

Special Representative on Eastern Europe discusses Belarus with Head of Delegation



Daniela De Ridder meets with Andrei Savinykh on 15 Feb. 2021

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Special Representative on Eastern Europe Daniela De Ridder (Germany) met Monday with Andrei Savinykh, Head of the Belarusian Delegation to the OSCE PA, for a wide-ranging discussion on the challenges facing Belarus and the way forward for the country.

In the online discussion, which was also joined by OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella, the sides exchanged views on the situation in Belarus as well as a possible role for the PA in facilitating dialogue. De Ridder explained that as the newly appointed Special Representative on Eastern Europe, Belarus is at the top of her agenda and asked Savinykh to offer his views on what is happening in Minsk and the rest of the country.

Savinykh provided an overview of the situation with relevant context since independence in 1991. He agreed that there is an imperative to reform the political process as well as the electoral

system, but also a need to guard against foreign interference and instability. There is a danger of allowing a street democracy to rule, he said, and therefore what is needed is development of the political system and formalized dialogue.

De Ridder emphasized the value of including all stakeholders in political dialogue, accepting and reflecting on criticism, and understanding the positions of all factions in order to improve the political process. She stressed that if there are grave violations of human rights, it becomes an international concern and noted that the Parliamentary Assembly takes seriously the process that Belarus has started and wants to help advance dialogue between all stakeholders.

Both De Ridder and Savinykh agreed on the importance of negotiation in order to come to agreement, and pledged to continue discussing these issues in future talks.

Secretary General Montella highlighted the work of the OSCE PA to create conditions for dialogue and underlined the importance of the international community acting with integrity and an unbiased posture in its diplomatic efforts. We need to work within the perimeters of the legal framework and shared values, he emphasized, noting that it is in everyone's interest to build trust and engage in open dialogue.

On 5 February, De Ridder met with former Belarusian presidential candidate Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya. The PA also held an online forum with OSCE PA Bureau members, Savinykh and Tsikhanouskaya last September.

Special Representative Fry moderates EEF roundtable on women in the labour market

The OSCE PA's Special Representative on Gender Issues, Head of the Canadian Delegation Hedy Fry, moderated a roundtable on Monday during the OSCE's Economic and Environmental Forum. Focused on the equal participation of women in the labour market, the roundtable featured Mia Mitchell from the U.S. State Department, Umberto Cattaneo from the International Labour Organization; Christine Mayrhuber from the Austrian Institute of Economic Research, and Lazzat Ramazanova from the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The discussion focused on the gender pay gap and policy approaches to bridge it, the role of women in health care in responding to COVID-19, redistributing parental responsibilities with the aim of promoting women's equal participation in the labour market, and gender-sensitive social protection in increasingly insecure labour markets. The First Preparatory Meeting of



Hedy Fry moderates EEF roundtable on 15 Feb. 2021

the 29th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum took place 15-16 February and was organized by the 2021 Swedish OSCE Chairpersonship and the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities.

CCT Chair Lopatka addresses high-level UNOCT-PAM event



Reinhold Lopatka speaks at UNOCT-PAM event on 15 Feb. 2021

On Monday, Chair of the OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism (CCT) Reinhold Lopatka (Austria) addressed the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and the

Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM)'s Joint High-Level Virtual Event on the "Challenges of the post-territorial ISIL context."

Speaking at the Panel on Regional Cooperation and Strengthening Counter-Terrorism Efforts, Lopatka stressed the need to support the prosecution and deradicalization efforts of the local authorities in Syria and Iraq and the urgency of dealing with radical and extremist movements in Europe. Underlining the excellent partnership established between the OSCE PA, PAM and UNOCT, Lopatka presented the main activities of the CCT to counter terrorism. The CCT Chair mentioned his visit to Syria, underlining the terrible conditions for internally displaced persons and family members, including children, of former terrorist fighters. In addition, he recalled that countering terrorism should be a priority for all countries.