

# News from Copenhagen

## German elections display democratic commitment, say OSCE PA observers

In the OSCE PA's first-ever election observation mission to Germany, observers concluded that the 24 September parliamentary elections were a strong demonstration of the country's commitment to democratic processes and provided an opportunity for voters to freely express their will. The efficiency and professionalism of the election administration, as well as a high level of public confidence in the overall integrity of the electoral process, contributed to the conduct of democratic elections, observers said.

"Germany has once again demonstrated that its commitment to democracy is undiminished," said Special Co-ordinator George Tsereteli (Georgia), delivering the post-election statement in Berlin. "Highly competitive and well-run, these elections were an opportunity for voters to express their choice in a process that benefits from and is based on broad trust among society."

"This was the first time we've deployed a full observer



team to Germany, and the welcome of our mission by all German officials and political parties that we met is a positive signal that the country is ready to pay continued attention to democratic processes," said Head of Mission Isabel Santos (Portugal). "Changing political cultures in many countries and new challenges such as cyber attacks mean that we must all dedicate time and effort to preserving democratic systems."

After two days of briefings, the observer team, composed of 45 parliamentarians from 25 countries, observed the vote in Berlin, Stuttgart, Munich, Dusseldorf, Cologne, and Hamburg.

## President Muttonen discusses common challenges with leaders in Morocco

OSCE PA President Christine Muttonen (Austria) met last week with parliamentary and governmental leaders in Morocco for discussions focused on challenges including migration, terrorism and climate change. The President also raised issues related to gender representation in parliament and foreign affairs, commending Morocco's efforts to increase the proportion of women in parliament.

In meetings on 21 September with Hakim Benchamach, President of the House of Councilors; Lahbib El Malki, President of the House of Representatives; Saadeddine Othmani, Head of the Government; and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Mounia Boucetta, the sides discussed avenues for increased engagement of Morocco in the OSCE and its Parliamentary Assembly to address common challenges.

A delegation of OSCE PA members will visit Morocco on 18-21 October to further co-operation on common security challenges such as terrorism, including through the exchange of lessons learned at a seminar organized by Morocco on the spread of violent extremism in the OSCE region.



Moroccan interlocutors said that Morocco attaches great importance to co-operation with the OSCE and is exploring ways to enhance relations through concrete activities to reinforce its status within the PA.

## Special Representative on the South Caucasus Vigenin on visit to the region



Kristian Vigenin (Bulgaria), the OSCE PA's Special Representative on the South Caucasus, is on a visit this week to Azerbaijan,

Georgia and Armenia for talks with government officials, parliamentary leaders and civil society representatives. In Baku Vigenin discussed a range of issues including the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Speaker of Parliament of Azerbaijan Ogtay Asadov, Members of the Azerbaijani Delegation to the PA and other senior officials. He also travelled to Masazir region to meet with people displaced by the conflict.

In his discussions, Special Representative Vigenin has noted the impacts that the protracted conflicts are having on the lives of people living in the region. Welcoming plans for a meeting between the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan in the near future, Vigenin stressed that while the final responsibility for finding a resolution to the conflict lies with the governments of the two countries, greater international attention can help support peace efforts. The Special Representative has regularly highlighted the role that parliamentary dialogue can play in conflict resolution processes.

Vigenin is using the opportunity of the visit to speak with a range of political actors and civil society representatives on current events including democratic developments in each of the countries. The visit is part of a range of activities he is undertaking in his role as Special Representative.