

Norway's Elvestuen appointed Special Representative for Arctic Issues



Ola Elvestuen

OSCE PA President Ilkka Kanerva (MP, Finland) has appointed Norwegian parliamentarian Ola Elvestuen as the PA's first Special Representative for Arctic Issues.

The newly established position will help ensure that the PA is kept informed of the latest developments and trends concerning the Arctic and will enhance the Assembly's

co-operation with other international organizations in this increasingly important region.

President Kanerva noted that since the OSCE PA gathered in Tromsø ten years ago to consider Arctic issues, the region's challenges have only gained in prominence within both the Assembly and the broader international community. "The Paris Agreement on climate change provides even greater incentive for the creation of this new position," Kanerva said.

In accepting the appointment, Elvestuen said:

"Challenges for the Arctic area are geopolitical, environmental and economic, and human rights-related. That is, they cut across all dimensions of human security that the

OSCE works on. There is the issue of emerging tensions between countries in the High North and of course there is climate change, which is resulting in serious environmental, security-related and social challenges, including special challenges for indigenous peoples."

The Special Representative's mandate is to:

- Raise awareness in the OSCE PA regarding Arctic issues;
- Promote co-operation on Arctic issues within the OSCE PA among all delegations, particularly within the Arctic region;
- Maintain contact with and follow up on the work of the OSCE regarding Arctic issues;
- Maintain contact with and follow up on the work of other international organizations dealing with and involved in the Arctic region;
- Monitor the situation in the Arctic region and report to the OSCE PA and to the President on relevant developments.

Elvestuen has been a Member of Norway's Delegation to the OSCE PA since 2013. In his national parliament, the Storting, he serves as Chair of the Standing Committee on Energy and the Environment.

Preparations begin for OSCE PA's 2016 Skopje Autumn Meeting

The conference team of the OSCE PA's International Secretariat is visiting Skopje this week to begin preparations for next year's Autumn Meeting, to be held 29 September to 2 October 2016. Hosted by the Parliament of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the OSCE PA Autumn Meeting will include a parliamentary conference on "Strengthening Confidence-Building Measures and Good Governance in the OSCE Region" and meetings of the Assembly's Mediterranean Forum and the Standing Committee.

From 14 to 16 December, Deputy Secretaries General Gustavo Pallares and Semyon Dzakhaev together with Conference Co-ordinator Odile Lelarge have been in Skopje assessing all logistical and practical matters related to the organization of the meeting, including possible venues, lodging and transport of participants and other matters. They have discussed the programme and related events in meetings



Left to right: Liman Avdiu, Bekim Fazliu, Odile Lelarge, Gustavo Pallares, Renata Deskoska, Dimitri Stevanandzija, Biljana Ogrenovska and Semyon Dzakhaev

with Renata Deskoska, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament and Head of the Delegation to the OSCE PA; Zarko Denkovski, Secretary General of the Parliament; and Liman Avdiu, Co-ordinator of the Working Group for organizing the Autumn Meeting, among others. The OSCE PA team also held meetings at the Foreign Affairs and Interior Ministries to discuss issues related to entry visas and security matters.

During their stay in Skopje, the PA team visited the OSCE Mission to Skopje and met with the Head of Mission, Ambassador Nina Suomalainen, and her staff.

PA's Chepurina presents Helsinki +40 Project recommendations on strengthening OSCE conflict management

At a conference held last week in Helsinki, OSCE PA Programme Officer Maria Chepurina outlined the OSCE's work in Central Asia, offering several suggestions for strengthening its mandate in this sphere, based on recommendations put forward by the OSCE PA's Helsinki +40 Project. The conference, which was organized by Wider Security Network – WISE, focused on the OSCE's conflict

prevention, peacebuilding and mediation work.

Chepurina offered remarks on whether the OSCE is adequately equipped to prevent conflict and support peacebuilding, noting the Helsinki +40 Project's final report's conclusions that the Organization would benefit from closer co-operation with civil society actors, as well as enhancement of its legal personality.