

News from Copenhagen

On Serbian border, PA delegation calls for more action on migration



Members of PA delegation speak with a Syrian refugee at the Presevo registration center, 4 Feb. 2016.

An OSCE PA delegation led by Third Committee Chair Isabel Santos (MP, Portugal) wrapped up a migration-related visit to the Czech Republic and Serbia last week by travelling to southern Serbia on 4 February to meet with refugees, aid workers and officials at reception facilities near the border with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The delegation, which included the PA's Special Representative on OSCE Border Issues, Ignacio Sanchez Amor (MP, Spain), visited the reception facilities at Miratovac and the registration center at Presevo. Third Committee Rapporteur and Deputy Speaker of the Serbian Parliament Gordana Comic hosted the delegation, which also included Committee Vice-Chair Ivana Dobesova (MP, Czech Republic).

The delegation was joined on 4 February by the Head of Serbia's Delegation to the OSCE PA, Dijana Vukomanovic, Delegation member Meho Omerovic, who serves as Chair of the Serbian Parliament's Committee on Human and Minority

Rights and Gender Equality, and OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella.

At the reception facilities, delegation members heard personal stories of Syrian refugees and discussed procedures and trends related to the crisis with workers from a range of international organizations and aid groups, including the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration and the Red Cross.

Santos noted that Serbian citizens and authorities have done admirable work in many respects, but Serbia, like many other countries, needs to be part of a co-ordinated Europe-wide response to the migration crisis. The OSCE can also do more to help manage the crisis, she said, including by facilitating the exchange of best practices and organizing additional trainings for officials.

Rapporteur Comic said that Serbia's experience during and after the wars in the 1990s shows that the current situation affecting Europe is certainly manageable, particularly once better domestic and international mechanisms are in place.

The delegation, which was supported by Maria Chepurina and Richard Solash of the International Secretariat, also met with officials at the OSCE's southern Serbia field presence in Bujanovac. The migration crisis will be the central topic of the PA's upcoming Winter Meeting, scheduled for 25-26 February in Vienna. The Third Committee will present a report on the topic, which will include concrete proposals for action by participating States and the OSCE.

Series of visits to Copenhagen headquarters focus on Assembly work



Geir Joergen Bekkevold (centre), with Head of Section Vibeke Greni (left) and Sec. of Del. Dorthe Bakke (right)



Alain Neri (centre) and French Sec. of Del. Fabrice Hugot meet with PA staff.



Doris Barnett (right) meets with the OSCE PA's external auditor and PA staff.

In visits to the OSCE PA International Secretariat over the past week, a number of Assembly leaders have held discussions with staff members on various issues related to PA work, including upcoming meetings, election observation missions, and the Assembly's budget.

Treasurer Doris Barnett (MP, Germany) met on Wednesday with Secretary General Roberto Montella, Deputy Secretaries General Gustavo Pallares and Semyon Dzakhaev, and Administrative Director Kurt Lerras for talks on budgetary matters. Barnett was informed of the results of a recent financial assessment by the OSCE PA's external auditor.

On Tuesday, OSCE PA Vice-President and Deputy Head of the Assembly's French Delegation Alain Neri visited the

Secretariat for discussions that focused on the governance of the PA and its relationship with the Organization's executive structures. Neri also talked with Secretariat staff about the migration crisis in Europe and the OSCE's priorities for 2016.

Head of the Norwegian Delegation to the OSCE PA Geir Joergen Bekkevold visited the Secretariat on 5 February for meetings that covered topics including the upcoming election observation mission to Kazakhstan and OSCE PA budgetary issues. Montella talked about the methodology that is used for OSCE PA election observation missions, stressing the improved relationship with the OSCE/ODIHR in recent years.

On Thursday, Secretary General Montella will also hold meetings with the OSCE PA's Swedish Delegation.