

Central Asian and Nordic Parliamentarians Meet to Discuss Regional Co-operation

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, in co-operation with the Nordic Council, held a two-day meeting in Oslo on regional issues, 10-11 December 2007. Hosted by the Norwegian Parliament, legislators from the Nordic Council and OSCE Central Asian states met to discuss regional energy, environment, and cross-border co-operation issues. Participants included Central Asian and Nordic parliamentarians, as well as representatives of the OSCE field presences.

Discussions focused on issues of cross-border co-operation, with MPs from the two regions sharing their respective experiences in energy and water resource management, environmental issues and other issues of common concern.

The meeting was facilitated by Kimmo Kiljunen, Vice-President of the OSCE PA and Special Representative for Central Asia, and by Dagfinn Hoeybraaten, President of the Nordic Council, Member of Parliament, Norway.

The Head of the Norwegian Delegation to the OSCE PA, Morten Hoeglund, co-hosted the meeting at the Norwegian Parliament.

"I'm pleased to see strong parliamentary participation from Central Asia in this event. I am particularly glad to see parliamentarians from the two regions discuss openly and share their experiences in this field. While these kinds of discussions are common on the governmental side, it is a unique initiative at the parliamentary level. I hope such meetings will become a regular event within the framework of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly," said Mr. Kiljunen.

The next such event is scheduled to take place in Ashgabad, Turkmenistan in April/May 2008.

Deputy Secretary General Tina Schon, Programme Officer Anna Chernova, and Research Assistant Dadojan Azimov from the International Secretariat supported the delegations.

Kyrgyz Elections: A "Missed Opportunity"

Announcing the conclusions of the OSCE election observation mission to the parliamentary elections held in Kyrgyzstan on 16 December, Vice-President Kimmo Kiljunen expressed his personal disappointment at the "backsliding" noted in the elections process. Speaking at a press conference in Bishkek on 17 December, Mr. Kiljunen said that the elections failed to meet a number of OSCE commitments.

Noting that he had led the past two OSCE election observation missions to Kyrgyzstan, he stressed that "political pluralism which I have seen develop is undermined by this missed opportunity." Mr. Kiljunen was appointed as the OSCE Special Co-ordinator for the OSCE short-term election observation mission of some 250 observers, and also led the 26-member OSCE PA delegation, which included election observation veterans, Vice-President Joao Soares, Portugal, Jesus Lopez-Medel, Spain, and Christian Miesch, Switzerland.

In particular, the OSCE observation mission expressed concern at imbalance in media coverage of the election campaign. Also, a complicated new system for translating votes into parliamentary seats, which includes both national and regional thresholds, creates the real possibility of a situation in which no parties would be represented in parliament. The mission particularly expressed concern that no final decision had been made by the courts prior to election day regarding the precise interpretation of this provision.

The mission positively noted the extensive presence of domestic observers in polling stations on election day, which



helped to enhance transparency of the process. However, OSCE observers reported some election day violations including a lack of uniform application of procedures and ballot-box stuffing.

The OSCE PA mission worked in close co-operation with the long-term observation mission deployed by the OSCE/ODIHR. From the International Secretariat the delegation was accompanied by Ambassador Andreas Nothelle, Programme Officer Anna Chernova, and Press Officer Andreas Baker.