

Hastings welcomes US elections follow-up

The US Commission on Federal Election Reform – Headed by former US President Jimmy Carter and Former Secretary of State James A. Baker III – issued a landmark report this week on how to improve the US electoral system. The Report, entitled *Building Confidence in US Elections*, is the most extensive examination of the weaknesses in the US system ever carried out. With 87 specific recommendations on improving electoral processes in the United States, including important stipulations on access for international observers, the report aims to raise confidence in the electoral system.

President Hastings welcomed the Report, saying “The Carter-Baker Report clearly indicates that the US still has to make a number of improvements in its electoral system. Confidence in elections is absolutely crucial for a democracy, and this Report includes significant recommendations that will go far towards enhancing voter confidence if implemented. Last year the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly undertook the important responsibility of observing the 2004 elections here in the US. Since that time, a considerable amount of follow-up work has been undertaken by Congress, media representatives and other experts. This Report is an important addition to this follow-up work.”

One of the key recommendations in the Carter-Baker Report is that international observers be given unrestricted access to US elections, in line with US commitments in the OSCE Copenhagen Document. The Report states: “Although the United States insists on full access by its election observers to the elections of other countries, foreign observers are denied or granted only selective access to U.S. elections.” The OSCE observer mission in 2004 encountered difficulties in accessing a number of polling stations.

Congressman Hastings stressed that “As President of the OSCE PA, as a Member of the US House of Representatives, and as an active observer of elections throughout the OSCE, I feel very strongly that the US should live up to its OSCE commitments. Last year I was pleased to work with Secretary of State Powell in facilitating the OSCE observer mission here. The US should build on this experience and allow international observers full access to all of its elections, and I intend to continue working to achieve this.”

The full report can be downloaded at:

www.american.edu/ia/cfer/

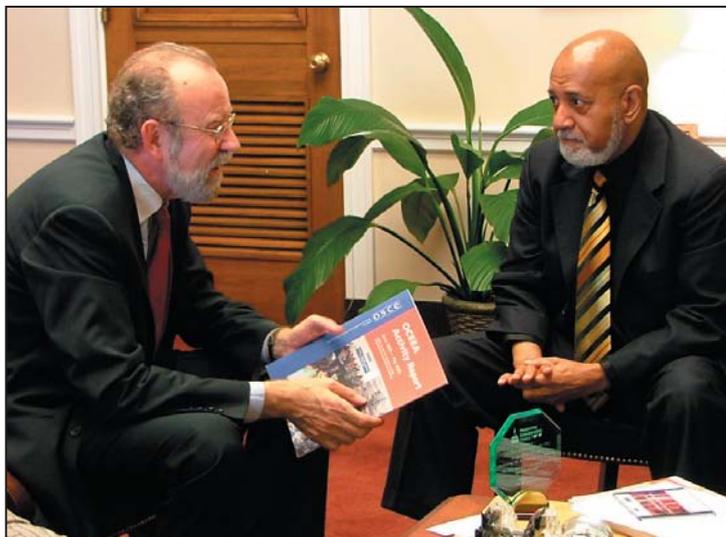
President Hastings meets with new OSCE Economic Co-ordinator

On Thursday September 22, President Hastings met with the newly appointed Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, Mr. Bernard Snoy, in Washington, DC. Congressman Hastings and Mr. Snoy discussed the work of the Co-ordinator, as well as future co-operation between the two OSCE institutions. OSCE PA Secretary General Spencer Oliver also attended the meeting in Washington.

While in Washington, Mr. Snoy also met with Congressman Benjamin Cardin, Chairman of the OSCE PA’s Second General

Committee, and particularly discussed work in the fields of anti-corruption efforts and the environment.

Mr. Snoy, from Belgium, has extensive experience in the field of international economic affairs, having served with the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. He has particular expertise in working with countries in transition, having served with the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe as Director for Economic Reconstruction, Development and Co-operation immediately prior to joining the OSCE in July this year.



New Research Fellows join Secretariat

A new team of Research Fellows has recently joined the International Secretariat, and will be assisting with Assembly activities for the coming six months. The staff has been joined by Adele Naudy (France), Aleksandr Golikov (Estonia), John Jones (USA), and Andrey Nosikov (Russian Federation). Gisela Fette, from Germany, will be joining the team shortly.

The Fellows have been assisting with preparations for the upcoming Autumn Meetings in Sveti-Stefan, as well as with other activities such as election observation missions.

The Fellowship programme offers an opportunity for recent graduates to experience a multicultural working environment while participating in the work of the PA, and providing substantial research and linguistic capability to the Secretariat.