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.

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.

Oliver discussed 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.

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.