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President Soares holds talks in Moscow



Boris Gryzlov and Aleksander Kozlovskiy meeting with Joao Soares and Spencer Oliver

OSCE PA President Joao Soares and Secretary General Spencer Oliver visited Moscow 23 and 24 November on the invitation of Boris Gryzlov, Chairman of the Russian State Duma and President of the Parliament Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation (PABSEC).

Mr. Soares and Mr. Oliver participated in the 34th Plenary Assembly of the PABSEC and met with Mr. Gryzlov as well as with the head of the Russian delegation to the OSCE PA, Alexander Kozlovskiy, and the Chairman of the Duma's Foreign Affairs Committee, Konstantin Kosachev.

The President was informed about Russian views in key Assembly activities and fields of work. The interlocutors discussed new political realities in the OSCE area, as well as ways to improve the effectiveness of the Organization.

Mr. Soares noted that the Russian Federation has played an important role in the OSCE and stressed the necessity of further active participation of the Russian delegation in all endeavors of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

President Soares and Secretary General Spencer Oliver also met with Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov for an exchange of views on the political situation in the OSCE area on the eve of the Ministerial Council in Athens and on the issues of a new security architecture for Europe, the Corfu process, election observation and the OSCE PA's future plans.

The President was informed about the Russian Federation's position regarding further development of the OSCE in the security, political, economic and human dimension fields, including the need to address continuing conflicts, particularly in the South Caucasus. Participants in the talks also discussed Kazakhstan's proposal to hold an OSCE Summit in 2010. They agreed on the need for reform of the OSCE, including oversight of OSCE institutions and field missions, as well as improvement in election observation activity.

Mr. Soares and Mr. Oliver were accompanied by Senior Counsellor Semyon Dzakhaev from the International Secretariat and Portuguese Parliamentary Advisor, Nuno Paixao.

Soares addresses OSCE Permanent Council and PACE

President Joao Soares visited Vienna and Bern on 19 and 20 November to address the OSCE Permanent Council and Standing Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE).

In Vienna, Mr. Soares outlined his priorities, including the need for greater transparency in the OSCE and a deepening dialogue on European security issues. All OSCE participating States must embrace this unique opportunity, he said.

The OSCE should be "at the forefront of change," noting that it is not in line with the Helsinki spirit that the Permanent Council conducts its work behind closed doors. He said "PC meetings need to open up and allow for the presence of the press and the interested public."

Commending the Greek Chairmanship for its initiatives and stewardship, he also pleaded for leaving Cold War thinking behind and for reviving the spirit of Helsinki.

In his speech, which was his second time addressing the Permanent Council as OSCE PA President, Mr. Soares also expressed his hope that the opportunity offered by the Corfu

Process will be used to consider improved transparency within the OSCE. As is the case in each democratic participating State, "parliamentary oversight is vital in international organizations, as we must always be accountable to the people we serve and whose tax money we spend."

Emphasizing his strong belief in the Organization, Mr. Soares nevertheless concluded that "the OSCE is in need of revival." The PA, he said, "has regularly encouraged an increase in high-level political dialogue on the OSCE."

Meeting with the PACE leadership in Bern, he touched on how the PACE and OSCE PA can complement each other's work. He also outlined efforts that the PA has made to improve transparency within the OSCE and discussed the OSCE's strong field work. In the ensuing exchange of views, Mr. Soares answered questions related to work in Belarus, oversight of budgets, and co-operation on election observation.

The President was accompanied by Secretary General Spencer Oliver, Presidential Advisor Andreas Baker and Advisor Nuno Paixao.