

President Lennmarker Urges Closer Co-operation in Central Asia; Appoints Special Representative for the region



Greater focus on Central Asia by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly was the main message from President Göran Lennmarker during his recent visit to four of the five countries in the region, from 27 April to 4 May.

He urged closer co-operation between the parliaments in Central Asia and the OSCE PA and he encouraged greater regional parliamentary co-operation.

He also announced the appointment of Finnish parliamentarian and OSCE PA member Kimmo Kiljunen as his Special Representative for Central Asia.

Kiljunen, who accompanied Lennmarker on the trip, has vast experience in the region.

The trip to Central Asia included visits to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. In February this year, Lennmarker visited Turkmenistan.

The trip had three purposes:

First, to reconnect and intensify the Parliamentary Assembly's co-operation with the Central Asian parliaments.

Second, to encourage and help facilitate greater regional parliamentary co-operation between the parliaments of Central Asia.

And, third, to support the important work of the OSCE Centers in the region.

"We in the OSCE PA now strive to focus on Central Asia. The countries in the region are equal members of the Parliamentary Assembly, and we need to hear their voice in our meetings," said President Lennmarker. "We strongly believe in co-operation rather than isolation and discussion is always preferred to silence."

Next year's Annual Session of the Parliamentary Assembly, when Kazakhstan will be the host, is another sign of the OSCE PA's new focus on Central Asia. Lennmarker also pronounced his personal support for Kazakhstan's candidature for the OSCE Chairmanship in 2009.

The delegation included OSCE PA Secretary General Spencer Oliver, Deputy Secretary General Vitaly Evseyev, Director of Communications Klas Bergman, and Programme Officer Anna Chernova. It also included Åsa Ekwall and Thomas Hörberg from the Swedish parliament.

"Throughout the trip, we had productive and interesting

discussions," Lennmarker also said, "and we are encouraged that this trip will mean a revitalized relationship between the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and Central Asia."

In all four countries, the delegation met with a series of officials, including speakers of parliament, foreign ministers, and opposition leaders, as well as with representatives from non-governmental organizations and the media.

Kiljunen Appointed Special Representative



The Special Representative for Central Asia, Kimmo Kiljunen, is a member of the Finnish Parliament and has been Vice-Chair of the Finnish delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly since 1995. He was OSCE PA Vice President from 2001 – 2004.

A global development expert, he was first elected to the Finnish Parliament in 1995 and has subsequently served on the European Affairs Committee, including as its Vice-Chair

1999 – 2007, on the Foreign Affairs Committee, and as Chair of the WTO sub-committee since 2000.

In the OSCE PA, he has served as Vice-Chair and Chair of its Political and Security Committee and as member of the Working Group on Belarus and as Chair of the Working Group on Moldova. He has also headed numerous election monitoring missions, to Moldova and Belarus in 2001, to Macedonia in 2002, to Kyrgyzstan and Moldova in 2005, and to Tajikistan in 2006.

He has an M.A. in Social Sciences from Helsinki University and a D.Phil. in Development Studies from Sussex University in England. He is fluent in Russian.