

OSCE PA Working Group on Belarus meets in Copenhagen to plan new activities

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Working Group on Belarus met in Copenhagen on Thursday, 7 February to discuss past and future activities of the group as well as political developments in Belarus.

Led by the Chair of the Working Group, Uta Zapf, Germany, the other participants were Cecilia Wigstrom, Sweden, Morten Hoeglund, Norway and Ambassador Hans-Jochen Schmidt, Head of the OSCE Office in Minsk, the capital of Belarus.

The participants in the Working Group expressed a wish to visit Minsk this spring and to follow-up on previous joint initiatives between the Group and the Belarusian parliament.

The Working Group also met in Copenhagen in January last year and then held a joint Seminar with the Belarusian delegation in Minsk in March. The seminar focused on Exploring the Opportunities for Belarus within the European Neighbourhood Policy.

Secretary General Spencer Oliver, Deputy Secretary

General Tina Schøn and Programme Officer Anna Chernova participated in the Copenhagen meeting from the International Secretariat.



Working Group Chair Uta Zapf, to the right, and Swedish parliamentarian Cecilia Wigstrom.

OSCE PA SG Oliver in St. Petersburg

Secretary General Spencer Oliver addressed a seminar on election observation hosted by the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the CIS on February 11-12 in St. Petersburg. The Seminar, third in a series of events on this subject sponsored by the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the CIS, discussed elections in the OSCE and CIS area and on the need for common standards for election observation. Secretary General Oliver explained the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's reasoning and methodology, including the Parliamentary Assembly's decision not to observe the Russian Presidential election next month. He emphasized the importance of Parliamentary observers due to their unparalleled experience, credibility and visibility in this area. Mr. Oliver also talked with CIS PA Secretary General Mikhail Krotov, Russian Central Election Chairman Vladimir Churov, and the Chairman of the CIS PA, Sergey Mironov. PA staffers Semyon Dzakahev and Anna Chernova also participated in the seminar.



Russian Central Election Commission Chairman Churov and Spencer Oliver discussed Election Observation at the St. Petersburg seminar.

OSCE PA new website

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly launched a new website on Tuesday, 12 February 2008.

The website, the Assembly's primary means of communication about its activities and its work, replaces the old site while the url address remains the same: www.oscepa.org.

The site has a new design and its content is organized differently and more dynamically. In addition, the site contains an entirely new section for media representatives.

Your comments and ideas are most welcome and should be directed to Klas Bergman, Director of Communications, or Andreas Baker, Programme/Press Officer, at the International Secretariat in Copenhagen.

Deployment to Armenia

This week, the first deployments took place by those who are scheduled to be part of the Assembly's election observation mission to monitor Armenia's presidential election on 19 February. Vice President Anne-Marie Lizin will head the Assembly's delegation. She has also been appointed Special Co-ordinator for all short-term observers by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office. Ms. Lizin will be joined by around 40 parliamentarians and supported by Deputy Secretary General Tina Schoen, Programme/Press Officer Andreas Baker and Logistics Officer Petra Jezkova from the International Secretariat.