

News from Copenhagen

OSCE Chairman-in-Office Presents Priorities for 2006



On 12 January, the new OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Belgian Foreign Minister Karel De Gucht, addressed the Permanent Council in Vienna and presented the priorities of the Belgian Chairmanship for the coming year. The Chairman in Office stressed the importance of the December 2005 Ljubljana Ministerial Council as a “moment of renewed dialogue and better understanding”.

The Minister also expressed the Chairmanship’s commitment to implementing in a timely manner the institutional improvements outlined in Ljubljana, including through the appointment of a representative who will work closely with OSCE institutions. In this reform process, the CiO emphasized the need for preserving existing commitments while adapting the organization to the new European environment. Minister de Gucht noted the close interdependence between the three OSCE dimensions, announcing the Chairmanship’s determination to rebalance the

activities under the three ‘baskets’, in particular by giving more substance to the economic and environmental dimension.

Minister De Gucht highlighted the fight against organized crime and the need for closer co-operation in regards to transportation as priorities, and expressed the Chairmanship’s intention “to give more substance and backbone to these activities and introduce new ideas”. Noting the importance of effective judicial systems, Minister De Gucht proposed devoting the 2006 Human Dimension Seminar to the building of comprehensive Criminal Justice Systems. The CiO also praised the OSCE’s strong record in following up on human dimension commitments, including election observation efforts. He said: “There ought to be no double standards. The norms apply to all equally.”

The Chairman-in-Office also stressed that the resolution of frozen conflicts was a high priority of the new Chairmanship. In this regard, he recalled the promising recent developments in Nagorno-Karabakh and South Ossetia, expressing his hope that they will set an example for other regions.

The Minister expressed his hope for continued fruitful political dialogue with the Parliamentary Assembly in the coming year.

OSCE PA Representatives attend Heads of Missions and Institutions Meetings

From 12 to 13 January, Secretary General Spencer Oliver, Deputy Secretary General Tina Schøn, Ambassador Andreas Nothelle and Presidential Adviser Gustavo Pallares participated in the annual OSCE Heads of Missions and Institutions meeting and the Regional Working Group meetings, in Vienna.

At the Heads of Missions and Institutions meeting, the new Belgian Chairmanship presented its priorities and implementation plans. Participants also discussed the Secretary General’s ideas on improving programme planning in the OSCE and on the functioning of field operations. There was consideration of a number of operational issues, including how best to translate decisions from the Ministerial Council into activities, and on how to ensure that the Organization builds upon best practices.

At the meetings of the four Regional Working Groups, plans for work in the coming year was introduced, and the status of programmes and projects in each region was reviewed. The PA representatives presented the Assembly’s work, and discussed ways of expanding co-operation with the Missions. They stressed the Assembly’s willingness to continue contributing to the implementation of democratic values through the sharing of parliamentary best practices and inter-parliamentary dialogue. The Heads of Missions were invited to put forward ideas and requests for initiatives the PA could undertake in regard to their respective countries, such as inter-parliamentary conferences and seminars.

Ukrainian Ambassador visits International Secretariat



Mrs. Nataliia Mykolaïvna Zarudna, the Ambassador of Ukraine to Denmark, visited the Assembly headquarters in Copenhagen on 9 January, where she met with Secretary General Spencer Oliver and Deputy Secretary General Tina Schøn. The Ambassador was briefed about the workings of the Assembly and about the activities of the President, Committees, and field activities. In particular, the Secretary General described the upcoming election observation mission to be deployed for the Ukrainian parliamentary elections in March.

Ambassador Zarudna offered her full support and assistance in preparations for the 2007 OSCE PA Annual Session, which will be hosted by the Ukrainian Parliament in Kyiv.