

News from Copenhagen

President of the Bundestag and PA President finalize Annual Session agreement



George Tsereteli and Wolfgang Schäuble sign Annual Session agreement in Berlin, 21 March. (Photo courtesy of the Bundestag)

OSCE PA President George Tsereteli (Georgia) met last week in Berlin with President of the German Bundestag Wolfgang Schäuble, OSCE PA Treasurer Doris Barnett, and Deputy Chairman of the CDU/CSU parliamentary group Johann Wadepful. He noted that the German Parliament's preparations for hosting the PA's 27th Annual Session, to be held at the Bundestag in Berlin on 7-11 July, are proceeding rapidly. The Annual Session is expected to include some 300 parliamentarians from North America, Europe and Asia. On 21 March, President Tsereteli officially signed the agreement on the hosting of the Annual Session, which will mark the

second time that Germany has hosted the meeting, having done so in 2002 as well.

"Having recently held the Chairmanship of the OSCE, Germany is now stepping up to host the biggest event on the OSCE PA's calendar, the Annual Session," Tsereteli said. "Being held under the theme 'Implementing OSCE Commitments: The Role of Parliaments,' this year's meeting will provide an excellent opportunity to remind ourselves of the importance of legislative action in developing effective, results-oriented responses to the many challenges faced by the OSCE region."

Meeting with Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office Niels Annen, Tsereteli discussed the fight against terrorism, the crisis in and around Ukraine, and the 18 March presidential election in the Russian Federation. He noted that the German OSCE Chairmanship in 2016 contributed to rebuilding trust among OSCE countries as a basis to renew dialogue, stressing that these efforts must continue. Also participating in the visit to Berlin were OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella, Deputy Secretary General Gustavo Pallares, and OSCE PA Special Representative Andreas Nothelle.

Election observation, rule of law and co-operation focus of Poland visit

Wrapping up a two-day visit to Warsaw on 23 March, where meetings took place with colleagues from the Polish Parliament and from the OSCE/ODIHR, PA President George Tsereteli (Georgia) said that solving common problems requires greater international co-operation. OSCE countries must work together on meeting challenges, which also means stronger unity between OSCE institutions for results-oriented work, Tsereteli said. Poland's support for the OSCE is evident with its hosting of the ODIHR, he noted. He also expressed appreciation for the participation of Polish parliamentarians in OSCE PA activities, including election observation.

President Tsereteli was joined in the Polish capital by OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella. They met with Deputy Marshal of the Sejm, Ryszard Terlecki; Deputy Marshal of the Senate, Adam Bielan, and several Members of the Delegation of Poland to the OSCE PA headed by Barbara Bartus; as well as ODIHR Director Ingibjorg Gisladdottir and a range of senior experts from the OSCE's human rights office.

Topics discussed in meetings included OSCE priorities in Ukraine and the South Caucasus, domestic developments in Poland including judiciary reform and the rule of law in general.

Harstedt speaks at EP meeting on Belarus

Chair of the OSCE PA Ad Hoc Working Group on Belarus Kent Harstedt (Sweden) participated last week in a meeting of the European Parliament's delegation for relations with Belarus. The 22 March meeting focused on recent developments in EU-Belarus relations.

Harstedt spoke about the general situation in Belarus, including electoral reforms, the death penalty and the importance of maintaining dialogue with Minsk. He also spoke about past elections, noting that ODIHR's recommendations largely remain unaddressed, while welcoming openness to dialogue, including the Belarusian Delegation's constructive and active role in the PA. He was accompanied by Francesco Pagani from the OSCE PA's Vienna Liaison Office.

Cosido speaks at Malta counter-terrorism event

On 22 March Ignacio Cosido (Spain), a member of the OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism, participated in the Regional Workshop on "The Nexus of Parliamentarians and Criminal Justice Actors in Counter Terrorism," held in Malta.

In his remarks, Cosido emphasized the importance of parliamentary oversight in promoting the respect for the rule of law. He called for a greater role of parliaments in building social trust and confidence towards counter-terrorism efforts of state authorities, for instance, by enhancing transparency. Marco Bonabello, OSCE PA Liaison Officer and Advisor, moderated a session of the workshop on community involvement in counter-terrorism.