

REPORT

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly 2008 Fall Meetings

Toronto, Canada

18-21 September 2008



*The OSCE in an Open World:
Trade, Security and Migration*

**REPORT ON THE 2008 FALL
MEETINGS OF THE OSCE
PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY**

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Summary



Each year, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly holds a set of Fall Meetings to enhance inter-parliamentary dialogue on important topics related to OSCE commitments and values. The Meetings include a Conference on a topical issue, a session of the Assembly's Standing Committee of Heads of Delegations and typically also a meeting of the Mediterranean Forum. Previous Fall Meetings have been held in Portoroz, Malta, Sveti-Stefan, Rhodes and Rome.

The OSCE PA's 2008 Fall Meetings took place from 18 to 21 September in Toronto, hosted by the Parliament of Canada. The meetings included a major inter-parliamentary conference focused on "The OSCE in an Open World: Trade, Security and Migration." Bringing together Members of Parliaments from across the OSCE's 56 countries, the conference contributed to parliamentary dialogue on these important topics.

The Fall Meetings included a special session on the ongoing crisis in Georgia, with the two specially invited guests, Georgia's Foreign Minister, Eka Tkeshelashvili, and Russia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Vitaly Churkin, leading the debate. It was the first time that Russia and Georgia had debated the situation face to face in an open forum. In addition, OSCE PA President Emeritus and Special Envoy for Georgia, Goran Lenmarker, reported on his recent visit to the region.

In his opening statement at the Mediterranean Forum Senator Jerahmiel Grafstein (Canada) underlined the importance of economic cooperation and free trade in promoting stability and co-operation and highlighted the potential of the OSCE model for the Mediterranean as an inclusive security organization. Assembly President Joao Soares remarked that the annual Forum "underlines the fact that Mediterranean issues are closely linked with OSCE issues, as has been recognized since the beginning of the Helsinki process."

The Toronto meetings also included a session of the Assembly's Standing Committee of Heads of Delegations.



Opening Session



Opening remarks by Joao Soares, President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

President Soares welcomed participants to the Fall Meetings in Toronto and expressed the Assembly's gratitude to the Canadian OSCE PA delegation as well as professional staff in organizing and hosting the Meetings. The President noted that the theme of the Meetings, "The OSCE in an Open World: Trade, Security and Migration," is perfect for our time. He reminded the participants that under that theme there would be a special session on the crisis in Georgia, the big issue of our time in the OSCE area, where the OSCE continues to play a leading role.

Today's world is different from that of 1975, when Helsinki Final Act was first signed, he said, but the important topics chosen for this conference show that many of the challenges are similar – the Helsinki Final Act touches on trade, security, migration. The President emphasized that the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly must continue to address these and other challenges, whether they be compliance with the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe, combating intolerance, or improving compliance with OSCE standards for elections.

Speaking about his future activity as the OSCE PA President, Mr. Soares stated that he will balance the Organization's activity between the "West and East of Vienna," and will actively involve many Members in the work of the Assembly – both during PA meetings and in field work – and he will continue to push for greater transparency in the OSCE. There is a

democratic deficit that remains to be addressed, he said, and the lack of transparency through which the Permanent Council conducts its work is not always in line with the spirit of Helsinki. The President stressed that election observation and gender equality will continue to be priority areas for the Assembly.

Mr. Soares underlined the important role parliamentary diplomacy plays in complementing the work of executives in negotiating settlements to conflicts, and urged parliamentarians to fulfill that role. Similarly, democracy plays a vital role in securing long-term solutions to conflicts, and MPs can bring this aspect to the table, he said.

President Soares urged parliamentarians to work hard to ensure that dialog between parliamentarians in the Assembly remains open and active regardless of difficulties that may exist between governments.

Welcoming remarks by Senator Consiglio Di Nino, Head of the Canadian Delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Senator Di Nino welcomed all participants of the Assembly and emphasized that such forums as this one provide parliamentarians with opportunities to be able to understand better the issues and trends of the changing world and to tackle problems more effectively and seize on opportunities. He noted that the theme of the conference had been chosen to be able to deal with some of the major trends that in recent years have been profoundly changing global dynamics. In light of the recent developments in the Caucasus the organizers of the conference

Opening Session



Noël A. Kinsella, Speaker
of the Senate of Canada



Gareth Evans, President
and Chief Executive of the
International Crisis Group

had reformatted the panel on political-security topics to address this issue. It is our intention to hold a much needed open discussion on the matter, he said, and urged parliamentarians not to lose sight of common purpose and mandate of the OSCE in the course of discussions.

Mr. Di Nino reminded participants that Canada was in the middle of a federal election campaign at the time of the Fall Meetings and expressed his hope that it would offer an opportunity to witness the democratic process in Canada.

Welcoming remarks by Noël A. Kinsella, Speaker of the Senate of Canada

Speaker Kinsella welcomed all participants on behalf of the House of Commons and the Senate, and pointed out that Canada places a high value on inter-parliamentary cooperation. He stressed the importance of the nature of parliamentary diplomacy, which apart from executive diplomacy creates a new paradigm of relations. The values and principles of the OSCE, with its insistence on a global approach based on the human, politico-military, economic and environmental dimensions of security, go together with the values supported by Canada in the applying of its security policy, he said. Mr. Kinsella noted that the theme of the Meetings clearly indicates that the world is much more open in terms of trade, security and migration.

He emphasized the importance of knowledge, which lies behind the tremendous progress particularly in technology, economic exchanges, industrial productivity, transportation and communications. At the same time Mr. Kinsella admitted that access to knowledge is unequally distributed across countries and is closely correlated with the economic wealth of countries. We have to recognize, he said, that with the circula-

tion of ideas and the numerous opportunities of learning more about the rest of the world there are significant obstacles, even in our countries, to improving access to education. Chief among these obstacles is the high tuition and associated living costs of education today.

The Speaker reminded participants that Canada ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in August 1997, which became a part of international law in 1966 and where according to Article 13 of the Covenant there is a commitment of the “progressive introduction of free education.” Mr. Kinsella underlined the importance of a global system of education built on the movement of students and noted the progress made with the Bologna process aimed at removing barriers for student exchange. He urged parliamentarians to consider different means by which barriers to a global system of education may be lowered. Since 1975 and the conclusion of the Helsinki Final Act, the OSCE has stood for the promotion of respect for human rights, and has worked to ensure that the opportunities to promote these rights, such as the right to education, are not missed.

Keynote Address by Mr. Gareth Evans President and Chief Executive International Crisis Group

Mr. Evans devoted his speech mostly to the recent Russian-Georgian conflict and its implication on the geopolitical situation in the OSCE region. Regarding the OSCE’s security role, Mr. Evans emphasized the necessity to think about the nature and utility of the present security architecture because in the aftermath of the Russian-Georgia conflict the geopolitical landscape in the OSCE area looks more uncertain, and potentially dangerous, than at any time

Opening Session

since 1990. Thus, there is a need to rethink the kinds of security institutions the OSCE region needs.

Mr. Evans noted the useful work that has been and will continue to be done by OSCE in the areas of economic affairs, science, technology and the environment, as well as in the areas of migration, trade, democracy and humanitarian questions. Particularly, he emphasized the importance of the OSCE role in monitoring conflicts. The OSCE was immediately seen as the natural, most impartial choice for the expanded monitoring that was clearly needed quickly as the Russian-Georgian conflict unfolded, he said. And because it was reasonably trusted by all sides and already had a mission on the ground for over a decade in South Ossetia, the response time was quick by comparison with the interminable delays that are very often associated with the deployment or expansion of UN missions.

Beyond the monitoring functions, there is a broader conflict prevention role for the OSCE to play in the new regional security environment, Mr. Evans noted. Part of that framework is the OSCE's Conflict Prevention Centre, which maintains an early warning situation room and focuses operationally on confidence-building measures, helping states with border security and small arm stockpile management, and supporting multiple field missions working mainly on post-conflict capacity building.

Speaking about the OSCE's opportunities, Mr. Evans noted that the broad security horizon of OSCE, with its stress on "human dimension" aspects, and its strong record in dealing with difficult and sensitive minority rights issues, makes it more capable than anyone else of addressing the immediate challenges in the region and more adaptable to meet emerging ones. Mr. Evans stressed that if OSCE participating States are truly interested in de-escalating current tensions, there are no available institutions better capable of providing a vehicle for that than the OSCE, with its historical roots in the region.

The speaker also stressed the important role the Parliamentary Assembly has to play in setting the necessary tone and atmosphere for the required de-escalation, both through its regular statements and declarations as well as through the activities of the president and special envoys.





Session I: Economic/Environmental Dimension



Petros Efthymiou, Chairman of the General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science and Technology of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, chaired the first session of the Toronto meetings devoted to the economic and environmental dimension.

The objective of the session was to address one of the main topics of the Toronto conference: trade in an open world. Mr. Efthymiou welcomed all participants to Canada and expressed his conviction that economic issues and challenges in the context of the OSCE and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly are of paramount importance, particularly in the current situation of international economic crisis and uncertainty.

It is clear, he said, that the world is facing a global economic crisis caused by several important indicators such as high oil prices, which have led to both high food prices and global inflation. At the same time, a substantial credit crisis leading to the bankruptcy of large and well-established investment banks as well as commercial banks in various nations has led to interventions by several States. Increased unemployment and the possibility of a global recession continue to be serious threats.

Two keynote speakers addressed the parliamentarians in this session: Mr. Paul Evans, Co-CEO and Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada and Ms. Debra Steger Professor, Faculty of Law Ottawa University and Director of EDGE (Emerging, Dynamic, Global Economies) Network.

Paul Evans, Co-CEO and Chairman of the Executive Committee, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada

Mr. Evans focused his keynote address on the OSCE's relationship with an increasingly important Asia, stressing that Europe must consider the speed and velocity of Asia's rise. The OSCE is both a model and an inspiration to Asia's future, he said. This view, he noted, was recently expressed in Korea where some look to an OSCE-like process as the natural successor to the Six Party Talks Process for dealing not just with the North Korean nuclear problem but the ongoing cold war on the Korean peninsula.

When speaking about an "open world" we ought to make clear that we mean more than a liberal agenda for "open economies" and "open societies," he said. Rather, we mean being ready for an open international order that may not conform with the practices and experiences that emerged from World War II. Being accepting of new Asian influences while trying to shape them in creative directions is an enormous challenge for the OSCE, he concluded.

Debra P. Steger, Professor, Faculty of Law at Ottawa University and Director of EDGE (Emerging, Dynamic, Global Economies) Network

Professor Steger from the University of Ottawa entitled her presentation, "The Importance of Open Economies: Lessons from History." She addressed the important question of the crisis in the world economy, looking at the

Session I: Economic/Environmental Dimension



Paul Evans, Co-CEO and Chairman of the Executive Committee, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada



Debra Steger, Professor, Faculty of Law at Ottawa University

shocks and volatility in world markets, the price of oil, food shortages and unemployment. She emphasized that in responding to the challenges of the new global economy, there is a choice to be made between international co-operation and unilateral action, i.e. openness versus protectionism. There are currently pressures, she pointed out, to act unilaterally and protect national jobs and the national economies from the challenges of global competition.

Professor Steger concluded that the world is currently emerging out of a long economic boom and that macro-economic turbulence will continue. Although we have gained from globalization, gains are forgotten and losses are feared. The choices are there: openness/co-operation or protectionism/unilateralism.

Discussion

An open debate followed the presentations by the two keynote speakers. Delegates addressed a number of issues including the current financial crisis and possible responses by national governments and legislatures. Mr. Efthymiou closed the session by informing Members of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Economic Conference to be held in Dublin in May 2009 and underlining the importance of the Assembly devoting its time to the economic and environmental dimension of the OSCE. He also notified the participants that the Hellenic Parliament will host the Assembly's Fall Meetings in 2009 in Athens, and the intention is to devote the conference to the issue of energy security.



Session II: Security and Political Dimension

The Recent Crisis in Georgia



For the first time since violence erupted in Georgia in August, Russia and Georgia debated the issue face to face in a special session at the Fall Meetings.

The debate was led by the two specially invited guests, Georgia's Foreign Minister, Eka Tkeshelashvili, and Russia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Vitaly Churkin. In addition, OSCE PA President Emeritus and Special Envoy for Georgia, Goran Lennmarker, reported on his recent visit to the region.

Over 40 of the 180 parliamentarians who attended the conference participated in the debate.

President Emeritus Goran Lennmarker, Special Envoy for the Situation in Georgia

Mr. Lennmarker said that refugees will define this conflict and suggested the creation of a "Catastrophe Commission" to try to reach the truth about what happened during the hostilities, and particularly to answer the question whether or not ethnic cleansing had occurred. He said that the whole lesson of Europe is that there can be no ethnic cleansing, and we must see to it that this not take place in South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

"What is true?" Mr. Lennmarker asked. "We need independent and objective observers, both in South Ossetia and Abkhazia," he continued. "The first victim in a war is usually the truth. It is important that we find the truth."

"Recent weeks have been a very difficult time for many people in the OSCE region," said OSCE PA President Joao Soares in his introductory remarks. "Most importantly, my sincere sympathy goes to those hurt and killed

during the conflict in Georgia. I am pleased that we could bring representatives from Georgia, Russia and the OSCE together here in Toronto to discuss this issue."

He also highlighted the important role that parliamentarians can play in facilitating peace agreements. "As elected officials with direct connections to the public," he said, "we can help to build support for the long and difficult work of building a lasting peace."

Eka Tkeshalashvili, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia

Eka Tkeshalashvili underscored the importance of holding this debate as a way to determine the best way to move forward in the future. She emphasized the importance of international law as the basis of relationships between sovereign States and called on participants to ensure that "the whole infrastructure of international community based upon this notion is not destroyed."

She also questioned the very notion of "frozen conflicts," saying that the notion "is not only wrong, but also very dangerous at the same time." Too often, she pointed out, the international community allows conflicts to stay "frozen" in the hopes that eventually a solution will materialize. The outbreak of hostilities with the Russian Federation, she said, may serve as an important lesson for other troubled areas around the world.

Ms. Tkeshalashvili praised the leadership of the European Union, its Presidency, and Europe as a whole in bringing about an end to the hostilities. She hoped that this leadership would continue in the efforts to find a lasting solution to the situation.

Session II: Security and Political Dimension

The Recent Crisis in Georgia

She pledged “full transparency” on the part of Georgia in co-operation with any investigation that may be held on the conflict and said that she hopes for the same from Russia. Ms. Tkeshelashvili highlighted the plight of Georgia’s new internally displaced persons and called for the right of return for all those displaced during the hostilities.

Vitaly Churkin, Russia’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations

Following the Georgian Foreign Minister’s presentation, Vitaly Churkin took the floor. He offered the Russian Federation’s perspective on what led to the conflict and called upon OSCE parliamentarians to use their political weight to ensure that OSCE monitors are deployed in areas adjacent to South Ossetia and Abkhazia to prevent further hostilities. Ambassador Churkin noted that Russia had fulfilled its obligations under the peace plan regarding the withdrawal of Russian observation posts from Poti.

According to Mr. Churkin, the deployment of international observers in the security zone would be of great importance. In his view, this international monitoring force should be composed of at least 200 observers from the EU and an additional 100 OSCE observers in the safety zone adjacent to South Ossetia. UN and OSCE monitors who had previously been deployed in Abkhazia and South Ossetia ought to remain there, he added, but only with the consent of Tskhinvali and Sukhumi.

Mr. Churkin also brought attention to the number of Russian civilians who had died in the conflict, and highlighted the historical links between Russia and Georgia, which were “very strong.” He stressed the positive impact that the many Georgians living in the Russian Federation have had on politics, economy and culture.

Other speakers in the debate included Ambassador Aleksii Harkonen, Head of the Finnish OSCE Chairmanship Task Force, who informed the parliamentarians about the activities of the Finnish Chairman-in-Office in the Georgia crisis, and the Chairman of the Senate of the Parliament of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev.



Eka Tkeshelashvili offers the Georgian position



Vitaly Churkin presents the Russian perspective



President Emeritus Lennmarker presents his report



Aleksi Harkonen informs of the Chairman-in-Office’s activities

Session III: The Human Dimension



The Vice-Chair of the Assembly's Third General Committee, Walburga Habsburg-Douglas (Sweden), opened the third session of the Conference, introducing topics related to the human dimension. She announced that Members would have an opportunity to ask questions of the Director of the OSCE/ODIHR, Janez Lenarcic, before moving on to hear presentations by Ratna Omidvar and Peter Schatzer.

Janez Lenarcic, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Ambassador Lenarcic, addressing the Assembly for the first time, first discussed the important role of parliamentarians, who are tasked with translating OSCE commitments into reality. He urged a change in terminology, noting that reference to "old" and "new" democracies was not helpful – instead, all countries should work to fulfill commitments.

The Director thanked Members of the Assembly for their contributions in the field of election observation, and noted the important role that parliamentarians have in following up on recommendations of OSCE missions. Mr. Lenarcic also noted that the OSCE PA's activities had inspired ODIHR's work in areas such as protecting human rights defenders and working on opening legislative processes.

The Ambassador particularly highlighted ODIHR reports and recommendations in the fields of human trafficking, tolerance and non-

discrimination as relevant to the Assembly's work on migration-related work.

Following his presentation, Members asked about the ODIHR's criteria for recruitment of election observers, called for greater transparency in election-related work, and discussed the problems of double standards in election observation. Members also discussed the implementation of the OSCE Gender Action Plan, as well as difficulties related to extradition of war criminals.

Ratna Omidvar, President of the Maytree Foundation and Founding Board Chair of the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council

Turning Members' attention to the field of migration, Ratna Omidvar shared the Canadian experience in this field, which, she noted, was also her own personal story. Contrary to many other countries, migration was not a particularly difficult political topic in Canada, and Ms. Omidvar pointed out that in the ongoing political campaign, it was noteworthy that not a single political party runs on an anti-immigrant platform.

She particularly discussed the well-developed structure for immigrants coming to Canada, both by the government and by communities.

Ms. Omidvar also demonstrated the importance of migration to Canada by noting that 50 percent of the population of Toronto was not born in Canada. While this was a strong mes-

Session III: The Human Dimension



sage, she stressed that the real success story in Canada came with second generation migrants, who can be found in all walks of life and in senior leadership positions. Still, Ms. Omidvar stressed a willingness to continue to look for new and better ideas in implementing policies related to migration – in this regard, she discussed the work of a worldwide network of cities with high immigrant populations that could share experiences and expertise.

Peter Schatzer, Regional Representative for the Mediterranean, International Organization for Migration

Mr. Schatzer turned his focus to Europe, and particularly to the Mediterranean, where, he noted, there had recently been a sharp increase in the number of irregular migrants arriving by rickety boats on the coasts of Italy and Greece. While such stories receive a great deal of attention, he noted that the large majority of irregular migrants arriving in Europe arrive as tourists and overstay their visas or use forged documents.

The speaker noted that there were improved prospects in channeling migration into legal avenues, which can help to fight the crime that fuels human trafficking. Spain, in particular, has had some success in working together with Senegal, Morocco, and some Latin American countries.

Mr. Schatzer described his concern related to the growing number of unaccompanied minors, who were undertaking the dangerous

journey of irregular migration. Most attempts to return minors to their families failed, he said, because migrants tend to hide their identities and because many families choose to avoid the financial burden of raising a child. He also noted that the number of female boat people arriving in Italy had increased significantly.

Mr. Schatzer stressed the importance of international co-operation on several levels to address this broad range of challenges. He said that varying resources by countries must be addressed by a genuine partnership between those with and without capacity. Governments, parliaments, the business community and civil society, he continued, all have a role to play in overcoming these problems. There is also a difficulty in balancing the legitimate need for population movement with growing security concerns, he added.

Discussion

In the ensuing discussion, Members touched upon many issues related to migration. Focusing on the positive side, several expressed their admiration for the courage of those who undertook such a move. Participants also discussed the impact of migration on demographics in a number of countries, noting that with an aging population, greater circulation was necessary. In the hopes of overcoming challenges related to migration, they also underlined the importance of dialogue between countries in a number of areas.

Standing Committee



The Standing Committee consists of the 56 Heads of National Delegations and Members of the Bureau. Meeting three times a year -- at the Winter Meeting, the Fall Meetings and the Annual Session -- the Standing Committee guides the work of the Assembly, approves its budget, and appoints the Secretary General.

President Joao Soares presided over the Standing Committee meeting on 21 September. The Heads of Delegations were welcomed by Senator Consiglio Di Nino, Vice-Chair of the First Committee and Head of the Canadian Delegation.

In his report, the President highlighted the important contribution that the Assembly had made in holding a debate dedicated to the crisis in Georgia the previous day and noted that he intended to continue promoting focused topical debates during Assembly meetings.

Briefly outlining his work since being elected in July 2008, Mr. Soares noted that he had visited the Assembly headquarters in Copenhagen, where he met with the new Director of the OSCE/ODIHR, Janez Lenarcic, among others. He reported on his swift response following the resumption of hostilities in Georgia, including his appointment of President Emeritus as his Special Representative on Georgia. President Soares had also visited Moscow in early September, to meet with senior Russian parliamentarians and government officials.

OSCE PA Treasurer Hans Raidel presented a report, indicating that the Assembly remained in excellent financial condition. He reported that the finances were being well administered and were subject to diligent oversight by the PA's external auditors, KPMG. Mr. Raidel also thanked Financial Assistant Per-Henrik Durr, who would soon be leaving the International Secretariat, for his hard work in keeping the Assembly's finances in order, under the management of the Secretary General. The Treasurer took note of a request that the draft budget be distributed well in advance of Assembly meetings.

Secretary General Spencer Oliver reported on the work of the International Secretariat in supporting the Assembly's Members, and

thanked the Canadian Parliament in hosting the Toronto Fall Meetings. Mr. Oliver highlighted the weekly bulletin News from Copenhagen as the Secretariat's primary tool for publicizing Assembly work and also discussed the Research Fellowship programme, which brings young graduate students to the Secretariat for six months at a time, noting that it provides invaluable research capacity to the Assembly in a cost-effective way. In response to a question, the Secretary General noted that the Secretariat staff was already taking action to provide more interactive content on the Assembly's website.

The Special Representative in Vienna, Ambassador Andreas Nothelle, briefed Members on recent developments on the OSCE governmental side.

On the issue of election observation, Deputy Secretary General Tina Schøn informed Members about the ongoing observation mission to the parliamentary elections in Belarus, to be held 28 September. She also provided information regarding the Assembly's observation mission to the elections on 4 November in the United States.

A number of Special Representatives also reported on their work. The Head of the Italian Delegation, Riccardo Migliori delivered a report on behalf of the Special Representative against Transnational Crime, Senator Carlo Vizzini, and invited the Assembly to hold a future meeting in Italy.

Vice-President Kimmo Kiljunen outlined his intentions to improve engagement with Central Asian countries, with particular emphasis on encouraging greater intra-regional co-operation. He also noted that he was working to organize a seminar on migration issues.

The Special Representative on Gender Issues, Vice-President Tone Tingsgaard, dis-

Standing Committee



OSCE Sec. General Marc Perrin de Brichambaut

cussed her intention to propose a change to the Assembly's Rules of Procedure to improve gender equality in national delegations. It was also suggested that there could be a change to the Rules of Procedure to increase involvement by Mediterranean Partner States.

Ambassador Aleksi Harkonen, Head of the Finnish OSCE Chairmanship Task Force, gave a brief overview of recent work by the Chairmanship, noting in particular how the crisis in Georgia had impacted their work. The Ambassador also outlined efforts related to mediation in Moldova and regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The OSCE remained actively engaged through its field mission in Kosovo, he noted. Mr. Harkonen also expressed the Chairmanship's hopes for a concise political declaration during the Ministerial Council meeting to be held in Helsinki in December 2008.

The Secretary General of the OSCE, Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, briefed Members on the draft 2009 OSCE budget. He described the challenges posed by a policy of zero nominal growth, and noted that the Secretariat in Vienna had gradually increased its portion of the budget as it increased thematic functions. The Secretary General discussed gender balance in the OSCE and noted difficulties in staffing, including a lack of secondment proposals by participating States. Following the Secretary General's presentation, Members encouraged greater participation by Heads of Field Missions in OSCE PA work and requested further information on auditing within the OSCE.

Prior to finishing, Members were informed about preparations for upcoming meetings of the Parliamentary Assembly.



Mediterranean Forum



With the goal of developing stronger ties with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation, the Assembly's annual Mediterranean Forum was chaired by Canadian Senator Jerry Grafstein, Vice-President of the Assembly. The 2008 Forum focused on multilateral initiatives to promote integration and co-operation in the Mediterranean, including the Union for the Mediterranean and the OSCE Mediterranean Dimension.

It was the best attended Forum since its establishment in Rome in 2003. High level parliamentary representatives from Algeria, Israel, Jordan, and Morocco actively contributed to the debate.

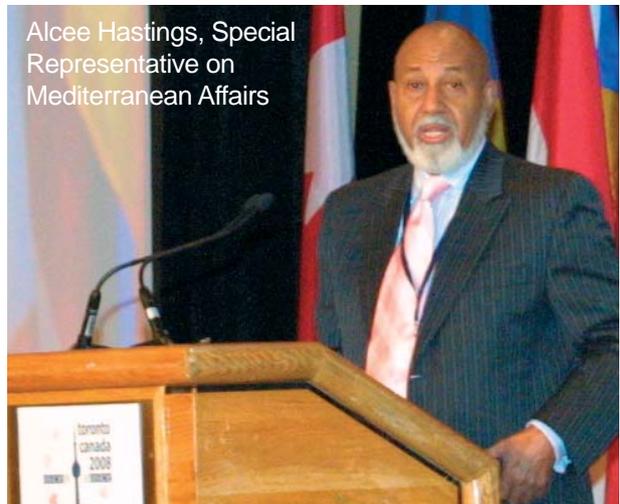
In his opening statements Senator Grafstein underlined the importance of economic co-operation and free trade in promoting stability and co-operation and highlighted the potential of the OSCE model for the Mediterranean as an inclusive security organization.

Assembly President Joao Soares remarked that the annual Forum "underlines the fact that Mediterranean issues are closely linked with OSCE issues, as has been recognized since the beginning of the Helsinki process."

U.S. Congressman Alcee L. Hastings, who serves as Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs, underlined the value of promoting the OSCE Mediterranean dimension at the parliamentary level, stressing that European security is directly linked to security and stability in the Mediterranean.

Gilles Mentré, Representative of the French

Alcee Hastings, Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs



Ministry of Foreign Affairs, introduced a French proposal intended to further develop the EU's Euromediterranean Partnership. Entitled the Union for the Mediterranean, the initiative unites all EU members with several non-EU countries that border the Mediterranean Sea, promoting co-operation on energy issues, security, immigration and trade, as well as fighting corruption, terrorism, organized crime and human trafficking.

Ambassador Mara Marinaki, Permanent Representative of Greece to the OSCE and Chair of the OSCE Contact Group with the Mediterranean Partners, underlined the importance that Greece - OSCE Chair in 2009 - attaches to the strengthening of OSCE Mediterranean dimension.

She invited the Assembly to the next Conference to be held in Amman later this month on the topic: "The OSCE Approach to Regional Security - A Model for the Mediterranean."





Philippe Nobile



Secretary General
Spencer Oliver

The OSCE PA International Secretariat provides administrative support for the Assembly in its various activities. The Secretariat organizes the meetings of the Assembly, and provides support for election observation projects, special missions and Presidential activities. Its work is carried out in co-operation with other OSCE Institutions and international parliamentary organizations. The Secretariat, which is hosted by the Danish Parliament, is headed by Secretary General Spencer Oliver, and has a permanent staff of 17, including two staff members at the liason office in Vienna.



Deputy Secretary
General
Tina Schøn



Deputy Secretary
General
Gustavo Pallares



Special
Representative
Andreas Nothelle



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Advisor
Andreas Baker



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General
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Senior Secretary
Connie Mathiesen



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cations Officer
Nat Parry



IT-Supporter
Stephen Paul



The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly is the parliamentary dimension of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, whose 56 participating States span the geographical area from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

The primary task of the 320 member Assembly is to facilitate inter-parliamentary dialogue, an important aspect of the overall effort to meet the challenges of democracy throughout the OSCE area. Recognized as a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, the OSCE is a primary instrument for early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation in its area. The Parliamentary Assembly, originally established by the 1990 Paris Summit to promote greater involvement in the OSCE by national parliaments, has grown into a very active and esteemed member of the OSCE family.

The basic objectives of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly are:

- To assess the implementation of OSCE objectives by participating States;
- To discuss subjects addressed during meetings of the Ministerial Council and the summits of Heads of State or Government;
- To develop and promote mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflicts;
- To support the strengthening and consolidation of democratic institutions in OSCE participating States;
- To contribute to the development of OSCE institutional structures and of relations between existing OSCE Institutions.

To pursue these objectives, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly employs a variety of means:

- A Final Declaration and a number of resolutions and recommendations are adopted each year at the Annual Session in July;
- Committee work addresses important contemporary international issues;
- Programmes and Seminars designed to develop and strengthen democracy including an extensive election observation programme;
- Special parliamentary missions to areas of latent or active crisis.



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