

## President Soares on official visit to South East Europe



OSCE PA President Joao Soares will travel to the Balkans next week. From 10 to 16 May, he will visit four OSCE field missions in South East Europe, beginning in Belgrade and continuing to Skopje, Pristina, and Tirana.

With the visit, in which Roberto Battelli, the Assembly's Special Representative on South East Europe is also participating, President Soares aims to show support of the work of the OSCE field missions in the region. The President has regularly stated that the OSCE's most important work is conducted by field missions, and he looks forward to getting further acquainted with the details of their work.

The visit is also aimed at increasing dialogue on regional and international issues, as the President is scheduled to meet municipal, parliamentary, and governmental leaders throughout the region.

While in Tirana, the delegation will also take the opportunity to discuss preparations for the 28 June parliamentary elections in Albania. President Soares has appointed Vice-President Wolfgang Grossruck (Austria) to lead the OSCE PA observation mission to those elections.

Supporting the Balkan visit are Ambassador Andreas Nothelle, head of the Assembly's liaison office in Vienna, and Andreas Baker, Presidential Adviser at the International Secretariat in Copenhagen.

## OSCE PA participates in Heads of Mission meetings

OSCE PA Special Representative on South East Europe, Roberto Battelli, and Ambassador Andreas Nothelle attended the Regional Meeting of OSCE Heads of Missions in South East Europe, which took place on 4-5 May in Dubrovnik, Croatia. The meeting offered an opportunity to learn about the most recent developments in the region, including an assessment of the impact of the current world economic crisis on the region.

Mr. Battelli reported on the activities of the PA, intending to strengthen regional parliamentary co-operation, and about the election observation activities of the PA in the region.

The five OSCE Heads of Missions in Central Asia, representatives of the OSCE Institutions and units of the Secretariat met on 28-29 April 2009 in Dushanbe to discuss recent developments in the region, as well as exchange ideas on regional strategies and priorities for the OSCE. The participants also met with representatives of international organizations in Central Asia to co-ordinate activities.

Activities regarding Afghanistan, an OSCE Asian Partner for Co-operation, were also discussed – emphasizing border management and training of border officials. A new Border Management Staff College is to be established in Dushanbe.

OSCE PA Programme Officer Anna Chernova participated in the event. Prior to the regional mission heads meeting, she participated in a Needs Assessment Mission (NAM) with OSCE/ODIHR to Kyrgyzstan 23-24 April, ahead of that country's presidential elections on 23 July to which the OSCE is expecting an invitation to send election observers. The NAM was organized by the OSCE Centre in Bishkek.

Ms. Chernova also supported the 16 April labor migration seminar in Dushanbe, organized by the OSCE PA and the Parliament of Tajikistan with the support of the OSCE Office in the Tajik capital.

## Dublin prepares for OSCE PA Economic Conference

The draft programme for the 2009 OSCE PA Economic Conference, to be held on 27-29 May in Dublin, is now available online, at [www.oscepa.org](http://www.oscepa.org). Confirmed speakers at the conference include Pat Moylan, President of the Irish Senate, U.S. Congressman and Co-Chair of the U.S. Helsinki Commission Alcee Hastings, Austin Hughes, Chief Economist at KBC Bank, and Mikhail V. Popov of the NOVATEK Company of the Russian Federation.

The OSCE PA's Economic Conferences provide parliamentarians with opportunities to exchange views with colleagues and international experts and to deepen their understanding of OSCE issues within the wider context of OSCE principles and the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security.

This year's conference, under the general theme of *The World Financial Crisis*, will address issues such as the effects of the world financial crisis in the OSCE area, free trade vs. protectionism, financial regulations and good governance, and the social consequences of the crisis.

There is still time to register for the conference. General information, the draft programme and registration forms are available at [www.oscepa.org](http://www.oscepa.org).