

News from Copenhagen

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Current Information from the OSCE PA International Secretariat

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President Severin Visits Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia

From 21-29 October 2001, President Severin paid an official visit to Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia. President Severin met with the Presidents of the three countries, the speakers of Parliament and Ministers of Foreign Affairs. He also had talks with OSCE PA Delegations and representatives of political parties in opposition as well as a number of NGOs. Mr. Severin also met with religious leaders and representatives of the judiciary.

Throughout his visit, President Severin discussed the security situation in the region, including the specific consequences stemming from the global war against terrorism. President Severin stressed that security in the Caucasus is an integral part of the security and stability of the OSCE region and that democratic development is an essential element in resolving the ongoing conflicts in the region. While expressing support for the OSCE work in the region, President Severin discussed ways in which the OSCE, and in particular the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, could be more instrumental in providing support to democratic developments in the region. Mr. Severin suggested that new commitments are needed on behalf of the international community to overcome the frozen conflicts in the Caucasus within the framework of OSCE Documents and principles of international law.

In Azerbaijan, the President paid a visit to settlements for internally displaced persons. Mr. Severin stressed that a continuation of the current situation, with an increasing level of frustration among the refugees, could foster violent reactions.

During meetings in Georgia, the situation in Abkhazia was the focus of discussion. President Severin expressed concern over the recent



incidents in the Kodori Valley involving casualties on all sides and stressed the importance of putting an end to the illegal armed groups operating in the conflict zones. Mr. Severin also addressed the issue of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Georgia and stressed that finding a solution to this problem should be given highest priority. He noted that without any prospects for a better future, the frustration of the IDPs could lead to violent reactions, thereby developing into another security problem in the area.

In Armenia, President Severin learned about the ongoing reform programme, including the constitutional developments. He also discussed ways in which the political party system could be strengthened ensuring some political stability while at the same time allowing for pluralism.

President Severin also briefly visited Nagorno-Karabakh. In his meetings there, President Severin emphasized that he was not in Nagorno-Karabakh to recognize or negotiate on its status but to listen to various groups of people and to be able to evaluate the situation on the ground. President Severin stressed that in order to solve the conflict, a compromise must be found and that in order to be able to implement a future solution the public must be informed throughout.

During his visits to all of three countries, the President underlined the important role played by the mass media in forming public opinion. In this connection he stated that the mass media's engagement in war rhetoric and the deliberate distribution of false information should be stopped and constructive dialogue opened.

Activities of the International Secretariat

A representative of the International Secretariat participated in the delegation of the Chairman-in-Office during his official visit to Uzbekistan on 22 November. Mr. Paul LeGendre, Program Officer, was present during meetings with the Foreign Minister, Speaker of Parliament, and with representatives of NGOs and local media. While in Tashkent, Mr. LeGendre also took part in the Regional Heads of Mission Meeting, which was held from 22-23 November and attended by the five Heads of Mission and Political Officers from Central Asia and by representatives of the Secretariat in Vienna.

New Members of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Belarus

The Head of the Portuguese Delegation Mr. António Reis and the Head of the Latvian Delegation Ms. Helena Demakova have been appointed as new members of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Belarus

President Severin attends the "3+3" in Vaduz

The leaderships on the OSCE and the Council of Europe met in Vaduz, Liechtenstein, on 30 October 2001 to discuss and coordinate their activities concerning issues of common concern. The meeting was hosted by Mr. Ernst Walch, Foreign Minister of Liechtenstein, as the present Chairman of the Council of Europe. The President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Lord Russell-Johnston and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe Mr. Walter Schwimmer also attended the meeting. President Adrian Severin represented the OSCE PA whilst other OSCE representatives included Mr. Mihnea Motoc, Secretary of State, representing the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, and the Secretary General, Ambassador Jan Kubis. President Severin was accompanied by Mr. Pentti Väänänen, Deputy Secretary General of the OSCE PA.

The fight against terrorism was discussed in length. This issue will also be discussed both at the forthcoming OSCE Ministerial Meeting in Bucharest and at the Council of Europe Committee of the Ministers. Both organizations stressed the need for multicultural dialogue and the importance of tackling the root causes of terrorism. It was agreed that both institutions will invite each other to their meetings dealing with the issue.

President Severin reported on his recent visit to the Caucasus and on the OSCE PA's future plans concerning the FYR of Macedonia.