

Alcee Hastings visits Mediterranean Partners



Alcee Hastings addresses the recent Mediterranean Forum held in Toronto

Alcee L. Hastings, Chairman of the United States Helsinki Commission and Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs for the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, recently concluded a visit to the Mediterranean Partner States.

From 28 November to 12 December Mr. Hastings traveled to Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Israel, where he met with parliamentarians and senior government officials to discuss greater OSCE engagement by the Mediterranean Partners, reinvigoration of the Barcelona Process through the new Union for the Mediterranean, the Middle East peace process, resolution of the disputed Western Sahara, and the Iraqi refugee humanitarian crisis.

Mr. Hastings is scheduled to brief OSCE PA President Joao Soares in Lisbon on 11 December on the conclusions of his meetings and what efforts must be taken to bring about greater engagement of the Mediterranean Partners in the framework of the Parliamentary Assembly.

Also, the U.S. Helsinki Commission, chaired by Mr. Hastings, plans to host a meeting of the Mediterranean Partners in Washington in the coming months in an effort to direct the Parliamentary Assembly as well as the U.S. Congress on how to improve bilateral relations.

In particular, Mr. Hastings intends to bring together the Mediterranean Partners to begin working together on how best to solve problems faced in the region.

Mr. Hastings noted, "I hope that this meeting will help foster greater engagement by the Mediterranean Partners and the Parliamentary Assembly. It is imperative that we move forward together and work to seek clarity and understanding on the vexing problems we face on the global stage."

Kimmo Kiljunen travels to Tajikistan

OSCE PA Special Representative for Central Asia and Vice-President Kimmo Kiljunen (Finland) traveled to Dushanbe 27-28 November 2008 to discuss regional co-operation with the Parliament of Tajikistan.

Tajikistan is scheduled to host the next regional parliamentary seminar as a follow-up to a regional event hosted by the Norwegian Parliament in December 2007.

During meetings with the OSCE Office in Tajikistan, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and with Members of Parliament, including Safar Safarov, First Deputy Speaker of the Lower Chamber of Parliament and Head of the Tajik Delegation to the OSCE PA, it was agreed that the proposed Seminar would focus on labor migration and would be held in Dushanbe in March/April 2009.

The Seminar is expected to bring together parliamentarians from across the OSCE area, including the Nordic parliaments, Central Asia, Russia, Turkey, and others, including the Parliament of Afghanistan, which would be invited to observe the process as an OSCE Partner for Co-operation.

During his visit, Mr. Kiljunen was briefed by the OSCE Office in Tajikistan and also met with representatives of embassies of OSCE countries. In order to promote greater co-ordination of regional efforts, he met with other international organizations including the United Nations Development Programme and the European Commission.

The visit was organized in close co-operation with the OSCE Office in Tajikistan. Mr. Kiljunen was accompanied by Programme Officer Anna Chernova.

Deadlines Reminder

The International Secretariat is currently compiling research on follow-up action to the Annual Session in Astana, which is intended to support the work of the Vice-Chairs of the three General Committees in preparing their reports to be presented at the Winter Meeting.

We kindly ask Delegations to submit completed follow-up questionnaires to Presidential Advisor Andreas Baker (andreas.baker@oscepa.dk) by **31 December**, or to contact him with any questions.

Also, please keep in mind that the deadline for registering for the Winter Meeting is **19 January**. Registration forms are available at www.oscepa.org.