

News from Copenhagen

Report on Guantanamo

Immediately following the adjournment of the 14th Annual Session from 1-5 July in Washington, DC, OSCE PA President Hastings and the OSCE PA Special Representative on Guantanamo, Senator Anne-Marie Lizin (Belgium) held a joint press conference focused on the detention centre in Guantanamo, in which they addressed questions specific to this issue, as well as general ones regarding the Session.

The previous day, Mrs Lizin had presented a report on her work since her appointment as Special Representative earlier in the year. Given that Senator Lizin had been refused access by the United States government to visit the detention facility at Guantanamo, her report was based on information from others who had visited the facility.



President Hastings and Senator Lizin address representatives of the press on the issue of Guantanamo, July 5 2005.

In her report, Mrs Lizin considered both the nature of Guantanamo as a unique facility, as well as the conditions of detention and the procedures being used at the facility. She noted that her report was particularly critical of the secrecy surrounding the selection criteria for the prisoners being detained there. Despite several meetings with officials in the United States Defense Department, Senator Lizin had still not received a precise explanation of the criteria being used for selection.

Regarding the efficiency of the camp, Mrs Lizin noted that certain policies such as rotation of staff, were undermining the potential for gathering of intelligence. Nonetheless, the Senator rejected claims that the anti-terrorist intelligence emerging from the prison was entirely without worth.

Senator Lizin noted that any decision regarding closure of the detention centre must be taken at the political level, and would not develop at an administrative or procedural level.

The Special Representative's main recommendations in her report include her call upon the United States government to implement a calendar for closure of the facility. In addition, she called upon the US government to institute more extensive exchanges of intelligence with other countries to ensure maximum usage of anti-terrorist information. Finally, she recommended continuing pressure by the international community upon the US government to close the detention centre. In the plenary debate following Mrs Lizin's report, several Members spoke in support of the work being undertaken by the Special Representative.

Senator Lizin's complete report can be found at: www.oscepa.org

Gender Issues in focus

On 1 July 2005, the first day of the Assembly's Session in Washington, a great deal of work was done on promoting gender issues and gender equality in the OSCE.

A Working Breakfast on Gender Issues was hosted by President Alcee L. Hastings, and was chaired by OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues, Vice-President Tone Tingsgård. In his welcoming remarks, President Hastings reaffirmed his commitment to advancing female representation in the Assembly and regretted the slow progress in this regard. Ms Tingsgård welcomed President Hastings' participation in gender related activities as a very important political gesture. Speakers expressed support for the work being done by the OSCE PA on gender issues, and Ms Tingsgård invited the members of the PA to support the participation of the Assembly in the March 2006 UN Conference on Equal Participation of Men and Women.

During the Plenary Session in the afternoon, the Assembly unanimously adopted the Supplementary Item on improving the gender equality in the OSCE, presented by Ms Tingsgård. The resolution, which forms a part of the Washington Document, calls upon the OSCE Secretary General and participating States to take positive action to promote the recruitment of women candidates within OSCE bodies and institutions, especially at higher levels, as well as to improve the culture and working conditions in the

Organization. In this regard, OSCE PA Delegations are called upon to monitor the work of their national delegations to the OSCE Permanent Council to ensure that they promote gender balance.

In conjunction with this resolution, Ms Tingsgård presented the OSCE PA Gender Report 2005, commenting that "The conclusions of the Report are very discouraging; the OSCE PA has struggled for several years to promote gender equality within the OSCE, but the so-called 'glass ceiling' still prevents women from advancing into the leadership level in the Organization. It seems that all the good will stops when it comes to implementation." Ms Tingsgård further praised the work of the International Secretariat in preparing the report.

