

PA participates in OSCE Dublin Internet Freedom Conference



Eoghan Murphy at the Dublin Conference on Internet Freedom

Eoghan Murphy, Head of the Irish Delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and Irish MP Ann Phelan represented the OSCE PA at the Dublin Conference on Internet Freedom 18-19 June.

The conference organized by the Irish OSCE Chairmanship

focused on ensuring open Internet access and respecting freedom of expression and other fundamental freedoms online. Featuring working sessions on online content, Internet governance and human rights, panelists debated contemporary questions, including how to best balance concerns over protecting intellectual property with freedom of expression.

OSCE PA Communications Director Neil Simon also attended the conference. During a working session on new media he spoke about the ongoing work of the Assembly to highlight practices that aim to increase civic participation and make government more accessible.

While several speakers highlighted new ways to protect basic freedoms online, OSCE officials and others reminded

the audience of the broad commitments to which OSCE participating States have already freely agreed. Landmark documents like those from Copenhagen and Madrid are clear in expressing the need for governments to respect freedom of access to information regardless of the platform and free expression regardless of the medium.

A summary of U.S. Congressman Chris Smith's Global Online Freedom Act was also made available to the more than 300 registered conference participants. That legislation would require U.S. technology and software companies who export spyware to publicly report their dealings with governments who are known to restrict Internet freedom.

Prominent speakers included President Toomas Ilves of Estonia, Frank La Rue, UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; Nils Muižnieks, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights; and journalists and bloggers from Azerbaijan and Belarus who had been imprisoned for their work.



U.S. OSCE Ambassador Ian Kelly and Ann Phelan

Deputy PM Xhaferi visits Secretariat



Musa Xhaferi (right) with Tina Schoen and Gustavo Pallares

Musa Xhaferi, Deputy Prime Minister of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, visited the OSCE PA International Secretariat on 19 June.

Deputy Secretaries General Tina Schoen and Gustavo Pallares briefed the minister on the work

of the Assembly, including next month's Annual Session in Monaco and October's Fall Meetings in Tirana, as well as upcoming election observation activities.

As the government official responsible for the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, which ended ethnic conflict in August 2001, Xhaferi outlined the country's current political situation. He indicated the challenges, including additional administrative requirements, that have arisen in the Agreement's implementation.

His government works closely with the OSCE Mission to Skopje towards full realization of the Framework Agreement, he added.

Preparations for Fall Meetings going ahead

Hosted by the Parliament of the Republic of Albania, the Assembly's 2012 Fall Meetings will be held in Tirana from 5 to 7 October 2012.

The Fall Meetings will this year consist of a parliamentary conference on the theme *The OSCE: Promoting Good Governance and Integration as a basis for Stability and Security* and a meeting of the Standing Committee. The host parliament will organize a half-day cultural programme on the final day.

Deputy Secretary General Gustavo Pallares, Ambassador Andreas Nothelle and Senior Counselor Semyon Dzakhaev visited Tirana recently to meet with the Secretary General of the Albanian Parliament and co-ordinate preparations with the staff of the Parliament to ensure a productive session in Tirana.

The 2012 Fall Meetings will also coincide with the celebration of the 100th anniversary of Albania's independence.

An official letter of invitation from Speaker of the Albanian Parliament Jozefina Topalli and all practical documents for delegates regarding the meetings have been distributed to national delegations.