

## OSCE PA delegation discusses environmental issues in Uzbekistan, visits Aral Sea



OSCE PA delegation at the Ministry of Ecology, Environmental Protection and Climate Change in Tashkent, 11 April 2024

An OSCE PA delegation led by Special Representative on Central Asia Farah Karimi (Netherlands) was in Uzbekistan last week with the aim of strengthening regional co-operation and inter-parliamentary dialogue. Wrapping up a three-country tour of Central Asia, the Uzbekistan leg included a visit to the Aral Sea, which has lost 90 per cent of its size since the 1960s in what is considered one of the planet's worst environmental disasters. In meetings with governmental representatives, parliamentary

leaders and academics, the delegation learned about the efforts made by Uzbekistan and the four other Central Asian republics to counter the adverse effects of desertification in the Aral Sea region, improve biodiversity, and strengthen climate change resilience.

It was Karimi's first visit to Uzbekistan in her capacity as OSCE PA Special Representative on Central Asia. She was joined by OSCE PA Second Committee Rapporteur Gudrun Kugler (Austria) and Special Representative on Climate Change Pere Joan Pons (Spain), as well as Ainur Argynbekova and Dilorom Fayzieva, members of parliament from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, respectively.

The 11-12 April visit to Uzbekistan followed stops in Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, and was intended to support the engagement of delegations of Central Asia in the activities of the OSCE PA, to ensure that the OSCE PA understands the issues important to Central Asia, to learn from the region's experience, and to facilitate co-operation to address shared challenges.

## Inter-Parliamentary Forum in Tirana promotes regional dialogue in South East Europe

More than 15 parliamentarians convened in Tirana on 12-14 April for the inaugural Inter-Parliamentary Forum, organized by OSCE PA Special Representative on South East Europe Kyriakos Hadjiyianni (Cyprus). Hosted by the Albanian Delegation to the OSCE PA, with support from the Albanian Parliament, the forum provided an opportunity for parliamentarians from South East Europe to engage in meaningful exchanges and strengthen collaboration.

Speaker of the Albanian Parliament Lindita Nikolla, Head of the OSCE PA's Albanian Delegation Damian Gjiku and Special Representative Hadjiyianni opened the forum with remarks on the importance of exchanging experiences and building co-operation for the benefit of progress in the region. Delegations from Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary, Slovenia, and Albania participated in the forum.

The agenda covered discussions on the work of the OSCE PA Presence in Albania and EU integration of Albania and the



The opening of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Delegations from South East Europe to the OSCE PA in Tirana, 13 April

Western Balkan countries. Participants shared concerns on topics such as irregular migration, foreign investment, tourism, cultural exchange, depopulation of the region, science diplomacy and best practices regarding solidarity among South East European countries in the face of past natural disasters.

At the end of the forum, participants agreed on a joint declaration affirming a commitment to enhanced co-operation and friendly relations. The document is available to download here: <https://bit.ly/49Fv8g>

## OSCE PA Conference Team visits Dublin ahead of 22nd Autumn Meeting



Several members of the International Secretariat have been on an assessment visit to Dublin this week in preparation for the OSCE PA's 22nd Autumn Meeting, which will take place from 2 to 4 October in the Irish capital. Deputy Secretary General Gustavo

Pallares, Head of Conference Services Odile Lelarge and Head of ICT Service & Support Section Stephen Paul have met with representatives from the Irish Parliament, as well as staff from hotels and the proposed venue, to assess the logistical and technical aspects of the meeting, including the programme.

Hosted by the Oireachtas, the OSCE PA's 2024 Autumn Meeting will include a Parliamentary Conference, a meeting of the Mediterranean Forum, and a meeting of the Standing Committee.

## In memoriam: Roberto Battelli (1954-2024)

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly is mourning the death of Roberto Battelli. A member of parliament from Slovenia, Mr. Battelli served in the OSCE PA for 27 years before retiring in 2018. In the Assembly, he held several leadership positions including Vice-President, Treasurer and Special Representative on South East Europe, and over the years led numerous election observation missions. In a tweet on Tuesday (<https://bit.ly/4aXSYUa>), OSCE PA President Pia Kauma and Secretary General Roberto Montella expressed their condolences over his passing. He was 69 years old.



Roberto Battelli is presented a token of the OSCE PA's appreciation at the 27th Annual Session in Berlin, 11 July 2018