

Grossruck conducts post-election visit to Albania

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Vice-President Wolfgang Grossruck (Austria) visited Albania from 20 to 23 August to assess the situation in the country following the 28 June parliamentary elections.

After holding meetings with the main state actors and party leaders, Mr. Grossruck said that the elections had been the best that have ever been held in Albania, stressing in particular that they were much better than those held in 2005. However, he pointed out that there was still considerable room for improvement.

“I invite all the Albanian politicians to join together and co-operate in the best interests of the country,” he said. “The Electoral Code was transparent and very good, and the 28 June electoral process was much more professional.”

Because the extensive counting procedure following the elections prevented the International Election Observation Mission from fully assessing the country’s compliance with OSCE commitments, Mr. Grossruck’s visit was necessary to make this assessment. The PA’s final report, based partly on this visit, will be published shortly, Mr. Grossruck announced.

Over the course of three days, Mr. Grossruck met with the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, and the Assembly Speaker, as well as with the Chair of the largest opposition party and Mayor of Tirana, the leader of the prospective coalition partner, and the Chair of the Central Election Commission. Christian Miesch (Switzerland) also participated in the talks.



OSCE PA Vice-President Wolfgang Grossruck with the Deputy Mayor of Fushe Arrez

In addition to his election-related activities, Vice-President Grossruck visited the city of Shkoder, holding extensive talks with the mayor, and paid a visit to a missionary station of Franciscan nuns, who have built up a number of training and supply projects for the poor in the mountain areas around the town of Fushe Arrez, with the support of Austrian, German and Italian donors.

Finally, he inspected a copper mine in the area which appears to be having detrimental effects on the environment.

During his visit, Mr. Grossruck was accompanied by Ambassador Andreas Nothelle from the PA’s Vienna Liaison Office and Lukas Mussi from the Austrian Parliament.

OSCE PA participates in Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly was represented at the 18th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference, held from 30 August to 1 September in Nyborg, Denmark, by Deputy Head of the Danish Delegation Jeppe Kofod, OSCE PA Secretary General Spencer Oliver and Deputy Secretary General Tina Schøn.

The conference, hosted by the Danish Parliament, was entitled “New Security Challenges” and dealt with a variety of issues of concern to the Baltic Sea States.

Discussions focused on enhancing co-operation in the Baltic Sea in order to meet new security challenges such as energy shortages, climate change, the global economic crisis, maritime safety and security, and migration. Also discussed was co-operation in the fight against transnational organized crime including efforts to combat the practice of trafficking in human beings.

The Speaker of the Danish Parliament, Thor Pedersen, opened the conference which also heard a report by the OSCE’s Special Representative on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Ms. Eva Biaudet.

2009 Fall Meetings to be held in Athens

OSCE Parliamentarians will gather from 9 to 12 October in Athens to discuss “Energy Security and Environment” during the annual OSCE PA Fall Meetings.

Some 200 Members of Parliaments are expected to participate in the meetings, which will be addressed by senior guests including the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Greek Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis; President of the Greek Parliament, Dimitrios Sioufas; and OSCE Secretary General Marc Perrin de Brichambaut.

In three focused sessions, the Parliamentary Conference on Energy and Security will address Regional Co-operation in Energy Security; Climate and Environmental Policy – the Road to Copenhagen; and Optimal Utilization of Natural Resources for Human Security. The Fall Meetings also include a Mediterranean Forum which will consider prospects and challenges for the OSCE Mediterranean dimension, as well as a meeting of the Standing Committee.

The Athens meetings come one year after the Fall Meetings in Toronto, 2008. Each year the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly organizes a set of Fall Meetings to enhance inter-parliamentary dialogue on important topics related to OSCE commitments and values.