

## OSCE PA to meet next week in Minsk for 26th Annual Session

The OSCE PA will meet on 5-9 July 2017 in Minsk for its 26th Annual Session. With some 300 parliamentarians from North America, Europe and Asia expected to participate, the theme of the Session is “Enhancing mutual trust and co-operation for peace and prosperity in the OSCE region.”

The largest event on the Assembly’s calendar, the Annual Session consists of several days of meetings featuring high-level speeches and debates, and will culminate in the adoption of the Minsk Declaration. This political document will contain recommendations to national governments, parliaments and the international community in the fields of political affairs, security, economics, environment and human rights.

Expected keynote speakers at the opening session include



President of Belarus Alexandr Lukashenko, Speaker of the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly of Belarus Mikhail Myasnikovich; Speaker of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of Belarus Vladimir Andreichenko; PA President Christine Muttonen (MP, Austria); and OSCE Chair-in-Office and Austrian Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz. The Annual Session will also include elections of several PA officers, including

the President, Vice-Presidents and Treasurer.

The draft programme, committee reports, resolutions, supplementary items, and general information are available at [www.oscepa.org](http://www.oscepa.org). The hashtags #OSCEPAMinsk2017, #ПАОБСЕМинск2017, #ПААБСЕМинск2017 will be used for the event on social media.

## OSCE PA observes ‘competitive and well-organized’ Mongolian election



Georgios Varenenos and Guglielmo Picchi observe voting technology in Ulaanbaatar, 26 June 2017.

The 26 June presidential election in Mongolia was competitive and well-organized, concluded observers in a statement delivered by Guglielmo Picchi, Special Co-ordinator of the short-term OSCE observer mission, in Ulaanbaatar on Tuesday. The election administration was effective despite some perception of partisanship, and freedoms of assembly and expression were generally respected, said the statement. However, protracted resolution of complaints, as well as pending court cases, led to uncertainty regarding candidacies.

“These were competitive and well-run elections, and are overall promising for the future of Mongolia’s democracy,” Picchi said. The legal framework for elections provides for fundamental rights and freedoms, forming an adequate basis for the conduct of democratic elections, the observers noted.

“Yesterday was an impressive display, and many European politicians would be envious of how technologies were put to good use in polling stations,” said Georgios Varenenos, Head of the 22-member delegation from the OSCE PA. The mission was the first time the PA has observed an election in Mongolia and was supported by Iryna Sabashuk, Andreas Baker and Ulvi Alizada from the International Secretariat. The PA worked closely with ODIHR and the European Parliament.

## Albania’s parliamentary elections respect fundamental freedoms, say observers



Marietta Tidei, Roberto Montella, Katerina Koci and Roberto Battelli at a polling station in Tirana, 25 June 2017.

Taking place following a political agreement that secured the participation of the opposition, Albania’s 25 June parliamentary elections respected fundamental freedoms and electoral contestants were able to campaign freely, observers said in a statement on Monday. The implementation of the political agreement, however, created challenges for the election administration and resulted in a selective and inconsistent application of the law, observers said.

The joint statement of the OSCE PA, ODIHR, PACE and the European Parliament was delivered by PA Vice-President Roberto Battelli, Special Co-ordinator of the short-term OSCE observer mission. “It is good that the elections could be held and that promises were made to improve elements of the electoral process that have created so much distrust in the past in the functioning of this key component of a democratic system,” said Battelli.

“I have witnessed a broad desire to overcome once and for all the political gridlock that has held Albania back for too long,” said Marietta Tidei, Head of the 34-member PA delegation. The mission was supported by Roberto Montella, Andreas Nothelle, Francesco Pagani, Anna Di Domenico, Nat Parry, Tim Knoblaue, and Katerina Koci from the Secretariat.