

Hastings addresses 13th OSCE Ministerial Council, OSCE PA Expanded Bureau meets in Ljubljana

Addressing the OSCE Ministerial Council, PA President Alcee L. Hastings stressed the important role of the Assembly in supporting the OSCE, saying that "A clear and unmistakable recognition of the Parliamentary Assembly's place and role is not simply a matter of prestige, but something from which the entire Organization will benefit." The OSCE PA, he underlined, has long provided important fora for dialogue among parliamentarians on OSCE issues.

President Hastings referred to the need for reform, as highlighted in the Colloquium on the Future of the OSCE organized by the OSCE PA and the Swiss Foundation for World Affairs in June 2005. He assured the OSCE Ministers of the Assembly's willingness to support efforts to adapt the Organization to new challenges. As an example of the Assembly's complementary work, Hastings mentioned the PA's active election observation programme, in which parliamentarians add their unique expertise and credibility to the OSCE's election activities. The President also proposed the establishment of joint OSCE-OSCE PA committees to seek practical solutions to the so-called 'frozen conflicts' in the OSCE area.

President Hastings congratulated Slovenia for the leadership it has provided to the OSCE over the past year, and expressed the Assembly's willingness to work closely with the Belgian Chairmanship in the coming year. The PA will hold its Annual Session in Brussels in July.



OSCE/EODD - Stjepan Zivulovic

The PA Expanded Bureau, made up of all Assembly elected officials, also met in Ljubljana. The PA leadership was addressed by the Chairman-in-Office, Dimitrij Rupel, and by Roberto Battelli, Head of the Slovenian Delegation to the OSCE PA. President Hastings informed the Expanded Bureau about his activities, and Secretary General Spencer Oliver presented a financial report on behalf of the Treasurer.

The Members of the Expanded Bureau heard updates on the work of the Assembly, including election observation activities and preparations for future meetings. They also discussed a theme for the upcoming Annual Session in Brussels and the work of the Assembly's General Committees.

Kazakh election flawed despite some administrative improvements

Although the International Election Observation Mission noted some improvements over past elections in the administration of the December 4 Presidential election in Kazakhstan, the election did not meet a number of OSCE commitments for democratic elections, reported Bruce George on December 5. Mr. George was appointed by President



Mr. João Soares (Portugal) served as Deputy Head of the OSCE PA delegation, leading the OSCE PA observers in Almaty while Bruce George (UK) led the overall effort in Astana.

Alcee L. Hastings and the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel, to lead the short-term observation effort and to deliver the preliminary post-election statement on behalf of the OSCE.

Mr. George, former PA President, was speaking at a press conference on behalf of over 460 short-term observers, including 45 from the OSCE PA, that had been deployed around the country to observe the election.

In delivering the main conclusions of the Mission, Mr. George highlighted a number of positive elements such as inclusive candidate registration and an extensive voter education campaign. However, media bias in favor of the incumbent, as well as restrictions on freedom of expression and intimidation of members of the opposition indicated insufficient political will by the authorities to hold a genuinely good election, reported Mr. George.

The IEOM was a joint undertaking of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the European Parliament. The OSCE PA observation was supported by Programme Officers Paul LeGendre and Andreas Baker, and Research Assistant Aran Pagoaga.