

News from Copenhagen

Migliori appoints Soares to lead Rules Sub-Committee

In accordance with Rule 45 of the OSCE PA Rules of Procedure, President Riccardo Migliori (Italy) has appointed nine experienced OSCE Parliamentarians to examine the Assembly's Rules of Procedure and consider proposed changes to improve the efficiency of the PA's work.

Former OSCE PA President Joao Soares will chair the Rules Sub-Committee, which will include Ilkka Kanerva, Head of the Finnish Delegation; François-Xavier de Donnea, Head of the Belgian Delegation; Doris Barnett, Head of the German Delegation; OSCE PA Treasurer Roberto Battelli; Vice-President Robert Aderholt of the U.S.; Susanne Bratli, Vice-Chair of the First Committee; Gordana Comic, Deputy

Head of the Serbian Delegation; and Lord Peter Bowness of the UK, who has chaired the Drafting Committee during recent Annual Sessions and who has been particularly active in suggesting more efficient procedures for the PA's work.

The Sub-Committee is expected to meet in conjunction with the OSCE PA Fall Meetings in Tirana on 5-7 October. It will consider recently proposed Rules changes as well as recommendations from the OSCE PA International Secretariat and other proposals which may be put forward for consideration. Senior Counsellor Semyon Dzakhaev will be responsible for co-ordinating the Sub-Committee's work from the International Secretariat.

Grossruck, Mecacci speak at human dimension meeting in Vienna



Wolfgang Grossruck and Andreas Nothelle at SHDM in Vienna.

Assembly Vice-President Wolfgang Grossruck (Austria) and the chairman of the PA's Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions, Matteo Mecacci (Italy), participated in the OSCE's Supple-

mentary Human Dimension Meeting on Elections and Election Observation in Vienna on 12-13 July.

Grossruck, who led the delegation, underlined the PA's many years of experience in election observation. "When democratic systems are not working properly, when citizens are hindered to express their will in a free and fair procedure, and when they cannot resort to effective judicial remedies in

their own country, then we have to state this in no uncertain terms," he said.

Grossruck emphasized that – while being clear when denouncing breaches – due respect for the sovereignty of the participating States makes it imperative for observers to be diligent in their work and to use an impeccable and credible observation methodology.

In the session on election observation and the electoral cycle, Mecacci referred to the discussions about Belarus that had taken place during the Annual Session in Monaco. He deplored the restrictions on the free movement of Belarusian human rights activists and reminded the audience that in most countries the core responsibility for elections lies with the parliaments. He also underlined the importance of the 1997 OSCE Co-operation Agreement.

During the meeting, the delegation was assisted by Ambassador Andreas Nothelle, Roberto Montella and Marc Carillet of the Vienna Liaison Office.

PA participates in visit to Belarus ahead of elections

OSCE PA Programme Director Anna Chernova this week participated in an OSCE/ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission (NAM) to Belarus in preparation for parliamentary elections scheduled for 23 September. Belarus issued an official invitation to the OSCE observers, without restrictions, on 6 July.

Meeting with election officials, parliamentarians, political parties and movements (registered and unregistered), representatives of the presidential administration, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Information and Ministry of Justice, as well as state media, independent journalists and NGOs, the NAM is assessing the pre-election environment and the preparations for the parliamentary elections. Based on this assessment, the ODIHR will determine whether to deploy an election observation mission.

President Riccardo Migliori called the mission "a crucial moment of our activity" in announcing the Belarus election observation in his inaugural address in Monaco. He has appointed Third Committee Chair Matteo Mecacci (Italy) to lead the Assembly's election observation mission.

In meetings this week, officials have stated their willingness to co-operate with an OSCE election observation mission.

In a resolution on Belarus adopted at the OSCE PA's Annual Session in Monaco on 9 July, the Assembly expressed its expectation that Belarus "will respect its OSCE commitments, including the 1990 Copenhagen Document, in particular with regard to the upcoming parliamentary elections."

The Assembly's resolution also "calls on the Government of Belarus to release and exonerate all political prisoners in Belarus."