

## Washington Preparations in Full Swing

On April 5, the Speaker of the US House of Representatives, Mr. Dennis Hastert, and OSCE PA President Alcee L. Hastings signed the host Agreement for the 14th Annual Session of the OSCE PA. Secretary General Spencer Oliver was also present at the ceremony on Capitol Hill.

At the invitation of the US Congress, the OSCE PA's 14th Annual Session will be held from 1-5 July 2005 in Washington, DC. Honouring the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, the Assembly decided to focus this year's Session on '30 Years Since Helsinki: Challenges Ahead'. More than 700 members of Parliament, senior parliamentary staff, representatives of partner States, International Organizations and other guests are expected to attend. The Session will also be addressed by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Slovenian Foreign Minister, Mr. Dimitrij Rupel, who will also answer questions from the floor.

The preparations for the Annual Session are in full swing. Secretary General Spencer Oliver and Deputy Secretary General Vitaly Evseyev have visited Washington, DC twice to carry out, together with American organizers,

final preparations for the Session. Draft reports and draft resolutions for the three General Committees have been prepared by the Rapporteurs and will be discussed at the meeting of the Expanded Bureau in Copenhagen on 18 April. The US hosts have prepared a very special social programme for participants.



## President Hastings Visits All OSCE Mediterranean Partner Countries

President Alcee L. Hastings is the first OSCE PA President to visit all six OSCE Mediterranean Partner States. This past December, President Hastings travelled to Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. In April, Hastings returned for a trip to Egypt, Jordan and Israel. Hastings' travels underscore the importance of the Mediterranean Partners' participation in the OSCE.

In Egypt, following President Mubarak's announcement of multi-candidate presidential elections, President Hastings commended Egyptian officials for their recent political reforms.

In Jordan, Hastings met with Prince Faisal and King Abdullah, where he lauded Jordan's role as agents for peace, stability and democracy in the Middle East.

In Israel, Hastings met with Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres, Knesset Speaker Reuven Rivlin and Knesset Members Colette Avital and Avram Poraz. He thanked them for their participation in the Parliamentary Assembly and reaffirmed his hope for a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Hastings, as part of a U.S. Congressional Delegation, also recently travelled to Lebanon, Iraq and Cyprus. While in Lebanon, he visited with the widow of slain Prime Minister Rafik Harriri. At Harriri's gravesite in Martyr Square, where hundreds gathered in what some are calling the "Gucci Revolution," protestors expressed their excite-

ment as well as their fear about changes occurring within Lebanon. At a meeting with Lebanese opposition leaders, Hastings encouraged them to seek observer status in the Parliamentary Assembly once a legitimate government was formed and conditions stabilized. In a meeting with Lebanese Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri, Hastings said that conflict had become endemic in Lebanese society and the people were crying out for change. "It's time for Lebanon to know sustained peace."

Continuing on to Cyprus, President Hastings toured the Green Line dividing the island nation. In a meeting with Cypriot officials, he encouraged a swift resolution to the long-standing conflict and expressed hope that a united Cyprus would one day be represented in the Organization.

### President Hastings extends Condolences on the Passing of Pope John Paul II

OSCE PA President Alcee L. Hastings has extended the Assembly's condolences on the passing of His Holiness Pope John Paul II in a letter to Msgr. Leo Boccardi, Head of the Permanent Mission of the Holy See to the OSCE.

"The world has lost one of its greatest spiritual leaders, whose commitment to peace and democratic development was highly valued by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly", said President Hastings.