



Left to right: Chair of the Second Committee Petros Efthymiou, OSCE PA Secretary General Spencer Oliver, Speaker of the Greek Parliament Dimitrios Sioufas, OSCE PA President Joao Soares, and Panagiotis Skandalakis, Head of the Greek Delegation

## OSCE PA President addresses NATO PA and visits Greece

OSCE PA President Joao Soares addressed the Plenary Session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and held talks in Greece with the incoming OSCE Chair-in-Office on 18 and 19 November, respectively.

In his address to the NATO PA in Valencia, Spain, President Soares highlighted the common work of the two assemblies and encouraged continued co-operation both in field work and election observation.

“Both of our organizations have played, and still play, an essential role in the security infrastructure of Europe,” he said. “We must continue working together to create a secure Europe without divisions. The Cold War is a thing of the past, and we must use modern thinking to overcome our current challenges.”

Mr. Soares urged an inclusive approach to problems, based on the spirit of Helsinki. He said that the OSCE, as the most flexible and responsive Euro-Atlantic body, is the primary instrument for early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation in the region.

He met with outgoing NATO PA President Jose Lello, and the newly elected President, John Tanner.

In Athens, President Soares met with the Foreign Minister of Greece and next year’s OSCE Chair-in-Office, Dora Bakoyannis, as well as with the leadership of the Greek Parliament. High on the agenda during the talks was the OSCE agenda for the coming year.

Mr. Soares and Ms. Bakoyannis considered the prospects for the OSCE, and the President noted that this was a very important time for the OSCE. He underlined that the OSCE is best placed to accommodate ongoing discussions regarding security architecture in Europe and was open to the idea of an OSCE summit meeting.

Mr. Soares highlighted the added value of parliamentary

involvement in the work of the OSCE, noting that not only do parliamentarians provide democratic legitimacy to the OSCE, but also regularly provide fresh ideas and initiatives. In the discussion about OSCE election observations, Mr. Soares stated that parliamentarians provide unmatched credibility to the OSCE’s efforts in this field and will continue to play the leading role.

The President also met with the Speaker of the Parliament of Greece, Dimitrios Sioufas, and with the Head of the Greek OSCE PA Delegation, Panagiotis Skandalakis, and the Chair of the OSCE PA’s Second Committee, Petros Efthymiou. He thanked them for their active work in the Assembly and welcomed the willingness of the Greek Parliament to host the OSCE PA Fall Meetings in October 2009, for which preparations are well underway.

President Soares was accompanied on the trip by Secretary General Spencer Oliver and Presidential Advisor Andreas Baker from the International Secretariat and by Advisor Nuno Paixao from the Portuguese Parliament.

### OSCE PA Winter Meeting: 19-20 February

The Winter Meeting of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, comprising the meetings of the Standing Committee and the three General Committees, will take place 19-20 February 2009 in the Congress Center Hofburg, Heldenplatz, 1014 Vienna, Austria.

The draft schedule of the meetings will be made available in due time.

The Austrian Parliament will kindly offer a reception for Members of the Parliamentary Assembly on Thursday, 19 February at the end of the meeting.

For more information, and to register, please visit [www.oscepa.org](http://www.oscepa.org). The deadline for registering is **19 January 2009**.