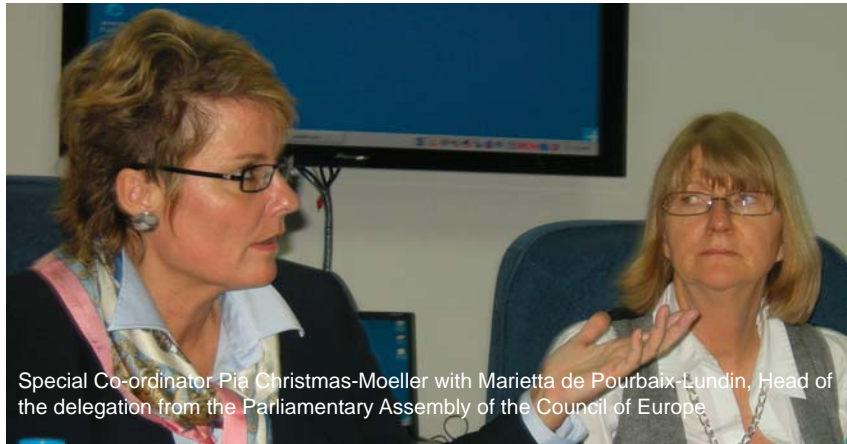


## Christmas-Moeller in Skopje: Elections met most international standards, despite some remaining challenges



Special Co-ordinator Pia Christmas-Moeller with Marietta de Pourbaix-Lundin, Head of the delegation from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

The elections in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia met most OSCE and Council of Europe commitments and standards for democratic elections, although some challenges remain, announced Vice-President Pia Christmas-Moeller (Denmark) at a press conference in Skopje on 23 March.

Ms. Christmas-Moeller had been appointed by the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office as Special Co-ordinator to lead the short term OSCE observer mission of the 22 March elections.

“It is a pleasure for me to see that this country has made a number of steps along the democratic road that it returned to during the rerun of the elections last summer. Irregularities and a lack of trust remain – and these must be dealt with – but there is no doubt that you have made further progress in holding elections according to international commitments,”

she said. Ms. Christmas-Moeller was also OSCE Special Co-ordinator for the observer mission to the parliamentary elections in the country in June 2008.

The observer mission noted that parties and civil society had made a concerted effort to ensure a calm and peaceful campaign, and that the election administration made a genuine effort to run transparent elections, despite an insufficient number of staff. Voting Day was altogether assessed quite positively.

However, the observers reported that an atmosphere of distrust persisted to some extent, as demonstrated by numerous troubling allegations of election-related pressure or intimidation. Ms. Christmas-Moeller also noted that the accuracy of the voter lists continues to be another serious problem.

OSCE PA President Soares had appointed an 18-member OSCE parliamentary delegation. Ms. Christmas-Moeller led the some 300 short-term OSCE observers who worked together with a delegation from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe as well as with long term observers deployed by the OSCE/ODIHR. The Council of Europe’s Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, which observed the municipal elections, also subscribed to the statement.

From the International Secretariat the delegation was supported by Special Representative Andreas Nothelle, Presidential Advisor Andreas Baker and Research Fellows Cecilia Lagomarsino and Nadja Douglas.

### Italy hosts Conference on European Security

The Italian Delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly hosted a conference in Rome on 25 March 2009 under the theme, *The Present and Future Role of the OSCE in the European Security Architecture*.

At the invitation of the Head of the Italian Delegation, Riccardo Migliori, the Conference aimed to promote an exchange of views among representatives of governments and parliaments from the OSCE participating States as well as scholars and experts.

The Rome Conference took place in the Chamber of Deputies, in the Italian Parliament. Speakers included the President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, Gianfranco Fini, Italy’s Foreign Minister Franco Frattini, the President of the Parliamentary Assembly, Joao Soares, and OSCE PA Secretary General Spencer Oliver.

In his address, Mr. Soares emphasized that the OSCE is the most appropriate forum for discussions on the European security architecture to take place.

### OSCE PA Economic Conference: 27-29 May

*The World Financial Crisis* is the theme of the 2009 Economic Conference to be hosted by the Irish Parliament in Dublin, Ireland from 27 to 29 May. The OSCE PA organizes an Economic Conference every two years.

The Economic Conferences provide parliamentarians with occasions to exchange views with colleagues and international experts and to deepen their understanding of OSCE issues within the wider context of OSCE principles and the OSCE’s comprehensive concept of security.

OSCE PA Delegations are kindly reminded that the deadline for registering is **23 April**.

Also, hotel reservations should be made directly with the hotels as soon as possible but not later than **17 April**.

For hotel information and to register, please visit [www.oscepa.org](http://www.oscepa.org). A detailed programme for the conference will be posted as it becomes available.