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OSCE PA Field Visit to Latvia and Estonia



Mr. Andrew MacKinlay (Left) with the Governor of the Ida-Virumaa Region, Mr. Rein Aidmaa (middle) and the Head of the OSCE Mission to Estonia, Ambassador Doris Hertrampf.

From 6-8 December 2001, nine Members of the OSCE PA took part in a three-day visit to the OSCE Missions to Latvia and Estonia.

This was the first visit of a new initiative of the OSCE PA to visit OSCE field presences in order to better understand the work of the OSCE and to determine ways in which the OSCE PA can better contribute to the work of the OSCE in the field. It was decided to organize the first such visit to Latvia and Estonia since the mandates of these Missions may be determined to be fulfilled by the end of the year. Closure of these two Missions on the basis of successful fulfillment of mandates would be a precedent for the Organization.

The Delegation was headed by Mr. Andrew MacKinlay (United Kingdom) and included Ms. Anastasia Moser (Bulgaria), Mr. Nesrin Uzun (Bulgaria), Mr. Petr Sulak (Czech Republic), Mr. Jiri Karas (Czech Republic), Mr. Giovanni Kessler (Italy), Mr. Guglielmo Castagnetti (Italy), Mr. Antonio Reis (Portugal), and Mr. Tom Cox (United Kingdom).

According to Mr. MacKinlay, the visit provided the Delegation the opportunity to become aware of the sensitive debates currently taking place in Latvia and Estonia regarding the future of the OSCE Missions.

In Riga on 6 December, the Delegation was first briefed by Ambassador Peter Semneby, Head of Mission. The programme also included meetings with the Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Members of the Latvian Delegation to the OSCE PA, as well as representatives of the Naturalization Board, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interior and civil society representatives, all of whom have been working in close co-operation with the Mission. While the meetings generally reflected the impressive progress made by the Latvian government since 1991, the Delegation was also made aware of some concerns by the Russian-speaking minority during a meeting with Russian-speaking MPs and with the Deputy Mayor of Riga.

The Mission to Latvia welcomed the opportunity to introduce Members of Parliament to the work of the Mission and were appreciative of the support of the OSCE PA for the efforts undertaken by the Mission in the field of social integration.

The Delegation travelled to Tallinn on 7 December for the continuation of the programme, which included a briefing by Ambassador Doris

Hertrampf, Head of Mission, and Mission staff. The Delegation also met with Members of the Estonian Delegation to the OSCE PA, the Minister of Population Affairs and Ethnic Issues, as well as representatives of the Foreign Ministry and the Russian-speaking and other minorities.

On 8 December, the Delegation also travelled to the Ida-Virumaa Region of Estonia, in the northeast of the country, in which the Russian-speaking community makes up 80 percent of the population. In Jõhvi, the location of the regional government, the Delegation met with Mr. Rein Aidmaa, the Governor of the Region. The Delegation then traveled to Narva, the easternmost Estonian city on the border with the Russian Federation and composed of 96 percent Russian-speakers. There, the Delegation met with the Mayor of Narva, Members of the Narva City Council, as well as with representatives of civil society and the Director of Narva College.

According to the Mission in Estonia, the visit was a welcome and timely sign of the interest devoted by the OSCE PA to minority issues and the work of the field missions. The Mission regarded this as an encouragement of the work that had been achieved since the Mission began its work in Estonia in the spring of 1993.

Vice-President Tan represents PA at the Bishkek International Conference

From 13-14 December 2001, Vice-President Ahmet Tan (MP, Turkey), travelled to Kyrgyzstan to take part in the Bishkek International Conference on "Enhancing Security and Stability in Central Asia: Strengthening Comprehensive Efforts to Counter Terrorism" which was co-sponsored by the OSCE, the UN and the Government of Kyrgyzstan. Mr. Tan addressed the Conference on the role of parliaments in preventing and combatting terrorism.

President Severin visits Bulgaria and addresses the General Assembly of PABSEC

On Wednesday 5 December 2001 Mr. Adrian Severin addressed the General Assembly of the PABSEC (Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation). In his remarks, under the general debate on Globalisation and the Black Sea Region's Challenges, Mr. Severin reiterated the need for increased co-operation between the two parliamentary organizations in particular in the field of economic development.

Following his participation in the PABSEC - and a brief encounter with the Prime Minister of Bulgaria Mr. Simeon

Saxe-Coburg-Gotha - President Severin continued his official visit with a meeting with the Head of the Bulgarian Delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Mr. Toshko Peikov, and several members of the Delegation. The discussion was centered on the participation of the Bulgarian Delegation in the activities of the OSCE PA. The proposed theme for the Berlin Annual Session (the fight against terrorism) was also discussed and met the approval of the Bulgarians.

In the afternoon Mr. Severin held a meeting with the President elect of Bulgaria,

Mr. Ghiorgi Parvanov followed by talks with the Speaker of the Bulgarian National Assembly Mr. Ognian Gerdjikov. In both meetings Mr. Severin referred to the efforts of the OSCE PA to enhance the parliamentary dimension of the OSCE and called for Bulgarian support in such efforts.

The programme concluded with a meeting with the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Petko Draganov. During the meeting President Severin elaborated on his address to the OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting held in Bucharest.