

News from Copenhagen

Number 44

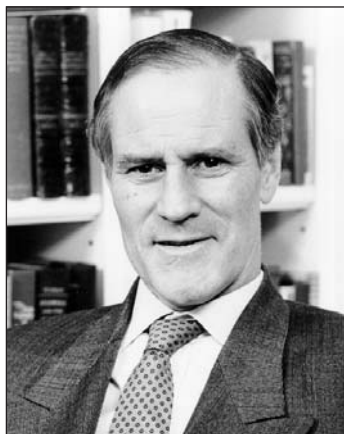
Current Information from the OSCE PA International Secretariat

4 February 2002

Bill Graham appointed Foreign Minister of Canada

On January 15, former OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Treasurer Bill Graham was appointed Foreign Minister of Canada, following a reshuffle of the Government. President Severin sent a letter of congratulations to Mr. Graham thanking him for his dedicated work for the Assembly. Mr. Graham was a very active member of the OSCE PA serving as a Vice-President from 1997-1999 and as Treasurer from 1999 until the Annual Session in Paris. A Professor of Law, Mr Graham was elected to the Canadian Parliament in 1993 and served as Chair of the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee for seven years.

When commenting on the appointment of Mr. Graham *The Economist* stated: "Not since 1948 has Canada tapped such a well prepared foreign minister."



President Severin visits Norway

On 28-29 January, President Severin paid an official visit to Norway where he had an audience with His Majesty the King of Norway and meetings with the Speaker of the Parliament, Mr. Jørgen Kosmo, the Prime Minister, Mr. Kjell Magne Bondevik, the Foreign Minister, Mr. Jan Petersen, the OSCE PA Delegation and the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs. The programme also included a discussion with the President and Members of the Nordic Council as well as a meeting with a group of non-governmental organizations. Throughout the visit, President Severin stressed the role of the OSCE Parliamentarians in the work of the OSCE and the need for more openness in the Organization. He also discussed the priorities and projects of the Organization in particular regarding the Balkans and Central Asia. In addition, on the issue of terrorism, President Severin stressed that even during the war against terrorism, human rights and democracy should be on the top of the international political agenda.

Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency and Accountability meets in Washington

On 21 January, the Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency and Accountability met in Washington under the chairmanship of Congressman Steny Hoyer, in order to discuss ways in which co-operation and co-ordination with the governmental side of the OSCE can be strengthened. The Committee stressed that increased interaction between the two branches of the OSCE would reinforce the work of the Organization and allow the two sides to reach their common goals.

Members of the Committee also emphasized that the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, as one of the OSCE Institutions, needs to be further incorporated into

the Organization and that more regular consultations should take place at both the political and executive levels. The Ad Hoc Committee also noted the importance of opening a small OSCE PA liaison office in Vienna in order to ensure better contacts and flow of information between the parliamentary and governmental branches of the Organization.

In addition, Members of the Committee highlighted the need for the governmental side of the Organization to further implement the values and principles it preaches and at least provide directly elected parliamentarians with information on the decision making in the

OSCE. The Committee agreed that one of its priorities will be to actively seek the support of the participating Governments for the policies and recommendations made by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly through engagement of all national OSCE PA Delegations.

The Ad Hoc Committee is currently preparing for direct discussions with Members of the Permanent Council at a retreat, which will take place in Salzburg on 23-24 February. The Committee sees this retreat as a unique opportunity to exchange views on the future development of the OSCE.

President Severin attends the OSCE Troika and addresses the Heads of Missions

President Severin attended the meeting of the OSCE Troika, composed of the Foreign Ministers of Portugal, Romania and Netherlands, in Lisbon on 21 January 2002. The meeting, which was chaired by Mr. Jaime Gama, Foreign Minister of Portugal and the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, concentrated on the present challenges to the OSCE, such as OSCE policies towards Central Asia, Belarus and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as well as OSCE's role in combating terrorism.

The Troika also discussed the OSCE's budgetary difficulties.

After the Troika meeting President Severin attended the meeting of Heads of the OSCE Field Missions on 21-22 January. In his address the President informed the Heads of Missions about the activities of the Parliamentary Assembly and offered concrete support to the Missions in their work, pointing out that there are already several projects where the Assembly co-operates closely with the Missions.

President Severin addresses the Council of Europe PA

President Severin visited the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly in Strasbourg on 22-23 January 2002 at the invitation of Mr. Peter Schieder, President of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly. In his speech to the Assembly on 23 January, Mr. Severin addressed a number of areas where the two Assemblies co-operate, such as combating terrorism and promoting democracy and stability in Belarus.

During his visit Mr. Severin met with a number of high-level representatives of the Council of Europe, including the President of the Parliamentary Assembly, Mr. Peter Schieder and Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, Mr. Walter Schwimmer. He also met with the Secretary-General of the Parliamentary Assembly, Mr. Bruno Haller and Secretary-General of the CIS Parliamentary Assembly, Mr. Michail Krotov to discuss the forthcoming parliamentary conference on combating terrorism, to be held in St. Petersburg in March 2002.