

President Soares holds meetings in Vienna

OSCE PA President Joao Soares addressed the OSCE Permanent Council and had a series of meetings with relevant officials and ambassadors during a visit to Vienna on Thursday, 13 November.

Meeting with the President of the Austrian Parliament, Ms. Barbara Prammer, President Soares exchanged views on the work of the Assembly and key issues on the OSCE agenda. They discussed the increasing importance of international parliamentary work, as well as the needed democratic footing that inter-parliamentary bodies provide to international institutions. Mr. Soares welcomed the strong support of the Austrian Parliament for the work of the Assembly, in particular the support it offers during the annual Winter Meeting in the Austrian capital.

Meeting with OSCE Ambassadors, Mr. Soares took the opportunity to outline a number of his priorities as President of the parliamentary dimension of the Organization and underlined the importance of the OSCE within the European security architecture. The OSCE, he said, should remain in the center of security discussions, and he welcomed the French President Nicolas Sarkozy's recent idea to hold an OSCE Summit meeting in the near future.

President Soares also stressed the key role of the Parliamentary Assembly and noted that the OSCE PA brings an important democratic aspect to the Organization as well as provides fresh perspectives and contributes to



President Joao Soares addresses the Permanent Council in Vienna

international understanding by holding discussions such as the one about the crisis in Georgia during the recent Toronto Fall Meetings.

Mr. Soares reiterated that parliamentarians, with their unmatched credibility and authority regarding elections, would continue to play the leading role in OSCE election observation, as called for in the 1997 Co-operation Agreement. Members of Parliament provide important visibility to the OSCE, he added. The President also met with members of the OSCE Secretariat, including the Special Representative for Combating Human Trafficking, Ms. Eva Biaudet.

Mr. Soares was accompanied by Secretary General Spencer Oliver, Presidential Advisor Andreas Baker, and by Advisor Nuno Paixao from the Portuguese Parliament.

Kiljunen speaks at OSCE-Afghanistan Conference in Kabul

OSCE PA Special Representative for Central Asia and Vice-President Kimmo Kiljunen (Finland) participated in the 2008 OSCE-Afghanistan Conference on Strengthening Co-operation between the OSCE and its Asian Partners to Address Challenges to Security, held in Kabul 9-10 November.

Mr. Kiljunen highlighted the role of parliamentarians in the OSCE, including election observation and regional co-operation. He moderated a session of the conference on border security and management. The OSCE is working on several projects with participating OSCE states bordering Afghanistan, primarily in the field of border management.

While in Kabul, Mr. Kiljunen met with members of the Afghan parliament to exchange views on the situation in the country and prospects for regional co-operation with neighboring Central Asian OSCE States. He invited the Afghan parliamentarians to observe the upcoming OSCE PA Winter Meeting in Vienna. Mr. Kiljunen was accompanied by Programme Officer Anna Chernova.

Habsburg-Douglas represents PA at OSCE Human Dimension Meeting

Walburga Habsburg-Douglas, Vice-Chair of the OSCE PA's Third Committee and Head of the Swedish Delegation, underlined in her keynote address at the OSCE's Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Democratic Lawmaking the importance that the Assembly has always attached to the principle of transparency.

Representing the OSCE PA, Ms. Habsburg-Douglas recalled that transparency, in fact, was the theme of this year's Annual Session and reminded the participants at the meeting in Vienna 6-7 November that legislation essentially is a prerogative of parliamentarians. She also pointed out that effective legislation must take into consideration the views of all stakeholders.

OSCE PA Special Representative Andreas Nothelle said that while it is important in lawmaking to take into account the interests of civil society groups, the decisions must remain in the hands of constitutional bodies and the consultative process does not entitle lobby groups to have their proposals included in the text of documents.