

# News from Copenhagen

## Successful Winter Meeting concludes in Vienna

The seventh Winter Meeting of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly was held 21 and 22 February 2008 in Vienna before almost 240 parliamentarians from 48 of the 56 OSCE participating States.

The opening session was addressed by OSCE PA President Goran Lennmarker, the President of Austria's National Council, Barbara Prammer, and State Secretary Teija Tiilikainen, the special representative of the Finnish OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Foreign Minister Ilkka Kanerva.

"The parliamentary dimension is vital for the good health of the OSCE," said Ms. Tiilikainen in her speech. Ms. Tiilikainen particularly drew the Assembly's attention to three issues:

First, that the Finnish Chairmanship is determined to ensure continued OSCE engagement in Kosovo.

Second, the "continued dialogue on election-related issues among the participating States with the involvement of the OSCE PA is essential." The OSCE PA has "always played an important role in supporting OSCE election observation and we are grateful for the experience of parliamentarians in providing the necessary parliamentary dimension to what is an important and delicate process." She said that the Finnish Chairmanship plans to conduct a "structured dialogue" on election related issues.

Third, the Finnish Chairmanship urges the parties to continue a dialogue concerning the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) in order to seek a "resolution of outstanding differences."

In his introductory remarks, President Lennmarker underlined the importance of retaining the CFE Treaty and of the OSCE's continued presence in Kosovo. He thanked all those parliamentarians who have participated in the important task of election observation, which, he said, should be done both east and west of Vienna. He said the Assembly should make every effort to observe the U.S. elections in November. Mr. Lennmarker also underlined the importance of the



Assembly's Mediterranean partners and in this context he expressed his hope that Palestine would eventually become an OSCE partner.

The Assembly's Standing Committee was addressed by the OSCE Secretary General Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, who also answered questions from the parliamentarians.

Meeting in separate sessions, the General Committees heard reports by their Vice-Chairs on follow-up action undertaken by governments and the OSCE in response to the Assembly's previous declarations. The Committee sessions also provided an opportunity for the three Rapporteurs to discuss ideas for their reports which will be presented at the upcoming Annual Session in Astana in June and July. In addition, parliamentarians were briefed by senior officials from the OSCE governmental side, including the Chairman of the OSCE Permanent Council, Ambassador Anti Turunen; Knut Vollebaek, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities; Bernard Snoy, OSCE Economic and Environmental Co-ordinator; Miklos Haraszti, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, and Christian Strohal, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

"I believe," Mr. Vollebaek said, "parliaments and inter-parliamentary bodies need to be involved in our work rather than being mere spectators with no say. I believe that democratic accountability and parliamentary oversight ought to become a norm in international organizations, to the same extent as they are the norm in most of our own countries."

The Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, missile defence, and Kosovo were the topics of discussion during the Assembly's special debate on Friday, 22 February.

The two-day annual Winter Meeting is the second largest conference on the Assembly's conference calendar after the Annual Session, which this year will be held in Kazakhstan's capital Astana.



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