

News from Copenhagen

Preparations begin for 2012 Annual Session in Monaco

A team from the Assembly's International Secretariat in Copenhagen visited Monaco from 14 to 16 March in preparation for next year's Annual Session.

Deputy Secretary General Gustavo Pallares, Senior Counsellor Semyon Dzakhaev and Conference Co-ordinator Odile Lelarge held meetings with the organizing committee in charge of the 2012 Annual Session led by Jean-Francois Robillon, Speaker of Monaco's National Council. Assisted by members of the organizing committee PA Vice-President and Head of Monaco's PA Delegation Jean-Charles Gardetto and Olivier Wenden, Secretary of Delegation, the team visited the premises of the Grimaldi Forum Monaco where the Session will be held, as well as various hotels where delegations will be lodged.



Jean-Charles Gardetto, Odile Lelarge, Jean-François Robillon, Gustavo Pallares, and Semyon Dzakhaev

Hosted by the National Council of the Principality of Monaco, the 21st Annual Session of the OSCE PA will take place from Thursday 5 to Monday 9 July 2012.

Bureau to discuss Assembly's proposed budget for 2011/12

Treasurer Roberto Battelli will present the proposed 2011/2012 Budget at the Bureau Meeting in Copenhagen on 11 April. Recognizing the need for restricting public expenditure in many OSCE Parliaments, the proposed budget for the Assembly 20th financial year will call for a zero per cent increase – thus freezing the Assembly's budget for the third financial year in a row. The total budget of the Assembly is currently EUR 2.856 million.

Despite budgetary constraints and increasing activity the Assembly has remained within the approved budget since its inception, receiving no qualifications ever in its financial management from the Assembly's outside independent professional auditors.

In accordance with the Assembly's Rules of Procedure, the Treasurer will circulate the proposed budget to all members of the Standing Committee at least one month prior to the Annual Session. The Standing Committee will meet in Belgrade on 6 July before the opening of the PA's 20th Annual Session.

PA-Armenian training programme

For several years, the OSCE PA and the OSCE Office in Yerevan have co-operated on a joint project to train staff members of the Armenian National Assembly. Last summer, as part of the training programme, an essay competition was finalized in which two winners were chosen from among eight research contributions.

In November 2010, a group of seven staff members from the Armenian Parliament visited the Slovenian Parliament on a study tour to witness the day-to-day work of the Parliament as well as to learn about the organization of the legislative process, distribution of labour in the Parliament, legal analysis, public relations and recruitment processes.

In January and February, the Dutch Parliament – with assistance from the Dutch Delegation to the OSCE PA and the Secretary of the Delegation, Arjen Westerhoff – hosted an intern from the Armenian Parliament. Armen Galstyan, who works in the Armenian Parliament, spent three weeks in The Hague visiting various parliamentary departments.

The training programme is funded through the OSCE Office in Yerevan.

Special Rep Smith calls for increasing the fight against anti-Semitism

The struggle to fight anti-Semitism requires more participation and a redoubling of efforts, Rep. Chris Smith (U.S.) said on 24 March upon conclusion of the OSCE meeting on Confronting Anti-Semitism in Public Discourse.

"This week's high-level OSCE/ODIHR meeting in Prague on best practices to combat anti-Semitism specifically as it relates to public discourse was comprehensive, challenging, and timely, especially in light of turmoil in the Middle East which often corresponds with spikes in anti-Semitic hate," said Mr. Smith.

Mr. Smith, who serves as the Parliamentary Assembly's Special Representative on Human Trafficking Issues and

as Chair of the United States Helsinki Commission, joined participants at the Prague meeting calling for decisive steps to counter expressions of intolerance and hatred while preserving freedom of speech.

Speakers at the event organized by OSCE's Lithuanian Chairmanship and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights proposed improving tracking expressions of hate, strengthening government leadership confronting hate speech, and increasing financial investments in tolerance education.

"We must seek ways to expand ownership of this issue by encouraging more people to get involved," Mr. Smith said.