

OSCE Parliamentarians to meet in Vilnius on new security challenges

Strengthening and reforming the OSCE, promoting human rights and civil liberties, energy and food security, climate change, freedom of expression, and arms control are some of the issues that will be considered at the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's 18th Annual Session in Lithuania's capital Vilnius 29 June to 3 July.

Meeting for the first time in a Baltic country, over 250 Members of Parliaments from 49 OSCE countries are expected to participate in the Session, whose main theme is "The OSCE: Addressing New Security Challenges."

The call for strengthening and reforming the OSCE comes in a resolution with OSCE PA President Joao Soares (Portugal) as principal sponsor. It urges the OSCE participating States to recommit to a genuine and transparent political dialogue, calls on the OSCE Permanent Council to open up its meetings to the press and the public, and recommends that the OSCE modifies its consensus rule. It also calls for full implementation of the 1997 Co-operation Agreement, defining modalities for OSCE election observation activities.

The resolution is one of 24 to be debated, pending approval from the Assembly's Standing Committee. The others include how to promote human rights and civil liberties in the OSCE area, energy security and co-operation, labour migration, how

to strengthen OSCE engagement on freedom of opinion and expression, water management, climate change, abolition of the death penalty, Afghanistan, and arms control.

In addition, two of the Assembly's main Committees will consider resolutions about the financial and social consequences of the world's financial crisis, presented by Ivor Callely (Ireland) and Natalia Karpovich (Russia), respectively. The first Committee will consider a resolution on food security, presented by Riccardo Migliori (Italy).

The Annual Session will adopt a final document, called the Vilnius Declaration, which will include recommendations on all considered issues.

Speakers at the Session include Valdas Adamkus, President of Lithuania; Arunas Valinskas, Speaker of Parliament of Lithuania; Joao Soares, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President; Dora Bakoyannis, Foreign Minister of Greece, and Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE; Lluís De Puig, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe; Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, OSCE Secretary General.

Elections will be held for Officers of the Assembly and its three General Committees.



President Soares concludes visit to Tajikistan

On Monday 15 June, President Soares concluded his three-country visit to Central Asia in Tajikistan.

In the capital Dushanbe, the President met with the Chairmen of the Parliament, Mahmadsaid Ubaidulloev and Saidullo Hairulloev; the Minister of Foreign Affairs Hamrokhon Zarifi; the delegation of Tajikistan to the OSCE PA, as well as representatives of political parties and civil society. He received a full briefing on the work of the OSCE Office in Tajikistan, headed by Ambassador Vladimir Pryakhin.

Meeting with the delegation of Tajikistan to the Assembly, the President welcomed active work by the delegation, including during the upcoming Annual Session in Vilnius. He encouraged more regional co-operation in tackling the security challenges in Central Asia.

"Migration, increasing trade and tackling organized crime and drug trafficking all require common approaches. The OSCE's challenges do not stop here at the Afghan border," said President Soares at a border checkpoint in the southern

Khatlon region.

Mr. Soares also took the opportunity to visit several OSCE projects and offices throughout Tajikistan, including in Kurgan-Tyube and Khorog. The projects viewed included a Women's Resource Centre and a Labour Migration Centre in the south of the country. The President also visited the future Khorog campus of the University of Central Asia, being built by the Aga Khan Development Network in Tajikistan, and welcomed co-operation between the OSCE and the Aga Khan foundation.

The week-long visit to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan was intended to support the work of the OSCE field missions in Central Asia and encourage active parliamentary participation from the region in the OSCE PA. Mr. Soares was accompanied by Presidential Adviser Andreas Baker and Programme Office Anna Chernova from the International Secretariat and Nuno Paixao from the Portuguese Parliament.