

President Soares outlines OSCE PA themes for 2009

Emphasizing that the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly must “continue to engage with the most pressing topics facing the international community,” OSCE PA President Joao Soares recently made public the themes for Assembly meetings in 2009, which were decided in consultation with a number of OSCE PA Members.

In a letter sent to OSCE PA Bureau Members on 18 December, Mr. Soares announced that the topic of the special debate of the OSCE PA Winter Meeting, scheduled for 19-20 February, will be “the proposal for a new European Security Architecture.”

Mr. Soares has underlined that the OSCE is best placed to accommodate ongoing discussions regarding the security architecture of Europe and has noted that the Parliamentary Assembly is particularly well-suited to facilitate dialogue on this important topic.

At the OSCE PA’s Economic Conference in Dublin

from 27 to 29 May, the focus will be on the world financial crisis, with Members hearing from a variety of experts and policymakers.

The theme of the Annual Session, to be held in Vilnius from 29 June to 3 July, will be “The OSCE: Addressing New Security Challenges” and the Fall Meetings, to be held in Athens from 9 to 11 October, will focus on “Energy Security and Environment.”

In his letter to the Bureau Members, President Soares expressed his hope “that this range of topics will enable us to all continue our dialogue on pressing issues in a timely manner.”

Next week Secretary General Spencer Oliver and Deputy Secretary General Tina Schøn will participate in the Annual Meeting of the Chairmanship-in-Office, to be held in Vienna in conjunction with the Annual Meeting of the Heads of Field Operations and Institutions.

Assembly Officer Hilda Solis named U.S. Secretary of Labor



Hilda Solis addresses the OSCE PA's Winter Meeting, February 2008

Congresswoman Hilda Solis, Member of the U.S. Delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and Chairperson of its General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions, has been named Secretary of Labor in the cabinet of U.S. President-elect Barack Obama.

With her Senate confirmation hearings set to begin on 9 January, Ms. Solis, Democrat from California, is the first Hispanic American to be nominated as Secretary of Labor. She is considered a strong labor advocate and has also been a major proponent of environmentally friendly industries, having sponsored the Green Jobs Act in 2007.

Ms. Solis is a member of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, co-chaired by Senator Benjamin Cardin and Congressman Alcee Hastings, and has also been an active member of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, particularly on matters pertaining to the Third Committee.

As the OSCE PA’s Special Representative on Migration, Ms. Solis brought her personal experience to the endeavors of the OSCE on the issue of migration. Last May, she addressed a hearing in Los Angeles in which she noted the positive example set by the city for all OSCE participating States.

“Part of my mandate as OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Special Representative on Migration,” Ms. Solis said, “is to provide the OSCE and Member Delegations to the OSCE PA with policy recommendations to address migration issues.” With its diverse migrant communities, there is no city “more fitting to start that dialogue than Los Angeles,” she said.

At the 17th Annual Session in Astana, Ms. Solis was elected Chairperson of the OSCE PA’s Third General Committee. The current Vice-Chair of the committee, Walburga Habsburg Douglas, will serve as Acting Chair until a new Chair is elected at the Assembly’s 18th Annual Session this summer in Vilnius, Lithuania.

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

To register, please visit www.oscepa.org. The deadline for registering is **19 January 2009**.