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Working Group on Belarus Visits Minsk



Three members of the OSCE PA ad hoc Working Group on Belarus, Ms. Uta Zapf MP, (Germany), the Chair of the Group, Mr. Urban Ahlin, MP (Sweden), and Ms. Helena Demakova, MP (Latvia) visited Minsk from 3-5 February 2002.

The goal of the visit was to continue discussions begun during the Group's visit in November 2001 on ways in which the OSCE PA can reinvigorate a dialogue with the Belarusian authorities and with other political and social forces in the country on the continued basis of the four criteria established during the pre-election period.

During the course of the visit, the delegation met with the Chairman of the Council of the Republic, the Chairman of the House of Representatives, as well as other parliamentarians from the two chambers of the National Assembly. From the government, the delegation met with the Foreign Minister, the Head of the Presidential Administration, and the Minister of Information. The delegation also met with both opposition and pro-government political parties, research institutes, representatives of civic organizations and trade unions, family members of disappeared and imprisoned opposition politicians, as well as OSCE Ambassadors and representatives of international organizations. The delegation was accompanied by Programme Officer Mr. Paul LeGendre.

Election Update: Ukraine

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly will monitor the parliamentary elections in Ukraine to be held on 31 March 2002. Those interested in participating should send their completed registration forms to the International Secretariat as soon as possible but no later than 8 March 2002. For further information please contact either Deputy Secretary General Pentti Väänänen or Programme Officer Paul LeGendre.

OSCE PA Field Visit to Ukraine

From 31 January - 1 February a Delegation of ten Members of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly conducted a field visit to the Office of the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine. This was the second such visit to become better acquainted with the work of the OSCE in the field. Last December, nine Members of the OSCE PA took part in a visit to Latvia and Estonia.

The Delegation was headed by Mr. Mihai Stanisoara (MP, Romania) and included Ms. Roumiana Gueorguieva (Bulgaria), Mr. Jiri Karas (Czech Republic), Mr. Petr Sulák (Czech Republic), Mr. Helmut Rauber (Germany), Mr. Luigi Compagna (Italy), Mr. Lapo Pistelli (Italy), Ms. Elisabeth Meijer (Netherlands), Mr. Henrik Landerholm (Sweden), and Mr. Orest Deychakiwsky (United States) Helsinki Commission staff member.

During the course of the visit, the Delegation met with Ambassador Peter Burkhard, the OSCE Project Co-ordinator, as well as the Speaker of the Ukrainian Parliament, Members of the Ukrainian Delegation to the OSCE PA, the Chairman of the Constitutional Court, the Prosecutor-General, the Ombudsperson, as well as representatives of the Supreme Court and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Justice and Defence. The delegation was accompanied by Programme Officer Mr. Paul LeGendre.

President Severin pays Fourth Working Visit to the International Secretariat

From 6-9 February 2002 President Severin paid his fourth working visit to the International Secretariat in Copenhagen to discuss the upcoming Winter Session in Vienna and the Annual Session in Berlin as well as other activities of the Assembly. Whilst in Copenhagen Mr. Severin met with the Head of the Danish Delegation Mrs. Pia Larsen and with the newly appointed Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office for Terrorism, former Danish Minister of Defence, Mr. Jan Trøjborg.

Mr. Severin also held meetings with the Japanese and Korean Ambassadors to Denmark as well as with the Minister Counsellor of the Royal Thai Embassy to discuss further strengthening relations with the three Partners for Co-operation and the possibility of organizing a Trans-Asian Forum. In addition Mr. Severin met with the Political Director at the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Michael Zimer-Johns.

Vice-President Ostash Moderates Final Round Table in Kazakhstan

On 29 January 2002 Vice-President Ihor Ostash, MP, (Ukraine), moderated the Fourth and Final Round Table on Elections in Kazakhstan. The Round Table was conducted in conjunction with the OSCE Centre in Almaty and the ODIHR and in collaboration with the Government of Kazakhstan. The Round Table was co-moderated by Mr. Omirbek Baigeldi, the Head of the Kazakh Delegation to the OSCE PA. The Round

Table participants, included representatives from the Central Election Commission, the Kazakh Parliament, and political party representatives, discussed the specific issue of the role of the media in regard to the election process.

At the conclusion of the Round Table, Mr. Ostash submitted to the Parliament of Kazakhstan a comprehensive table of recommendations, the product of the four

Round Tables, for improving the electoral law. Summing up the process, Mr. Ostash said *"Despite some difficulties and uncertainties, the Round Table process succeeded to encourage and promote a political dialogue between all segments of civil society, in particular between opposition political parties and the Government."* Mr. Ostash was accompanied by Programme Officer Mr. Paul LeGendre.