

## OSCE PA opens election observation mission in Bulgaria



The PA delegation at the Bulgarian National Audit Office in Sofia.

Experts from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly are in Bulgaria this week to begin observation of the 12 May parliamentary elections.

OSCE PA Director of Presidential Administration Roberto Montella, Operations Officer Iryna Sabashuk and Senior Advisor to the Special Co-ordinator Andreas Baker have held two days of meetings in Sofia in preparation for the arrival of the rest of the parliamentary observers.

The delegation held constructive meetings with representatives of the Central Election Commission, of the Bulgarian National Audit Office, the Civil Registration and Administrative Services Department of the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works, representatives of political parties, the media, civil society, and the international community.

While in Sofia, the OSCE PA delegation also held a meeting with the OSCE/ODIHR On-site Co-ordinator Miklos Haraszti. The discussion focused on the preparations of the parliamentary briefings and information sharing. Regrettably the ODIHR has indicated no willingness to improve co-operation and their compliance with the 1997 Co-operation Agreement.

Eoghan Murphy (MP, Ireland) has been appointed by Minister Leonid Kozhara (Ukrainian OSCE Chair-in-Office) as OSCE Special Co-ordinator and leader of the short-term OSCE observer mission upon request from OSCE PA President Wolfgang Grossruck. This mission will include the OSCE PA delegation as well as the 220 OSCE short-term observers seconded by OSCE participating States.

The OSCE PA delegation will be headed by Roberto Battelli (MP, Slovenia). The OSCE PA delegation will include at least 30 observers from parliaments in 16 countries. The visit served as a useful opportunity to gather information from local and international stakeholders in the election process. The talks addressed a wide range of issues related to the election, including technical preparations, the political environment, campaign finance, legislation, and media coverage of the campaign.

The visit marks the start of a full-time OSCE PA presence in the country to prepare for the arrival of the parliamentary observers next week. Baker will remain in Sofia to finalize preparation for the election mission next week and act as a special representative of the leader of the short-term OSCE observer mission.

## Special Representative Soares to visit the Caucasus region next week

From 5-11 May, former PA President Joao Soares will visit the Caucasus in his capacity as Special Representative on the region. The purpose of the visit is to discuss developments in the region, both regarding democratic reforms and the prospect of solving protracted conflicts. Soares will start his tour in Baku, Azerbaijan, from 5-7 May where he will discuss the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the upcoming presidential election. He will then travel to Tbilisi, Georgia, from 7-9 May where he will be joined by President Wolfgang Grossruck.

The visit will serve as a follow-up to the election observation mission last October, a preparatory visit for the upcoming presidential election next autumn as well as a regular visit of the Special Representative. Finally, Soares intends to visit Yerevan, Armenia, from 9-11 May to continue discussions on Nagorno-Karabakh and also on the follow-up to the presidential elections in the country last February. Deputy Secretary General Tina Schoen will travel with Soares to all

the three countries, as will the Secretary of the Portuguese Delegation Nuno Paixao.

President Grossruck will be accompanied to Georgia by the Secretary of the Austrian Delegation Lukas Mussi.

### Annual Session Deadlines

Please be advised of the following deadlines related to the 2013 Annual Session, to be held in Istanbul on 29 June-3 July:

- Supplementary Items: Thursday **23 May**
- Compromise Supplementary Items: Thursday **13 June**
- Amendments to General Committee Draft Resolutions: Thursday **13 June**
- Amendments to Supplementary Items: Thursday **20 June**

Delegations are kindly asked to register for the Annual Session by **24 May**.

Registration forms are available at [www.oscepa.org](http://www.oscepa.org).