

News from Copenhagen

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Parliamentary Conference on the Mediterranean



More than 200 parliamentarians from 45 OSCE participating States participated in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Conference on the Mediterranean, held from 3-4 October 2002 in the Spanish Parliament in Madrid. The Conference, organized at the invitation of the Spanish Parliament, consisted of a series of presentations and discussions focussing on ensuring peace, democracy and prosperity in the Mediterranean region. The parliamentarians were welcomed by Mr. Bruce George, President of the OSCE PA and Chair of the Conference, Mrs. Luisa Fernanda Rudi Ubeda, Speaker of the Spanish Chamber of Deputies and by Mr. Prada Presa, First Vice-President of the Spanish Senate. The Conference was also addressed by senior OSCE Officials and expert speakers including OSCE Secretary General Jan Kubis, the Director of the International Organization for Migration, Department of External Relations, Mr. Peter Schatzer and the President of the Instituto Internazionali, Mr. Stefano Silvestri. In closing the Conference, President Bruce George underlined the

complexity of the issues which the Conference had dealt with, and stressed the need for a holistic approach in finding solutions to these problems. The discussions during the Conference had shown the solidarity of the gathered parliamentarians, and the President stressed that "We are all in a sense Mediterranean".

The President said that he hoped that the model set during this Conference in Madrid would continue with an annual Mediterranean Forum. He warmly welcomed the initiative taken by the Italian delegation in their devoting a full day of the 2003 OSCE PA Autumn Conference to Mediterranean issues. President George said that arrangements for this Forum were already underway. Before gaveling the Conference to a close, President George pledged that he would continue to work actively to enhance dialogue on Mediterranean issues and encourage action by the governmental side of the OSCE. The International Secretariat is preparing a summary report of the Conference which will be available shortly.

Secretary General Kubis briefs parliamentarians on OSCE budget

At its meeting on 2 October 2002 in Madrid the Standing Committee of the OSCE PA was briefed by the OSCE Secretary General, Ambassador Jan Kubis, on the proposed OSCE budget 2003. It was the first time in the history of the Assembly that such a briefing on the proposed budget took place. Also according to the Secretary General the briefing in Madrid was an excellent outcome of the work of the Assembly's Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency and Accountability. Ambassador Kubis also emphasized that the proposed OSCE budget 2003 was distributed to the OSCE participating States and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly at the same moment. After his presentation of the main trends in the proposed budget the OSCE Secretary General took questions from the floor. President Bruce George expressed the appreciation of the Assembly for the briefing by the Secretary General.

OSCE Election Monitoring Mission led by Pieter De Crem of Belgium

"These elections mark important progress toward the consolidation of democracy and rule of law under domestic control", said Pieter De Crem, member of the Belgian Delegation to the OSCE PA and Special Co-ordinator of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office to lead the OSCE Observation Mission during the general election in Bosnia & Herzegovina on 6 October 2002. Mr. De Crem delivered the preliminary post election statement at a press conference in Sarajevo on 7 October. The observation mission included 25 parliamentarians from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly as well as parliamentarians from the Council of Europe and the European Parliament. According to the statement the elections in BiH were largely in line with international standards for democratic elections, when considering the country's unique constitutional framework. The international observers noted that in what was a broad and active campaign involving 57 political parties, candidates were able to move unhindered and they engaged in substantially more cross-entity campaign activities than during previous elections. Shortcomings included the highly negative and often personalized nature of the campaign with little meaningful debate on reform issues. On election day, the voting took place in a calm and peaceful atmosphere, and the voting procedures were conducted generally in a well-ordered and efficient way.