

News from Copenhagen

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Current Information from the OSCE PA International Secretariat

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Special Meetings at OSCE PA Annual Session in Rotterdam

Throughout the 12th Annual Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, held from 5-9 July in Rotterdam, the Assembly's Ad Hoc Committees on Transparency and Accountability, Belarus, Moldova and Abkhazia held side meetings to discuss current and upcoming activities. The Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency and Accountability, chaired by US Congressman Steny Hoyer, heard reports by President Bruce George and Ambassador Andreas Nothelle, OSCE

PA Special Representative in Vienna, on developments in the working relations between the governmental and parliamentary dimensions of the OSCE. In addition, President George chaired a Special Meeting on the Mediterranean, attended by Members of the PA, parliamentarians of the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation and Ambassador Ivo Petrov, Chairman of the OSCE Contact Group with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation in Vienna.

Standing Committee Meeting

Prior to the Inaugural Plenary Session in Rotterdam, the Standing Committee of the OSCE PA gathered to hear reports on various upcoming Assembly activities as well as reports by the Treasurer and the Secretary General. The OSCE PA Treasurer, Senator Jerry Grafstein (Canada), reported that the Assembly was again functioning well within the overall guidelines of the budget approved by the Standing Committee. The Treasurer reported that his meeting with KPMG, the Assembly's external auditors, had resulted in a very positive assessment of the financial management of PA funds. The auditors had also expressed their complete approval of the financial procedures followed carefully and prudently by the staff of the International Secretariat. The Standing Committee unanimously approved the proposed budget for fiscal year 2003/2004, including an increase of 4.75% over last year's expenditures.

The OSCE PA Secretary General, R. Spencer Oliver, gave an overview of the International Secretariat's activities. He emphasized that the Assembly has continued its dynamic growth and that the International Secretariat continues to function well and efficiently in support of the expanded activities of the Organization and within the budget allocated by the Standing Committee.

Gender Report

On the final day of the Rotterdam Annual Session, Wednesday 9 July, a Gender Balance Report was presented by Geertje Lycklama à Nijeholt, Head of the Dutch Delegation to the OSCE PA. The Report, prepared by the Research Staff of the International Secretariat of the Assembly, concludes that since 1999, when the OSCE adopted the Gender Action Plan calling for a correction of the gender imbalance in the senior positions of the organization, there has been little or no improvement in the situation. To reach a higher ranking professional grade still seems close to impossible for women - the glass ceiling for female professionals still exists in the OSCE. President Bruce George has appointed newly-elected Vice-President Tone Tinggaard, head of the Swedish delegation, as the new Special Representative on the Gender Issue.

Upcoming events

- 9-12 October 2003, Rome: Standing Committee Meeting and OSCE PA Conference on Religious Freedom and Mediterranean Forum

-OSCE PA election monitoring of:

Presidential elections in Azerbaijan, 15 October 2003
Parliamentary elections in Georgia, 2 November 2003
State Duma elections in Russia, 7 December 2003

Address by the Chairman-in-Office



"Your insights and recommendations are of the utmost importance. They help to keep the OSCE relevant and, what is more important, in touch with the people of its participating States."

OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer

During the Inaugural Plenary of the Rotterdam Session the parliamentarians were addressed by OSCE Chairman-in-Office Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, Foreign Minister of the Netherlands. The C-I-O stressed that the theme of the 12th Annual Session was well chosen because it touched on two developments that require the repositioning of the OSCE: EU and NATO enlargement; and new threats confronting the OSCE, such as terrorism, organized crime, trafficking and illegal migration. His report on regional issues mentioned the situation in Moldova and the current efforts by Moldovan and Transnistrian negotiators to draft a new constitution for a reunified Moldova based on a federal model before the end of the year. "The Seminar organized by the Parliamentary Assembly in Moldova was of the utmost importance to this process, and was an excellent illustration of how your Assembly and other OSCE institutions can complement and support each other", said the C-I-O. The parliamentarians were also briefed by a panel of Senior OSCE Officials including Jan Kubis, Secretary General, Rolf Ekeus, High Commissioner on National Minorities, Christian Strohal, Director of ODIHR, Freimut Duve, Representative on Freedom of the Media, and Marcin Swiecicki, Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities. Both the address of the C-I-O and the presentations by the OSCE Panel were followed by a question/answer session.