

PA to gather in Vienna for 13th Winter Meeting



Preparations are continuing this week for the OSCE PA's 13th Winter Meeting, to be held at the Hofburg Centre in Vienna on 13-14 February. More than 250 parliamentarians from 56 countries have registered for the meeting, including several Mediterranean Partners.

Considering the high degree of interest in the situation in Ukraine, the special debate on 14 February is being split into two parts under the themes, "The Rise of Extremism, Radicalism and Xenophobia: Challenges for the OSCE Region," and "The Current Situation in Ukraine."

The Winter Meeting will be comprised of meetings of the Standing Committee of Heads of Delegations, each general committee, and joint sessions of the three committees.

Several speakers from the OSCE governmental side have been invited to address relevant meetings of the General Committees, including the Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, the Chair of the Human Dimension Committee, and the Chair of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Committee.

The first joint session of the three general committees will be addressed by OSCE PA President Ranko Krivokapic; the President of the National Council of Austria, Barbara Prammer; the Speaker of the Lower House of the Parliament

of Afghanistan, Abdul Raouf Ibrahim; and OSCE PA Secretary General Spencer Oliver. The second joint session of the general committees will include a report by the Secretary General of the OSCE, Ambassador Lamberto Zannier, followed by a question and answer session; as well as a report by the OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues, Dr. Hedy Fry, followed by a debate.

In the First Committee, PA Members will hear from Ambassador Dominic Schroeder, Chair of the OSCE Security Committee; Ambassador Adam Kobieracki, Director of the OSCE CPC; Lt. Col. Detlef Hempel, FSC Co-ordinator for the Code of Conduct; and Col. Presenjit Chaudhuri, from the Swiss Armed Forces.

The Second Committee will be addressed by Ambassador Olga Algayerova, Chair of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Committee, and Dr. Halil Yurdukul Yigitguden, Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities. Dr. Yigitguden will introduce the debate on co-operation on water management in the OSCE area.

The Third Committee will focus on rule of law, hearing from OSCE institutions, as well as invited guest speakers on human rights cases from several OSCE participating States. Confirmed speakers for the Third Committee include the OSCE Human Dimension Committee Chair, Ambassador Robert Kvile; ODIHR Director Janez Lenarcic and the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Dunja Mijatovic.

The OSCE PA has held an annual Winter Meeting at the OSCE headquarters in Vienna since 2002, providing an opportunity for OSCE parliamentarians to be briefed by high-level OSCE officials. The meeting also serves as an opportunity for members to meet with their countries' ambassadors to the OSCE, hear presentations by the three committee rapporteurs and to discuss their upcoming reports for the Annual Session.

Meeting of Nordic and Baltic delegations to the OSCE PA in Vilnius

On 31 January, OSCE PA Delegations of Nordic and Baltic countries met in Vilnius to discuss the events in Ukraine and other current political issues in relation to the upcoming OSCE PA Winter Meeting in Vienna on 13-14 February. Members issued a common statement on the situation in Ukraine urging the parties involved in the conflict to resolve the crisis by constructive political dialogue and calling upon the Chairmanship of the OSCE to invite all relevant parties to take an active role and participate in the political process.

Other issues considered were the human rights situations in Azerbaijan and Belarus and the recent OSCE PA election observation missions in Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

Delegates participating in the meeting included Peter Juel Jensen, Head of the Danish Delegation; Christian Friis

Bach (MP, Denmark); OSCE PA Vice-President and Head of the Finnish Delegation Ilkka Kanerva; First Committee Rapporteur Pia Kauma of the Finnish Delegation; Elsa Lara Arnardottir, Head of the Icelandic Delegation; Vineta Porina, Head of the Latvian Delegation; and Valdis Liepins (MP, Latvia). Also participating were Geir Jorgen Bekkevold and Aase Michaelsen, Head and Deputy Head of the Norwegian Delegation, respectively; Vice-President and Head of the Swedish Delegation Walburga Habsburg Douglas; Kent Härstedt, Deputy Head of the Swedish Delegation; Chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Belarus Christian Holm (MP, Sweden); and Head and Deputy Head of the Lithuanian Delegation Algirdas Sysas and Vice-President Vilija Aleknaite Abramikiene, respectively.