

News from Copenhagen

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President Severin visits Canada, United States

President Adrian Severin paid official visits to Canada on June 11 and 12, and to the United States from June 13-15. Invited by the Speakers of the two Chambers of the Canadian Parliament, he devoted one day to meetings with government officials, including Foreign Minister John Manley, and one day to meetings with Canadian parliamentarians. During his meeting with Foreign Minister Manley, Mr. Severin discussed the role of the Parliamentary Assembly in the OSCE, emphasising that the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly is an official parliamentary body of the OSCE, having been created by the governmental leaders at the Paris Summit in 1990. He pointed out, however, that there was a substantial democratic deficit in the OSCE, since its parliamentary dimension did not have similar powers to those of its sister international parliamentary bodies, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the European Parliament. He told Mr. Manley that the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly gave substantial "added value" to the OSCE through its leadership in election monitoring projects, activities of special ad hoc committees dealing with crisis areas, and providing visibility and access in the field to OSCE Missions, as well as numerous other activities. President Severin expressed the need for parliamentary oversight in the OSCE, particularly in light of the extremely critical external audit of the OSCE which had recently been brought to his attention.

During President Severin's visit to Ottawa, meetings were also held with other senior officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including Secretary of State James Wright and officials responsible for various regions in the OSCE. He also addressed a meeting of Ambassadors from OSCE countries and had a lengthy discussion with the Foreign Affairs Adviser to Prime Minister Chretien. On the parliamentary side, President Severin met with the members of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly delegation as well as other parliamentary leaders. He also met with former Second Committee Vice-Chair Jerry Grafstein who had just returned from the Seminar on Moldova in

Finland. Throughout his visit, President Severin was accompanied by OSCE PA Treasurer Mr. Bill Graham.

In Washington President Severin met with Speaker of the House of Representatives Dennis Hastert and the Minority Leader Richard Gephardt, as well as with OSCE PA Vice-President Steny Hoyer and Chair of the Committee on Political Affairs and Security Alcee Hastings. Mr. Hastings, who is also the ranking democrat on the European Affairs Sub-Committee of the House of Representatives, arranged a meeting with the sub-committee, including staff experts. President Severin also met with Senator Chris Dodd of Connecticut who will become the new Chairman of the U.S. Congressional Helsinki Commission. He attended a meeting of the American delegation to the Annual Session in Paris, which will be led by Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell. He was told that the Americans will come with a full delegation which will participate actively in all phases of the Annual Session. While in Washington he also met with Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky, and key Desk Officers for the OSCE area in the U.S. State Department. Meetings were also held at the National Security Council and at the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs. Secretary General Spencer Oliver accompanied Mr. Severin in Ottawa and Washington.

After his official visits, President Severin travelled to New York where he met Mr Danilo Turk, Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs, and Mrs Angela Kane, Director of the Europe and America Division of the UN Dept. for Political Affairs. He also met Guy Tozzoli, President of the World Trade Center Association. On this occasion he delivered, in front of an audience made up of businessmen and mass media representatives, a speech on the role and the evolution of the OSCE PA, the importance of achieving world stability and security through development, economic cooperation and integration, as well as the possibility of involving the business milieu in OSCE projects and, in particular, in achieving the Stability Pact objectives.

President Severin sends a letter to the Permanent Council

On 14 June, the Permanent Council of the OSCE discussed a "Discussion Paper" on "Strengthening the Organization and increasing its relevance for the participating States".

President Adrian Severin, who was unable to attend the meeting personally because of his visit to Canada and USA, sent a letter to the Members of the Permanent Council on the subject. In his letter, the President emphasized, in particular, the need to strengthen transparency and accountability in the OSCE. He also felt that the Parliamentary Assembly should have a role in these matters.

In his statement to the Permanent Council Mr. Pentti Väänänen, Deputy Secretary General, also informed the Permanent Council that the issues, addressed in President Severin's letter, will be discussed at the Tenth Annual Session in Paris and the Parliamentary Assembly is expected to make a number of proposals concerning these matters.

The "Discussion Paper" had been prepared under the Romanian Presidency. The matter is expected to be discussed at the Permanent Council again in September.

Bureau of the Third General Committee meets in Heidelberg

The Bureau of the Third General Committee met in Heidelberg on 16 June. The participants of the meeting were Mr. Gert Weisskirchen (Germany), Chair, Ms. Dorota Simonides (Poland), Vice-Chair and Ms. Elena Mizulina (Russia), Rapporteur. Mr. Pentti Väänänen, Deputy Secretary General, also attended the meeting.

The Committee Bureau discussed the preparations of the meeting of the General Committee in Paris during the Annual Session and the presentation of the OSCE Prize for Journalism and Democracy. The Committee's work in Paris will be particularly challenging since a large number of supplementary items may be sent to the Third General Committee.

After the meeting the Bureau visited the Central Committee of the German Sinti and Roma. Chairman of the Central Committee, Mr. Romani Rose, introduced the work of the Committee. During the discussion members of the Bureau considered a number of proposals and ideas how the OSCE PA could promote the issue of Roma and Sinti.

Third Round Table on Elections in Kazakhstan

On 11 June, Mr. Ihor Ostash, Vice-President of the OSCE PA, travelled to Astana, Kazakhstan, to participate as the moderator in the Third Round Table on Elections. The Round Table, which took place under the auspices of the OSCE, brought together representatives of Parliament, various government ministries and agencies and civil society. This third in a series of four planned round tables focused on sanctions and remedies for violation of election legislation and the procedures for handling electoral disputes.

During the course of the Round Table, a group of parliamentarians involved in the process agreed to form an initiative group which would sponsor the recommendations of the round table in Parliament. The fourth and final Round Table on Elections is scheduled to take place in September 2001. Mr. Ostash was accompanied by Paul LeGendre, Program Officer.