

News from Copenhagen

Moscow hosts first leg of OSCE PA Helsinki +40 Project seminars



The first of the OSCE PA's Helsinki +40 Project seminars was hosted by RIAC in Moscow on 25 September.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly held the first of its series of Helsinki +40 seminars last week in Moscow. Hosted by the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC) on 25 September, the Project's opening seminar, "Helsinki +40 Process: Prospects for Strengthening the OSCE," featured addresses by OSCE parliamentary leaders, Russian lawmakers and OSCE experts.

In his opening remarks, OSCE PA President Ilkka Kanerva (MP, Finland) urged participants to take stock of the current period of uncertainty and argued that in order to move from abstract ideas into concrete proposals on resolving the Ukraine crisis, it is necessary to take a lessons-learned approach to the OSCE's response to the crisis.

Andrey Zagorsky, Head of Department at the Institute of World Economy and International Relations – Russian Academy of Sciences, proposed that a general review meeting of OSCE leaders should be convened in 2015 to reconfirm the principles of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act.

OSCE PA Secretary General Spencer Oliver suggested that violations by Russia of OSCE principles in the context of the Ukraine conflict threatened to make the crisis "the final act for the Helsinki Final Act."

In presenting his paper for the seminar, Ambassador Javier Ruperez, a former OSCE PA President and participant in the drafting of the Helsinki Final Act, also emphasized that the

OSCE should reaffirm the Final Act's core principles. The Organization must also continue to focus on the primacy of human rights, he said.

Igor Ivanov, President of RIAC, said that despite challenges, the OSCE's response to the Ukraine crisis had demonstrated that its tool kit is diverse and still very much relied upon in today's world. He urged that the crisis not be allowed to create "another Berlin Wall between East and West."

Helsinki +40 Project Co-Chair Joao Soares (MP, Portugal) stressed the importance of the PA, arguing for an increased role within the Organization in order to better tap into the voice of average citizens across the OSCE area.

Alexey Pushkov, Chairman of the International Affairs Committee of the Russian State Duma; Mikhail Margelov, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Federation Council; Vladimir Dzhubarov, First Vice-Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Federation Council; Ambassador Alexander Grushko, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to NATO; and Ivan Soltanovskiy, Director of the Department of European Affairs at the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs all spoke at the seminar, detailing Russia's commitment to improving the OSCE.

Soltanovskiy also discussed the consensus-based decision-making on the OSCE's governmental side, an issue that was then addressed by several members of OSCE PA's Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency and Reform of the OSCE who were in attendance.

Following the RIAC seminar, Oliver, Soares, Ruperez and Goran Lenmarker, Chairman Emeritus of the Governing Board of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, met on 26 September with more than 50 graduate students from the Moscow State Institute of International Relations to discuss the OSCE's role in the world.

Autumn Meeting to feature debates on Ukraine, Mediterranean challenges

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's 2014 Autumn Meeting, bringing together more than 200 parliamentarians from more than 50 countries, opens Friday in Geneva, Switzerland.

The opening day will feature a parliamentary debate on the crisis in Ukraine, as well as a Mediterranean Forum, held under the theme "Facing Current Challenges to Security in the Mediterranean Region: the OSCE Model." The Forum will feature addresses by the Heads of the Parliamentary Delegations from the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation.

Held under the theme "New Security Challenges: The Role of Parliaments," the Autumn Meeting is also expected to include debate involving dozens of parliamentarians from across the OSCE area on other topics within the OSCE's

political-military, economic-environmental and human dimensions. Those topics include the threat of extremism, the global arms trade and the protection of minority and migrants' rights.

Addresses by OSCE PA President Ilkka Kanerva (MP, Finland); OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Swiss Foreign Minister Didier Burkhalter; President of the International Committee of the Red Cross Peter Maurer; OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Astrid Thors; and others will also feature in the three-day event. OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier will address the Assembly's Standing Committee on the proposed 2015 OSCE budget.

The full programme of the Autumn Meeting, as well as streaming video of all sessions beginning on 3 October at 7:00 GMT, is available at www.oscepa.org.