

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Winter Meeting set to discuss European security architecture

Over 270 parliamentarians from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly are scheduled to attend the Eighth Winter Meeting in Vienna 19-20 February, where the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Greece's Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis, will address the opening session on Thursday morning, 19 February.

Other speakers include the President of the Austrian Nationalrat, Barbara Prammer; the President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, U.S. Congressman, John Tanner; and OSCE PA President Joao Soares.

One of the highlights during the Winter Meeting will be a special debate on Friday morning, 20 February, about the initiatives by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and French President Nicolas Sarkozy for new European security arrangements. The OSCE parliamentarians will hear from Alexander Groushko, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation; Veronique Bujon-Barre, Deputy Director for Political and Security Affairs of the French Foreign Ministry; and OSCE PA President Joao Soares.

The debate, as other sessions and the meetings of the three General Committees during the Winter Meeting, is open to the press.

During the closing session on 20 February, the delegates will hear presentations by the OSCE PA's Special Representative on Gender Issues, OSCE PA Vice-President Tone Tingsgaard, and by Panos Kammenos, Greek Vice Minister of Mercantile Marine, Aegean & Island Policy, on "Piracy As a New Security Threat."

The Winter Meeting's agenda also includes a special presentation on Kazakhstan's preparations for its OSCE Chairmanship in 2010 by the Kazakh delegation, led by its head of delegation and OSCE PA Vice President, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev.

The OSCE PA Winter Meeting, addressed by the top officials of the OSCE, including the Secretary General and Heads of Institutions, is the second largest event in the OSCE PA calendar, topped only by the Annual Session, which takes place in Vilnius, Lithuania from 29 June to 3 July.

Soares and Lennmarker conclude visits to Moldova and the Caucasus

OSCE PA President Joao Soares and Goran Lennmarker, Special Representative on the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict and Special Envoy on the Conflict in Georgia, concluded their respective visits last week to Moldova and the Caucasus.

In a statement at a press conference in Chisinau on 12 February, Mr. Soares said that the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly will closely watch the upcoming elections in Moldova, and he underlined the importance of an open and transparent electoral process. "It is my hope," he said, "that this election will not only be free, but also be fair."

In meetings with officials in both Chisinau and Tiraspol involved in resolving the status of Transnistria, the delegation encouraged continued co-operation in confidence-building measures between the two sides.

"It was a pleasure to see first-hand the excellent work being conducted by the OSCE Mission in supporting confidence-building measures between experts from both sides. Common problems require common solutions," said President Soares.

President Emeritus Goran Lennmarker finished his week-long visit to all three countries in the South Caucasus on 14 February in Azerbaijan with a series of meetings with the President of Azerbaijan, the Speaker of Parliament, the Foreign Minister, the Delegation to the OSCE PA and the OSCE Office in Baku.

Mr. Lennmarker said that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict could be solved this year, and he underlined the importance of giving refugees and internally displaced persons the possibility to return.



Peter Juel Jensen is greeted by OSCE PA Secretary General Spencer Oliver

Danish Head of Delegation visits OSCE PA Secretariat

Peter Juel Jensen, the new Head of the Danish Delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, visited the International Secretariat in Copenhagen on 16 February. He was accompanied by the delegation's new secretary, Eva Esmarch.

A teacher by profession, Mr. Juel Jensen has been a member of the Danish Parliament since 2007, representing the island of Bornholm and the Liberal party (Venstre).

Secretary General Spencer Oliver briefed the visitors on the Assembly's activities for the next few months, including this week's Winter Meeting. Also participating in the talks were the two Deputy Secretaries General, Tina Schoen and Gustavo Pallares, Director of Communications Klas Bergman, and Senior Counsellor Semyon Dzakhayev.