

News from Copenhagen

OSCE Parliamentarians Debate Arctic Security



Jan Petersen, Norwegian Minister for Foreign Affairs; Alcee L. Hastings, President of the OSCE PA; and Bjørn Hernæs, Head of the Norwegian Delegation to the OSCE PA.

Meeting for two days in northern Norway, more than 80 parliamentarians from across the OSCE region gathered to debate environmental and security challenges faced by the northern reaches of the Organization. OSCE PA Members from 26 States, including both northern and southern OSCE regions, met in Tromsø, on May 12-13, at the invitation of the Norwegian Delegation to the OSCE PA, Headed by Mr. Bjørn Hernæs. This sub-regional conference, organized by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, highlighted the links between environmental concerns and security challenges in the Arctic region.

Welcoming participants, Mr. Jørgen Kosmo, President of the Norwegian Parliament, stressed the long history of co-operation between states in the Arctic region. He noted, however, that environmental and security challenges remain and that they continue to pose a threat to the region. Mr. Kosmo welcomed the convening of this inter-parliamentary Conference as an important method of exchanging views and experi-

ences between decision-makers in the Arctic states.

In his opening address to the Conference, US Congressman Alcee L. Hastings, President of the Parliamentary Assembly, noted the increasing prominence of new security challenges related to the environment. He stressed the importance of intergenerational solidarity, and called upon participants to maintain a long-term perspective in their discussions and debates, reminding Members that economic development and environmental protection must be integrally linked.

Addressing the Conference, the Norwegian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Jan Petersen, highlighted the many environmental and other challenges faced by the Arctic, stressing that these would require much more international attention in the future. He noted the potential for this increased focus and co-operation in stating that "Conflict has been replaced by a common concern about the challenges we face in the Arctic."

Following the opening of the Conference, the parliamentarians met in four separate sessions dealing with specific themes on Climate Change; Nuclear Waste; Petroleum Exploration; and Resource Management and Pollution. The Conference was addressed by expert speakers and senior government officials who gave presentations on the primary topics of debate. Following these presentations, parliamentarians engaged the speakers on their areas of expertise, discussing the regional and global consequences of the challenges addressed by the speakers.

In closing the Conference, President Hastings stressed the duties of all those gathered, from the Arctic and beyond. He stated that "we are all responsible for trying to find alternatives to the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources that is leading to the worrying situations described in this conference." He further noted that "This conference does not conclude here. I invite all of us to work in our respective parliaments to implement the principles and ideas that we have shared here in Tromsø."

