

Rules Committee agrees on proposed amendments

On 29 and 30 February, the Assembly's Sub-Committee on the Rules of Procedure met in Brussels, at the invitation of the Head of the Sub-Committee, Mr. Pieter DeCrem. President Alcee L. Hastings appointed the Sub-Committee in June 2005 to consider proposed amendments and to conduct a complete review of the Rules of Procedure. The Sub-Committee considered all of the proposals that have been put forward by delegations in past months. In addition, in accordance with its mandate, the Members considered ways to improve the overall effectiveness of the work conducted by the Assembly.

A wide range of changes were discussed, and those Members present – Vice Chair of the Committee and Head of the Slovenian Delegation Roberto Battelli, Vice-President Nino Burjanadze, Vice-President Barbara Haering, Deputy Head of the Russian Delegation Alexander Kozlovsky, Chairman of 1st Committee Göran Lennmarker, and Head of the Danish Delegation Kristian Pihl Lorentzen – unanimously agreed on a set of proposals to be considered by the Standing Committee on February 23. A total of eight separate amendments have

been proposed by the Sub-Committee. Amongst other items, the amendments would expand the membership of the Assembly Bureau to include the Officers of the three General Committees, and would change Rule 38 regarding the way in which the Secretary General and Deputy Secretaries General are selected. The set of proposals has been distributed to all Heads of Delegations.



Roberto Battelli (Slovenia) and Kristian Pihl-Lorentzen (Denmark)

Working Group visits Belarus

Uta Zapf (Germany), Chair of the OSCE PA Working Group on Belarus, Urban Ahlin (Sweden) and Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede (United Kingdom) visited Minsk from 30 January to 1 February to discuss the political situation in the run-up to the 19 March presidential election, and to consider further co-operation with the Belarusian Delegation to the OSCE PA.

The Group met with Sergei Martynov, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Lidya Yermoshina, Chairperson of the Central Election Commission, Vladimir Konoplev, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Sergei Zabolotets, Head of the Belarusian Delegation to the OSCE PA, as well as other high-level officials. The Group also met with representatives of opposition political parties and civil society organizations. The Working Group discussed preparations for a seminar in late

May 2006 on the possibilities for Belarus within the European Union's Neighbourhood Policy. Regarding the upcoming elections, the Group urged the electoral authorities to take every possible step to ensure a fair campaign environment, including equal access to the media for all candidates, balanced political representation, and adequate access to the election proceedings for all observers.

On February 2, Ms. Zapf traveled to Brussels to take part in a Parliamentary Troika meeting on Belarus, with colleagues from the Council of Europe PA and the European Parliament.

The visit to Minsk was organized with the support of the Belarusian National Assembly and the OSCE Office in Minsk. The Group was accompanied by Paul LeGendre, Anna Chernova and Andreas Baker from the International Secretariat.



Mrs. Zapf reported on the Group's visit in a press conference with Ambassador Ake Petersen, Head of the OSCE Office in Minsk

High-level OSCE-CoE meeting

On 30 January, the OSCE PA took part in a High-level meeting between the OSCE and the Council of Europe. Secretary General Spencer Oliver represented the Assembly in the meeting with the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Belgian Foreign Minister, Karel De Gucht, the Chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, Romanian Foreign Minister, Mihai-Razvan Ungureanu, the President of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, René van der Linden and the Secretaries General of the OSCE and the Council of Europe, Terry Davis and Marc Perrin de Brichambaut. The participants discussed their ongoing work, particularly co-operation in the field of election observation, and the need for the two organizations to ensure complementarity in their activities.