

In Azerbaijan and Georgia, OSCE PA delegation meets senior officials



OSCE PA delegation (left) meets with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in Baku, 25 January 2016.



David Usupashvili and other Georgian parliamentarians (left) meet with the OSCE PA delegation in Tbilisi, 27 January 2016.

A delegation from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly visited Azerbaijan and Georgia this week, meeting with an array of senior officials. The visits were part of a planned visit by President Ilkka Kanerva (MP, Finland) to all three countries in the South Caucasus, but Kanerva was forced to cancel his participation due to illness.

In Azerbaijan, the OSCE PA's delegation, which included Vice-President George Tsereteli (MP, Georgia), OSCE PA Vice-President Kent Harstedt (MP, Sweden), Deputy Head of the Bulgarian Delegation to the OSCE PA Kristian Vigenin and OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella, met with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, Parliament Speaker Ogtay Asadov, Prime Minister Artur Rasizade, Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov, and Members of Azerbaijan's OSCE PA Delegation, headed by Bahar Muradova and First Committee Vice-Chair Azay Guliyev.

The delegation expressed support for the work of the OSCE Minsk Group and raised concerns over increasing violence in the region. "Conflicts in this region are high on our agenda," said Vice-President Tsereteli after the meetings in Baku. "There is no alternative to a political settlement of the conflict, which will benefit both Azerbaijan and Armenia and their people, as well as the wider region."

The PA delegation, which also met with representatives of civil society in Baku, stressed the willingness of the OSCE to work co-operatively on common challenges, and encouraged visible steps in the field of human rights, media freedom and democratization.

In Georgia, Vigenin led an OSCE PA delegation that met with President Giorgi Margvelashvili, Parliament Chairman David Usupashvili, Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili, Foreign Minister Mikheil Janelidze, and Members of the Georgian OSCE PA Delegation.

The sides discussed a range of domestic and regional issues, including Georgia's upcoming parliamentary elections. "The OSCE has long supported Georgia in its development process, and we will continue to do so as the country continues to pursue reforms. As Georgia moves into election season, we call for a constructive and inclusive approach by all political forces. We take note of the government's efforts to engage with a range of political actors and civil society," Vigenin said.

Montella, on behalf of President Kanerva, signed the official agreement with Chairman Usupashvili on hosting the 25th Annual Session, to be held on 1-5 July in Tbilisi.

The delegation was supported by Andreas Baker, Francesco Pagani and Maria Chepurina from the International Secretariat.

Second Committee Vice-Chair Sena addresses EEF preparatory meeting

Speaking at the first preparatory meeting of the 24th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum in Vienna on Monday, OSCE PA Second Committee Vice-Chair Nilza Sena (MP, Portugal) discussed the importance of improving environmental governance for achieving long-term sustainability and security in the OSCE region.

The two-day meeting took place at OSCE headquarters in the Hofburg and was held under the theme "Strengthening stability and security through co-operation on good governance."

Addressing session one, Sena noted the value of taking a multi-stakeholder approach in tackling these issues. "From governments and NGOs to the private sector, co-operation is key to achieving effective governance that can help us move towards a more sustainable future, adhering to values such as accountability, civic involvement in decision-making and freedom of association," she said.



Nilza Sena addresses the EEF meeting on 25 January 2016.

She further stressed the PA's willingness to contribute to the overall effort of the OSCE in this regard and noted that it is the responsibility of governments to enhance effective national governance systems and to improve the necessary legal foundations.

In conjunction with her participation in the meeting, Sena visited the OSCE PA's Liaison Office and met with the PA's Special Representative in Vienna, Amb. Andreas Nothelle, and Deputy Director of Administration Marc Carillet.