

## Parliamentary Assembly calls for strengthening the OSCE



Voting in plenary session

The 18th Annual Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, held in Vilnius from 29 June to 3 July, concluded with adoption of the Vilnius Declaration, outlining a set of policy recommendations to the OSCE and its participating States.

The Declaration, voted on by parliamentarians from 50 OSCE countries, contains 28 resolutions and will now be forwarded to all governments and parliaments of the OSCE participating States.

The leading resolution, sponsored by President Joao Soares and other leaders of the Assembly, calls for strengthening the OSCE in order to enhance its legitimacy and political relevance. Another important resolution relates to election observation. It emphasizes the importance of OSCE election observation and calls on participating States to fully implement the 1990 Copenhagen Commitments for democratic elections.

Other resolutions deal with food security in the OSCE area, the world financial crisis and its social consequences, Iran, Afghanistan, human rights and civil liberties, arms control and disarmament in Europe, labour migration in Central Asia,

energy security, climate change, water management, freedom of expression on the Internet, and a moratorium on the death penalty.

On food security, the Declaration emphasizes that this is a new and major challenge to security in the OSCE area, and that it must become a top priority on the OSCE agenda. On the world financial crisis, the Declaration calls for greater co-ordination among OSCE participating States in the development of a coherent response to the crisis.

The Declaration expresses grave concern about the continuing violence in Iran, condemns the arrests of Iranian employees working at the British Embassy in Tehran, and deplores the arrests and intimidation of foreign and domestic journalists working in Iran. The resolution on Afghanistan, the Declaration urges the OSCE to continue to promote Afghanistan's increasing participation in the activities of the OSCE.

The Declaration is available in English, Russian and French on the Assembly's website, [www.oscepa.org](http://www.oscepa.org), as is a video webcast of the entire Annual Session.

## President Soares re-elected; three new Vice-Presidents elected

The Annual Session unanimously elected Joao Soares (Portugal) to a second one-year term as President of the Assembly.

It also re-elected Ben Cardin (United States) as Vice-President and elected three new Vice-Presidents: Petros Efthymiou (Greece), Jean-Charles Gardetto (Monaco), and Isabel Pozuelo (Spain).

Roberto Battelli (Slovenia) was elected as the new Treasurer.

The Assembly's three Committees also voted on new



Joao Soares and Jerry Grafstein

officers for the coming year. They are:

First Committee: Chair: Consiglio Di Nino (Canada); Vice-Chair: Canan Kalsin (Turkey); Rapporteur: Riccardo Migliori (Italy).

Second Committee: Chair: Roland Blum (France); Vice-Chair: Ivor Callely (Ireland); Rapporteur: Serhiy Shevchuk (Ukraine).

Third Committee: Chair: Walburga Habsburg Douglas (Sweden); Vice-Chair: Robert Aderholt (United States); Rapporteur: Matteo Mecacci (Italy).