

## 250 Parliamentarians attend Winter Meeting in Vienna

Almost 250 parliamentarians from over 40 OSCE participating States will meet in Vienna for the 4th Annual Winter Meeting of the OSCE PA. The Winter Meeting consists of two Joint Sessions of the Assembly's three General Committees, as well as separate meetings of the General Committees. During the event the parliamentarians will be briefed on current OSCE developments by senior officials, followed by question/answer sessions. The Meeting will also deal with preparations for the next Annual Session of the Assembly in Washington 1-5 July 2005, which will focus on "30 Years since Helsinki: Challenges Ahead".

The First Joint Session will meet on Thursday morning, 24 February. The meeting will be addressed by PA President Alcee. L. Hastings; the President of the Republic of Austria Dr. Heinz Fischer and the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel, who will then take questions from the floor.

### First Committee

The meeting of the General Committee on Political Affairs and Security (First Committee) will meet on Thursday afternoon, chaired by Vice Chair Jean Charles Gardetto. The Committee will hear presentations by Committee Rapporteur Pieter de Crem; Chairman of the Permanent Council Ambassador Janez Lenarcic; Chair of the Forum for Security Co-operation Parviz Shahbazov; Head of the Conflict Prevention Centre Lamberto Zannier and Head of the OSCE Terrorism Unit Brian Woo.

### Second Committee

The Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment (Second Committee) will also meet on Thursday afternoon. Chaired by Ben Cardin, the Committee will hear presentations by Committee Rapporteur Leonid Ivanchenko; Head of the Anti-Corruption Division of the OECD Patrick Moulette and OSCE Co-ordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities Marcin Swiecicki.

### Third Committee

The meeting of the General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions (Third Committee) will take place on Friday morning, 25 February and will consist of two parts. During the first part the Committee, chaired by Claudia Nolte, will hear presentations by Committee Rapporteur Anne Marie Lizin; High Commissioner on National Minorities Rolf Ekeus; ODIHR Director Christian Strohal and Representative on Freedom of the Media Miklos Haraszti. The second part of the meeting will be devoted to a discussion on Human Trafficking. OSCE PA Gender Advisor Tone Tingsgard will lead the debate on "Gender equality: the problem of prostitution and human trafficking". The Committee will also hear presentations by OSCE PA Special Representative on Human Trafficking Issues, Congressman Christopher Smith and Special Representative to the C-i-O on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings Dr. Helga Konrad.

On Friday afternoon the Winter Meeting will close with a Joint Session of the three General Committees. The Session will start with a report by OSCE PA Special Representative on the Gender Issue Tone Tingsgard, followed by a debate. The parliamentarians will also hear reports by OSCE PA Treasurer Jerry Grafstein and OSCE PA Secretary General Spencer Oliver after which OSCE Secretary General Jan Kubis will address the Meeting, followed by a question/answer session. Finally, the Chairs of the three General Committees will deliver summary reports of the discussions in their Committees, followed by a concluding statement by OSCE PA President Alcee. L. Hastings.

The Standing Committee will meet on Thursday morning. The members of the Standing Committee will hear welcoming remarks by the President of the Austrian Nationalrat, Dr. Andreas Khol followed by reports on current and upcoming activities of the Assembly.

## OSCE PA Working Group on Belarus Visits Minsk

Three Members of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Working Group on Belarus, Ms. Uta Zapf (Germany), the Chair of the Group, Mr. Fred Ponsonby (United Kingdom) and Mr. Gabor Hars (Hungary) visited Minsk from 1-3 February 2005.

The visit was the first since the 17 October 2004 parliamentary election and the Working Group aimed to meet the newly-formed Belarusian Delegation to the OSCE PA to discuss the work programme agreed upon in July 2004. The Group also sought to assess the political situation following the parliamentary election, which was observed by the OSCE PA together with the OSCE/ODIHR.

During the course of the visit, Working Group Members met with

Mr. Konoplev, Chairman of the House of Representatives, Mr. Zabolots, Head of the Belarusian Delegation to the OSCE PA, as well as other parliamentarians. Meetings were held with Mr. Martynov, the Foreign Minister and Mr. Kalugin, the Deputy Justice Minister. The Working Group also met with representatives of opposition political parties, civic organizations, OSCE ambassadors and with family members and lawyers of those who have disappeared and been imprisoned in circumstances widely believed to be politically motivated.

A press statement issued at the conclusion of the visit can be found at [www.oscepa.dk](http://www.oscepa.dk).

