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President Severin continues OSCE PA efforts in South-East Europe

Mr. Adrian Severin, President of the OSCE PA, visited the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on 27-29 November 2001.

During the visit Mr. Severin met with Mr. Stojan Andov, Speaker of the Macedonian Parliament, Mr. Ljubco Georgievski, Prime Minister and acting Foreign Minister, Mr. Radomir Karangeleski, Head of the Macedonian Delegation to the OSCE PA and Mr. Jordan Boskov, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Parliament. Mr. Severin also met with several other Parliamentarians and leaders of major political parties, representing different sections of the Macedonian population.

Prior to his meetings President Severin visited the OSCE Mission to Skopje and had discussions with the Head of the Mission, Ambassador Craig Jenness. He also visited the Mission's Field Station in Kumanovo. During his visit the President was accompanied by Mr. Pentti Väänänen, Deputy Secretary General.

During his visit to the OSCE Field Station in Kumanovo, the President met with local authorities and citizens learning about the OSCE's work and about people's



President Severin held talks with the Speaker of the Macedonian parliament Mr. Stojan Andov

everyday difficulties, such as school, water and food supplies, and health care.

Mr. Severin stressed the need to strengthen the OSCE's role in the country as the OSCE is well placed to promote internal dialogue and confidence building.

The President also stressed the need to agree on an early arrangement of a donor's conference.

The forthcoming elections, which will be held in October/November 2002 at the latest, were discussed in length. President Severin stressed that the elections should

be held as soon as possible. However, more important than the date is that the elections will be well organized. All of President Severin's Macedonian interlocutors emphasized the importance of a strong international presence during the whole electoral process. President Severin committed the OSCE PA to participating in the election observation mission. The Assembly will discuss the matter with the Council of Europe PA and the European Parliament in order to ensure a high level and strong political presence.

Ad hoc working group on Belarus visits Minsk

On 25-27 November two members of the OSCE PA ad hoc Working Group, Ms. Uta Zapf, MP (Germany), the newly appointed head of the Working Group, and Mr. Urban Ahlin, MP (Sweden) visited Minsk. The goal of the visit, the first in the post-presidential election period, was to assess the situation in the country and to discuss ways in which the Working Group could play a role in promoting the democratisation in the country.

The delegation of Ms. Zapf and Mr. Ahlin met with the Chairman of the Council of the Republic, the Chairman of the House of Representatives and other parliamentarians from the two chambers of the National Assembly.

The delegation also met with the Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration, the Minister of Information, representatives of the Advisory Council of Opposition Political Parties, Republican Co-ordinating Council of Political Parties, research institutes, the Belarusian Association of Journalists as well as OSCE Ambassadors.

Ms. Zapf and Mr. Ahlin discussed priority areas of the Working Group's future work in Belarus, which include, inter alia, the powers of the Parliament, the media situation and the electoral framework. The delegation noted that meaningful progress on these issues could help to resolve the problem of the lack of representation of Belarus in the OSCE PA.

OSCE PA President Visits Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Russia

From 19-21 November, President Severin travelled to Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan as part of an official visit that also included Tajikistan. In Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, the President met with the Foreign Ministers, the Speaker of the Parliaments as well as representatives of international organizations, local media, and non-governmental organizations. President Severin was accompanied by the Heads of the OSCE Centres in those countries.

Throughout his visit, the President discussed

the security situation in the region, including the situation stemming from the global war on terrorism. The danger of international terrorism was discussed at length in all meetings.

The President also briefly went to Tajikistan on 21 November, where he visited Khujand, the country's second largest city where he met with local parliamentarians and the deputy head of the local government.

From 23-24 November President Severin travelled to Moscow and St. Petersburg in the Russian Federation. In Moscow he met with

the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Gusarov as well as the Deputy Minister Mr. Trubnikov, and participated in a conference on Transdniestra.

In St. Petersburg on the following day, the President participated in the 18th Plenary Session of the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States. He also met with the Speaker of the Federation Council, Mr. Stroyev and the Speaker of the Russian State Duma and Vice President of the OSCE PA, Mr. Seleznev.