

PA delegation led by President Tsereteli stresses co-operation in visit to Baku



George Tsereteli speaking with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, Baku, 12 March 2018

In Baku this week, a high-level delegation led by OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President George Tsereteli (MP, Georgia) met with Azerbaijani counterparts to discuss upcoming domestic elections, as well as democratic and economic reforms in the country. Highlighting Azerbaijan's potential as a bridge for dialogue and co-operation in the OSCE area, the delegation underlined the important role that it plays in the region of the South Caucasus, and urged further efforts at economic and security co-operation.

The PA delegation noted the continuing human cost of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, and urged all actors to redouble efforts at conflict resolution. Other protracted conflicts and the crisis in and around Ukraine were also discussed.

Meeting with Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, President Tsereteli noted concern about violence on the line of contact, and the intolerable toll on civilian populations in areas affected by the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The PA President reiterated the Assembly's support for the mediation efforts by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs as well as the activities of the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office, Ambassador Andrzej Kasprzyk.

"Increased exchanges and strong co-operation are key to the development and success of our countries and our people," Tsereteli said. "Democratic reforms, particularly on freedom of the media and on creating conditions to maximize the contribution of civil society, should be addressed adequately. Democratic and economic reforms in Azerbaijan mean

increased security in the OSCE."

The PA delegation included Nilza Sena (Portugal), who serves as Chair of the PA's economic and environmental committee, OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella, and Chief Political Advisor Francesco Pagani. The delegation met Monday with Ogtay Asadov, Speaker of the Milli Mejlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan; Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan; members of Azerbaijan's delegation to the OSCE PA led by Bahar A. Muradova, and with Azay Guliyev, who serves as Vice-President of the PA.

Following Monday's meetings with Azerbaijani leaders, President Tsereteli and other OSCE parliamentarians participated in an international conference in Baku held under the theme "The role of Parliamentarians in boosting economic cooperation and cultural ties along the Silk Road." Parliamentarians have a key role to play in favoring economic opportunities and increased trade to support security across the OSCE area, Tsereteli said at the conference's opening session, adding that all OSCE countries are becoming increasingly aware of the link between economic success and security.

Guliyev moderated the opening session, which included the participation of Ivan Brajovic, President of the Parliament of the Montenegro; Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan; Bahar Muradova, Head of Azerbaijan's OSCE PA Delegation and Deputy Speaker of the Milli Mejlis; Damdin Tsogtbaatar, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia; Asaf Hajiyevev, Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation; and Mircea Ciopraga, Secretary General of the Intergovernmental Commission of the Transport Corridor of Europe, Caucasus and Asia (TRACECA).

OSCE PA Vice-President Victor Paul Dobre (Romania), Chair of the OSCE PA's Committee on Political Affairs and Security Filippo Lombardi (Switzerland), as well as several Heads of Delegations and Members of the OSCE PA, also spoke at the conference, addressing topics related to enhancing mutually beneficial economic co-operation and trade ties.

Nilza Sena holds meetings in Azerbaijan ahead of early presidential election

OSCE PA economic and environmental committee Chair Nilza Sena (Portugal), who has been nominated by the PA President to be the Special Co-ordinator for the short-term OSCE observer mission to the early presidential election in Azerbaijan on 11 April, met in Baku this week with a range of election stakeholders, as well as the OSCE/ODIHR election observation mission in the country. In advance of the election, which the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly expects to observe, Sena met with the Central Election Commission, the presidential candidates (or their representatives), as well

as representatives of political parties, the media and non-governmental organizations. The visit, intended to serve as a fact finding exercise, was concluded successfully on Tuesday.



Nilza Sena and Ogtay Asadov, 12 March