OSCE PA South East Europe envoy and Vice-President Guliyev visits Bosnia and Herzegovina

OSCE PA President Margareta Cederfelt (Sweden) signed an official agreement with Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP and Lord John McFall of Alcluth, the Speakers of the House of Commons and House of Lords, respectively, to hold the OSCE PA’s 29th Annual Session in Birmingham, United Kingdom. The agreement formally establishes the venue for the meeting, which is the first in-person Annual Session of the Assembly since 2019 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to discussing practical aspects the Annual Session, talks also focused on current political issues. Following the signing ceremony in London, President Cederfelt and Secretary General Roberto Montella sat in the public gallery of the House of Commons to watch an address to parliamentarians Tuesday evening by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy, who described in detail the dire situation his country faces due to the ongoing Russian invasion.

UK MPs listen to the speech of President Zelenskiy, 8 March

Cederfelt and Montella, together with Deputy Secretary General Gustav Pallarés and Adviser to the President Loïc Poulain, also held meetings this week with the UK Delegation to the OSCE PA led by Head of Delegation John Whittingdale and Deputy Head Mark Pritchard. They also met Tuesday with the Chairs and Members of committees with a focus on international affairs and security, as well as Caroline Nokes, Chair of the Women and Equalities Committee.

ODIHR-OSCE PA visit to United States follows up on election observation

An OSCE delegation comprising two leaders of the international election observation mission to the United States in 2020 conducted a follow-up visit to Washington, DC, last week. Michael Link, who served as Special Co-ordinator for the OSCE short-term observers for the 2020 elections in the United States, was in the US capital together with Urszula Gacek, who headed the ODIHR observers, to discuss responses to recommendations stemming from the observation mission.

With a focus on recommendations from the ODIHR Final Report on the elections, the delegation met with senior officials including Senators Ben Cardin and Roger Wicker, and Representatives Steve Cohen and Joe Wilson from the Helsinki Commission, as well as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Douglas Jones, and others.

Interlocutors expressed their appreciation for the OSCE’s work and took note of key recommendations from the mission. Acknowledging the decentralized system in the United States, Link and Gacek particularly highlighted the importance of international observers having access to all stages of the electoral process, including in polling stations.

PA holds webinar on implementing the Sustainable Development Goals

The OSCE PA held a webinar on 2 March focused on implementation of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals. Participants included OSCE PA Special Representative on SDGs Askar Shakirov and President Margareta Cederfelt, who noted that while international attention is rightly focused on the Russian Federation’s war against Ukraine, it is important not to lose sight of other matters on the global agenda. Challenges posed to development by the COVID-19 pandemic also require common solutions, it was stressed, and the OSCE PA should focus on increasing its impact in this regard.

SG Montella holds consultations with parliamentary partners

Today, OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella participated in a co-ordination call with the SGs of PACE and NATO PA, Despina Chatzivassiliou-Tsovilis and Ruxandra Popa, respectively, to exchange views and build co-operation to more effectively respond to the situation in Ukraine. SG Montella has also scheduled a phone call with the SG of the CIS Inter-parliamentary Assembly in the coming days, underlining the importance of consultations with all parliamentary partners.

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