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2005 Autumn Meetings in Sveti-Stefan



Beginning on October 7, parliamentarians from across the OSCE region gathered for three days in Sveti-Stefan, Montenegro, to debate questions of good governance in multi-ethnic societies in the annual OSCE PA Autumn Conference. The Assembly also held a meeting of its Standing Committee of Heads of Delegation and of the Mediterranean Forum on the following two days.

During the Conference and Parliamentary Forum, the over three hundred participants had the opportunity to hear interventions by experts in the fields being addressed, including several Heads of OSCE field missions, and senior political leaders from Serbia and Montenegro. The parliamentarians took advantage of this opportunity to exchange experiences

and debate practices in governing multi-ethnic societies.

In opening the Conference, OSCE PA President Alcee L. Hastings remarked on previous work by the Assembly at promoting respect for ethnic and cultural diversity as a cornerstone of democracy. The President also noted that a great deal more has to be done, as minority populations across the OSCE region often face significant obstacles in daily life. President Hastings noted that poverty amongst minorities continues to be a problem in his own country, which became particularly obvious in the recent devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina. "Democracy did not save those who were left stranded, but democracy linked with good governance would have," stressed the Congressman.

The Speaker of the Montenegrin Parliament, Mr. Ranko Krivokapic, warmly welcomed the participants to Sveti-Stefan. Stressing the importance of inter-ethnic understanding, Mr. Krivokapic also stressed the dangers of focusing too much on economic affairs. He noted that in the former Yugoslavia, aggressive nationalism was able to erupt with devastating effect despite a strong economy. Dialogue on cultural matters, in forums such as this, are of paramount importance.

In four separate sessions, the OSCE PA Conference heard interventions focused on managing multi-ethnic societies; the challenges of democratic governance in multi-ethnic societies; institutions and their role in minority protection; and the importance of civil society.

In the third annual Mediterranean Forum on October 9 parliamentarians gave particular consideration to issues of migration and trade within the region.

President Hastings urges reform and co-operation to OSCE Permanent Council

On 4 October PA President Alcee L. Hastings addressed the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna. In this, his second address to the ambassadors of all OSCE States, President Hastings highlighted in particular the recommendations on reforming the Organization, included in the OSCE PA's Washington Declaration of July this year.

Congressman Hastings applauded the successes that the OSCE has achieved since the Helsinki process began thirty years ago, and underlined the Assembly's desire to continue contributing to this ongoing success. The President also reiterated the need for reforming the decision-making mechanisms of the OSCE to effectively face new threats and challenges. In this regard, President Hastings noted that the Permanent Council's lack of response to the Parliamentary Assembly's recommendations on reform is discouraging, stressing that "There can be no OSCE reformation without effective OSCE communication."

of increased involvement of the Parliamentary Assembly in the work of the OSCE, highlighting especially the ability of parliamentarians to support the organization in its process of agreeing on a budget. Also, the ability of parliamentarians to speak freely and to help develop new ideas for overcoming intractable international problems greatly contributes to the work of the OSCE.

The Parliamentary Assembly has continued its active programme for observing elections, and President Hastings welcomed his appointment by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office as Special Co-ordinator for the parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan on November 6. He urged the Permanent Council to work to ensure close and co-operative work on election observation missions by all OSCE institutions, saying that "I believe that by continuing to work together, we will be more apt to achieve our goals and strengthen the transatlantic community and the brotherhood and sisterhood of all mankind."

The President also commented on the potential benefits