

Senior positions still open in the OSCE

Although the terms of the Secretary General of the OSCE and the Director of the ODIHR are set to end on 30 June, the competition for these posts has not yet been completed. The office of the Secretary General was advertised in December of last year and four candidates were nominated in early February. President Petros Efthymiou has urged that both posts be advertised and filled by candidates with a high political profile in order to enhance the visibility and the credibility of the OSCE.

The OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Audronius Ažubalis, assured the PA when he addressed the Winter Meeting on 24 February 2011 that the process for the appointment of the Secretary General would be open, fair and transparent.

The four candidates nominated for the SG post (Ursula Plassnik from Austria, João Soares from Portugal, Ersin Erçin from Turkey and Lamberto Zannier from Italy) each appeared before the Permanent Council in early March, and at least three of the candidates (Mr. Erçin, Mr. Soares and Ms. Plassnik) also campaigned vigorously in several OSCE capitals.

In a letter to Foreign Ministers dated 15 March 2011, the Chairman-in-Office asked Ministers to indicate their first and second preferences for the office of Secretary General. On April 15, the Chair of the Permanent Council indicated that "one candidate is being given a clear majority of participating States" and that consultations would begin "to build the consensus around the most prospective candidate."

Ambassador Andreas Nothelle reported that it was widely understood in Vienna that Ms. Plassnik (the former Foreign Minister of Austria and a member of the Austrian Parliament) was the candidate with the overwhelming majority and that apparently Mr. Erçin and Mr. Soares also received first preferences from a number of Foreign Ministers.

During the process, one of the candidates was vetoed by at least two countries, a few countries expressed no preference at all, and many countries expressed only a first but not a second preference. In his most recent communication with the Chairman-in-Office this week, President Efthymiou proposed to the Chairmanship to continue the process of seeking consensus with all three candidates that have not been vetoed and repeated that the principled position of the Parliamentary Assembly is in favour of political candidates.

President Efthymiou had called for the position of the Director of ODIHR to be advertised so that candidates can be put forward to compete for the position. But at the OSCE PA Winter Meeting, the Chairman-in-Office announced his intention to reappoint Ambassador Janez Lenarcic as Director of ODIHR. This proposal was put forward subject to a silence procedure in the Permanent Council, but was not agreed upon by the PC.

President Efthymiou has said that it is important for the selection of the candidates for these positions to be completed as soon as possible in conformity with the Rules as well as through an open, transparent and fair process.

Efthymiou supports Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission's work

The report from the Independent International Commission of Inquiry into the events in southern Kyrgyzstan sheds new light on the tragic events of last summer, OSCE PA President Petros Efthymiou said today.

"I strongly support the work of the Independent Commission headed by Kimmo Kiljunen," President Efthymiou said. "Nothing can undo the suffering or bring back the lives lost, but we are fortunate that Mr. Kiljunen and his team have worked so diligently and objectively to shed light on the historic and painful events of last June. This report should bring new clarity to what lies behind those tragic events, and I hope that the authorities and people of Kyrgyzstan will be able to use this report to make needed progress."

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has offered its political support to the Independent Commission since Mr. Kiljunen was first asked to lead the independent inquiry. A long-time Member of the Parliamentary Assembly, and former Vice-President, Mr. Kiljunen has also served as OSCE PA Special Representative for Central Asia.



Kimmo Kiljunen addressing the OSCE PA's Winter Meeting

Through more than 400 interviews and numerous high-level meetings, the Independent International Commission has reviewed the causes and course of the June 2010 events, qualified violations and crimes under international law, determined responsibilities and made important recommendations with a focus on accountability measures that can contribute to peace, stability and reconciliation. The commission has been supported by the Crisis Management Initiative, a Finnish independent non-profit organization.