

News from Copenhagen

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OSCE PA Ad Hoc Working Group on Belarus Visits Minsk

Three members of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly ad hoc Working Group on Belarus, the Chair of the Group, Ms. Uta Zapf (MP, Germany), Ms. Helena Demakova (MP, Latvia), and Mr. Urban Ahlin (MP, Sweden) visited Minsk from 20-23 May 2002. The delegation was accompanied by Programme Officer Paul LeGendre.

The visit was the third since the Presidential election and aimed to continue the discussions on ways in which the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly can reinvigorate a dialogue with the Belarusian authorities, as well as with other social and political forces in the country on the basis of the four criteria.

During the course of the visit, the delegation met with Mr. Voitovich, Chairman of the Council of the Republic, Mr. Popov, Chairman of the House of Representatives, as well as other parliamentarians

from the two chambers of the National Assembly. From the government, the delegation met with Mr. Khvostov, the Foreign Minister, and Mr. Podgainy, the Minister of Information. The delegation also met with the Advisory Council of Opposition Political Parties, the Republican Coordinating Council of Political Parties, research institutes, representatives of civic organisations and trade unions, the Belarusian Association of Journalists, as well as OSCE Ambassadors and representatives of international organisations. Finally, the delegation met with the family members of those who have disappeared and been imprisoned in circumstances widely believed to be politically motivated.

A press release issued at the conclusion of the visit can be found at www.osce.org.

Presidential visit to Slovakia

On Wednesday 29 and Thursday 30 May President Severin paid an official visit to the Slovak Republic at the invitation of the National Council (Parliament) of Slovakia. During his visit Mr. Severin had high level meetings with Slovak parliamentary and governmental leaders including the President of the National Council, Mr. Josef Migas and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Eduard Kukan. President Severin also met with the Head of the Slovak Delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Mr. Peter Osusky, and the Chairmen of the Committees on European Integration and Human Rights. In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mr. Severin met the officers responsible for OSCE matters. Throughout his visit Mr. Severin was briefed about the political situation in Slovakia, including the parliamentary elections scheduled for September 2002. President Severin praised the involvement of the Slovak Republic in the OSCE, and the active participation of Slovak Parliamentarians in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. Mr. Severin was accompanied by Presidential Adviser, Gustavo Pallares.

President Severin addresses Economic Forum

On Tuesday 28 May President Severin addressed the Opening Session of the 10th OSCE Economic Forum. In his address Mr. Severin welcomed the topic chosen for this year's Forum: "The Co-operation for the sustainable use and the protection of quality of water in the context of the OSCE" and stated that "*water is a scarce resource that knows no boundaries therefore its management and its sharing should provide a strong basis for cooperation among nations*" Mr. Severin praised the examples of successful water management co-operation in the OSCE area such as the Danube River Green Corridor. President Severin informed the participants about the next OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Sub-regional Economic Conference to be held in Switzerland during the Spring of 2003 on the topic of small and medium size enterprise development.

On the margins of the Forum President Severin met with the new OSCE Co-ordinator of Economic and Environmental Affairs, Dr. Marcin Swiecicki. The need to further develop the "second basket" within the OSCE was discussed and President Severin invited the Co-ordinator to address the Second Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly at the Berlin Session.

OSCE PA Conference in Almaty from 21-22 October

On 28-29 May, Mr. Vitaly Evseyev, Deputy Secretary General, and Mr. Paul LeGendre, Programme Officer, travelled to Almaty to discuss the preparations for a Trans-Asian Parliamentary Conference to be hosted by the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan. It was tentatively agreed that the Conference would be held from 21-22 October 2002 and would be devoted to issues of security within the trans-Asian dimension of the OSCE. A preparatory meeting for the Conference will be held on 9 July from 16:30 - 18:30 in the German Bundestag. In Almaty, Mr. Evseyev and Mr. LeGendre met with Vice-Speaker of the Kazakhstan Senate, Mr. Baigeldy, the Secretary General of the Senate, Mr. Rayev and other officials. They also met with representatives of the UNDP and the OSCE Centre in Almaty. More information about the Conference and the preparatory meeting will be made available shortly by the International Secretariat.

11th Annual Session in Berlin

From 21-23 May Deputy Secretary General Vitaly Evseyev, Counsellor Jan Jooren, Conference Co-ordinator Almuth Janisch and General Services Officer Kurt Andersen visited Berlin to finalize preparations for the 11th OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Annual Session in Berlin 6-10 July. Key documents such as Committee Reports and Draft Resolutions are also available from the OSCE PA web-site at: www.osce.org/pa

Upcoming Events

- **6-10 July 2002**
11th Annual Session in Berlin.
- **15 September 2002 (TBC)**
Parliamentary Elections in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.
- **2-4 October 2002**
OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Standing Committee Meeting and OSCE Parliamentary Annual Autumn Conference.
- **5 October 2002**
Parliamentary Elections in Bosnia & Herzegovina.