

Special Representative Klimke addresses Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference



Stronger co-operation between the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC) and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly would increase both organizations' effectiveness in addressing challenges of the Baltic Sea area, Juergen Klimke (MP, Germany) told the BSPC's Standing Committee meeting in Riga, Latvia, on 6 November.

Klimke, who was appointed in July by OSCE PA President Ilkka Kanerva (MP, Finland) to serve as the Assembly's first Special Representative for the Baltic Sea Area, noted at the meeting that the OSCE offers a forum for easing tensions and de-escalating potential regional conflicts by including all involved parties. The OSCE, in turn, benefits from the specialized regional expertise of the BSPC, experience that has been accumulated over nearly 25 years working on promoting co-operation and confidence-building in the region.

"The regional co-operation in the Baltic Sea area is close and many institutions do exist, which focus on this interdependence," Klimke said. "But the status quo can change quickly. How is an effective co-operation possible if the security situation is tense and the bilateral relations are characterized by mutual suspicion?"

This is why the Baltic Sea region has been identified by the OSCE PA as meriting a Special Representative focused on the unique situation of the Baltic countries, Klimke said. He further described his personal connection to the Baltic Sea area, including as a citizen of Hamburg, which hosts several consulates of Baltic Sea countries, and as a member of various parliamentary groups in the Bundestag working on issues of the coastal area of Northern Germany and the wider Baltic region. He is also a deputy member of the BSPC.

Klimke proposed a number of possibilities for improving co-operation, including organizing events and promoting conversations to establish trust. He also mentioned the importance of visiting the Baltic States to speak with parliamentarians, representatives of think tanks, as well as regional and national leaders, with a view towards reinforcing co-operation and mutual reliance. In addition, he hopes to initiate a security conference in the Baltic Sea area in 2016.

SG Oliver delivers keynote address at inaugural Astana Club meeting



OSCE PA Secretary General Spencer Oliver was a keynote speaker at the Astana Club's inaugural meeting, held in the Kazakh capital from 9 to 11 November under the theme "The Geo-Economics of Eurasia." Speaking at session one on Monday, Oliver addressed the OSCE's role in the region, including the added value of the Parliamentary Assembly, describing the organization's efforts in resolving protracted conflicts and in particular its work in Ukraine.

Oliver discussed the Ukraine crisis in the context of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, noting that through its actions in Crimea and the Donbas region, the Russian Federation has violated all ten principles of the Helsinki Final Act's Decalogue. He questioned whether the OSCE could survive the breach of Helsinki promises in relation to the Ukraine crisis.

He further described the PA's efforts in taking stock of the OSCE and its 40 years of important work, including through its recently concluded Helsinki +40 Project, a series

of six seminars held in conjunction with prominent think tanks with the goal of promoting reform and reaffirming the Organization's institutional and conceptual framework in the spirit of the Helsinki Accords. Oliver noted the central importance of human rights in the Helsinki Final Act.

Other speakers and participants included representatives and experts from leading think tanks and universities in Russia, China and the United States, as well as from Turkey, Jordan, Iran, Korea, France, Kyrgyzstan, Singapore, Afghanistan, Germany, and several European institutions. The conference was organized and hosted by The Institute of World Economy and Politics of Kazakhstan.

While in Astana, Oliver also met with the Head of Kazakhstan's OSCE PA Delegation Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Chairman of the Senate and former Prime Minister of Kazakhstan, as well as Deputy Head of Delegation Ikram Adyrbekov. Tokayev, who previously has served as OSCE PA Vice-President and Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, said that he intends to organize a conference next May under the theme "Religious Leaders against Terrorism," in which he hopes for strong participation by PA members.

Tokayev thanked Oliver for his good co-operation with and strong support for Kazakhstan during his service as Secretary General of the OSCE PA.