

Special Representative Eidsheim addresses Arctic challenges and climate change at seminar in Germany



Torill Eidsheim addresses the European Security Seminar – North, “The Arctic: Risks and Opportunities”, 2 March 2020

Speaking Monday at the Marshall Center’s 2020 Security Seminar North, OSCE PA Special Representative on Arctic Issues Torill Eidsheim (MP, Norway) focused on the increased geostrategic importance of the Arctic and its security challenges.

In her keynote address on “The Arctic – Risks and Opportunities,” in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany, Eidsheim noted that due to climate change, melting sea ice in the Arctic is opening new trade routes and that the Arctic is not immune from possible tensions. “Only by addressing climate change – the root cause

– will we be able to also address all of its multifaceted effects,” she said. “It is not merely an environmental issue: it is a global security matter.”

The life of Arctic communities is already severely affected, she noted, with resettlements, disruption to infrastructure, health risks, as well as changing agricultural and farming patterns. But effects are not limited to the Arctic and its people: these trends will also impact the rest of the planet. “Climate change is a threat multiplier,” Eidsheim underlined. “We are now in the middle of a panic wave for the coronavirus, but do we fully realize the risk factor of climate change?”

Eidsheim highlighted three strong assets of parliamentary engagement: proposing legislation, holding governments to account for the implementation of laws and international commitments, and being the direct link between people and institutions. She also noted the need to make use of the OSCE, a unique platform for dialogue that, among its 57 participating States, includes all Arctic countries, to foster international co-operation on these matters.

Update on OSCE PA activities

The OSCE PA International Secretariat is closely monitoring the situation related to the COVID-19 coronavirus, and will issue updates regarding upcoming activities as appropriate. There are currently no changes to the PA’s events calendar, with election observation missions expected for the 12 April North Macedonia elections and the 26 April Serbian elections, and the Bureau meeting scheduled to take place in Copenhagen on 27 April.

Third Committee Chair Hadjiyianni meets with OSCE SG, addresses Human Dimension Committee



Kyriakos Hadjiyianni and Thomas Greminger, Vienna, 28 Feb.

Third Committee Chair Kyriakos Hadjiyianni (MP, Cyprus) visited Vienna on 28 February to meet with OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger and address the OSCE Human Dimension Committee. He discussed with Greminger ways to increase co-operation between the OSCE’s parliamentary and governmental dimensions.

The talks touched on the situation in Ukraine, with Hadjiyianni noting that he has visited the country as a member of the Third Committee with a focus on humanitarian issues. The sides discussed the work of the Special Monitoring Mission, prospects for a durable ceasefire, and the possibility of opening new entry-exit crossing points along the contact line.

Hadjiyianni addressed the Human Dimension Committee on the topic of “Democratic Institutions: Promoting Comprehensive Security through Strengthening Democratic Institutions and Practice.”



Kyriakos Hadjiyianni addresses the HDC, Vienna, 28 Feb.

In his remarks, Hadjiyianni stressed that democracy should not be taken for granted and that it must be protected. Threats to democracy, he said, come from many sources – from authoritarian governments, unelected bureaucrats, and even through court decisions that remove duly elected politicians on technical grounds. It is essential, he said, to strengthen democratic institutions in order to ensure that the people’s will is upheld, and in this regard parliaments play a key role.

“The need for clear parliament oversight responsibility and processes which are clearly embedded in law is crucial,” said Hadjiyianni. He pointed to many areas identified by the OSCE PA in which parliaments should exercise oversight responsibilities. “Just last year we called for this in a range of fields including adherence to international commitments, financial institutions, states of emergency, journalists’ murders and imprisonment, in addition to avoiding corruption,” he said.

OSCE PA Special Representative on South East Europe Pritchard visits Greece this week

The OSCE PA’s Special Representative on South East Europe, Mark Pritchard (MP, United Kingdom), is beginning a three-day visit to Athens today which includes several meetings at the ministerial level, as well as with representatives of the UNHCR and the IOM, and a visit to a refugee camp. Discussions will focus on a range of issues including migration and regional co-operation.

On Tuesday, OSCE PA President George Tsereteli issued a public statement regarding developments on the Turkish-Greek border, calling for greater co-ordination between Turkey and European Union Member States to mitigate the situation and to pursue a sustainable solution.

President Tsereteli noted that the Assembly’s Ad Hoc Committee on Migration is following the situation closely.