



President Lenmarker visits Iceland

OSCE PA President Goran Lenmarker paid an official visit to Iceland 21-22 April. In the meetings, Mr. Lenmarker briefed his interlocutors about the work done by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. He stressed the importance of strengthening parliamentary input into the Governmental structures of the OSCE, the leading role of the Assembly in OSCE election observation missions, and the importance of parliamentary diplomacy.

Mr. Lenmarker particularly expressed appreciation for the active role played by the Icelandic Delegation within the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and thanked Petur Blondal for his efforts as Special Representative on the OSCE Budget.

Mr. Lenmarker and Members of the Icelandic Parliament (both Foreign Affairs Committee and OSCE PA Delegation) discussed the role that Nordic Parliamentarians can play in promoting democracy, human rights protection as well as the rule of law throughout the OSCE area and the preparations for the upcoming Annual Session in Astana, Kazakhstan in June/July.

Members of the Icelandic Parliament raised questions and discussed several current issues, including the political situation and upcoming elections in Georgia, the threat related to the unresolved conflicts in the OSCE area, the future of Kosovo, the Assembly's increased focus on and engagement with Central Asia, and the ongoing crisis regarding the CFE Treaty. The future role of the OSCE in the framework of Europe's increasing institutionalization was also discussed.

During his visit, Mr. Lenmarker met with leading representatives of both the Icelandic government and the parliament (Althingi), including Prime Minister Geir H. Harde, Foreign Minister Ingibjorg Solrun Gisladottir, and the Speaker of the Althingi Sturla Bodvarsson. Mr. Lenmarker was accompanied on the visit by Tina Schoen, OSCE PA Deputy Secretary General, and Ann-Sofi Lindenbaum, Adviser and Secretary of the Swedish Delegation to the OSCE PA.

PA participates in Heads of Missions Meeting in Serbia

OSCE PA Special Representative on South East Europe Roberto Battelli (Slovenia) and Ambassador Andreas Nothelle from the Vienna Liaison Office participated in this year's OSCE regional Heads of Missions Meeting in Vršac, Serbia, from 20 to 22 April 2008.

Together with representatives of the present and the incoming Chairmanship of the OSCE, Finland and Greece, the OSCE Secretariat and the Institutions, the participants discussed a variety of issues concerning the region, in particular the consequences of Kosovo's Declaration of Independence, problems of refugees and displaced persons, and regional cooperation. Keynotes by former Serbian Foreign Minister Goran Svilanovic and UNHCR Deputy Director for Europe Udo Janz were highlights of the intensive debates.

In light of the different approaches of participating States towards the status of Kosovo, the particular problem for the OSCE is how to implement what is seen to be the "status-neutral" position of the organization in its on-going activities. This affects in particular the co-operation of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo with the authorities in Belgrade and Pristina, the future of UNMIK, and the extent to which the OSCE will be able to observe the upcoming elections in Serbia.

The latter point was also discussed between Roberto Battelli and the ODIHR team, which has started to observe the Serbian elections. The meeting with the ODIHR team took place in Belgrade as part of the preparatory visits by Roberto Battelli, who will head the OSCE PA's election observation in the country. It complemented the recent two-day pre-assessment visit of the PA to Serbia. The PA monitoring team will be deployed starting from 6 May.

Belarusian Ambassador meets with PA Secretary General

Ambassador of the Republic of Belarus, Andrei Grinkevich, visited the OSCE PA Secretariat on 23 April to discuss parliamentary co-operation between the PA and the Parliament of Belarus. The Ambassador informed Secretary General Spencer Oliver of the active participation of Belarusian parliamentarians at the upcoming OSCE PA Annual Session in Astana. The co-operation and activities of the OSCE PA Working Group on Belarus was positively noted, including preparations for the next joint seminar of the Group on Foreign Direct Investment, tentatively scheduled to take place in Minsk on 12 June 2008. Preparations for the upcoming parliamentary elections in Belarus this Fall, expected to be observed by the OSCE, were also discussed.