

OSCE

NEWSLETTER

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Chairman-in-Office pursues dialogue on Chechnya and Turkmenistan

By Keith Jinks

VIENNA – Keeping up the brisk pace he has set since taking over as Chairman-in-Office (CiO) of the Organization on 1 January, the Foreign Minister of the Netherlands, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, has paid visits to participating States in recent weeks in pursuit of expanded OSCE co-operation.

The first trip of the Chairmanship took place on 4 February, when the Dutch Foreign Minister met his counterpart in the Russian Federation, Igor S. Ivanov. The two Ministers discussed ways of harmonizing relations and improving co-operation within the OSCE framework in all three dimen-

sions of security. They also emphasized the need to enhance interaction between participating States in combating terrorism, as well as trafficking and other forms of international crime.

“We discussed key items on the OSCE’s agenda in 2003 and took note of substantive agreement on ways to



OSCE/Alyan Evrensel

Journalist Anna Politkovskaya receives OSCE award, worth \$20,000, from Representative on Freedom of the Media, Freimut Duve

Winner of OSCE journalism and democracy award pleads for solution in Chechnya

By Jan Jooren

“I’m a journalist. I’m neither a politician nor a diplomat. And so I’m not polite – I say what I think. And what I think about is what I see with my own eyes. My job is simple: to look around and to write what I see.”

Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya’s remarks after receiving the 2003 OSCE Prize for Journalism and Democracy on 20 February were as earnest and intense as her writing.

“Granting her this honour is a strong statement by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in support of courageous and professional journalism, for human rights and freedom of the media,” said Assembly President

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achieve the objectives set out at the meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council in Porto last December,” the CiO said. The Russian Minister expressed support for the priorities of the Netherlands Chairmanship.

Both sides discussed the lack of agreement on an extension of the mandate of the OSCE Assistance Group to Chechnya, which formally ceased to exist at the end of 2002 and was set to be closed down on 21 March. However, the two ministers agreed on a renewed constructive engagement of the Organization in Chechnya based on a two-track approach.

Firstly, a technical assessment mission led by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) would be sent to Chechnya to review the circumstances under which the referen-

dum scheduled for 23 March would be held and might be observed.

[Since the CiO’s visit, a five-day assessment mission has reported back and the ODIHR has announced that, while a standard observation mission would not be possible, a “fact-finding visit” would take place on the occasion of the referendum.]

Secondly, discussion would start on the development of arrangements for a longer-term OSCE presence and involvement in Chechnya. “I agreed with Minister Ivanov that, to this end, the Chairmanship will soon submit proposals to Moscow,” said Minister de Hoop Scheffer.

The Ministers also reviewed the situation in other parts of the OSCE area, in particular Moldova and the southern Caucasus. They agreed to continue joint efforts to find peaceful solutions to

existing conflicts and emphasized the usefulness of regular contacts.

Travelling a month later to Ashgabad, the Chairman-in-Office was received by the Turkmen President, Saparmurat Niyazov, and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov.

They discussed a number of issues,

Winner of journalism ... *continued from page 1*

Bruce George at the parliamentarians’ Winter Meeting, where the award ceremony took place.

Ms. Politkovskaya, who writes for the Russian biweekly *Novaya Gazeta*, took the opportunity to address some 250 OSCE parliamentarians gathered at the Hofburg on a theme that she has reported on relentlessly.

The award, worth \$20,000, was presented to Ms. Politkovskaya by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Freimut Duve. It was Mr. Duve who, as a member of the German delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, initiated the annual prize in 1996. The goal remains to promote the principles of free journalism, as laid down in the OSCE Budapest Declaration of 1994.

Mr. Duve praised Anna Politkovskaya for her journalistic courage in pursuing her work in conflict regions. “More than 50 times now, Anna has crossed the bridge into a war region that is considered a no-man’s land for independent journalism,” he said. “She felt obliged to go to Chechnya again and again. She felt obliged to publish her articles in a book, *The Dirty War – a Russian Reporter in Chechnya*”.

He noted that the Russian journalist had underlined a reality that all those responsible for war should face: that war zones will not remain silent. “It is either the courageous journalist of the present time, or later on, the work of the historians who will open the dark windows,” he said.

Previous recipients of the OSCE Prize for Journalism and Democracy were: Adam Michnik from Poland (1996); the international network of correspondents, *Reporters sans frontières* (1997); Timothy Garton Ash from the U.K. (1998); Christiane Amanpour from the U.K. (1999); Andrei Babitsky from the Russian Federation (2000); Georgiy Gongadze from Ukraine and José Luis López de Lacalle from Spain (2001, both awarded posthumously); and Friedrich Orter from Austria and Pavel Sheremet from the Russian Federation (2002).

The OSCE Prize for Journalism and Democracy is made possible through the generosity of Bertelsmann AG, Germany; the Bonnier Group, Sweden; and Shibsted ASA, Norway.

Jan Jooren is Counsellor for Press and Public Affairs in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

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including human rights, terrorism and future co-operation between the OSCE and Turkmenistan. They stressed the importance of keeping communication lines open.

“It is clear after my discussion with President Niyazov that he is willing to continue the dialogue with the OSCE – even if different opinions exist about the situation in the country and mutual criticism is expressed,” said Foreign Minister de Hoop Scheffer.

The CiO spoke at length with the President about the Moscow Mechanism, a process initiated by ten OSCE participating States to examine the investigations carried out by the Turkmen authorities, after the arrest of people

suspected of having been involved in an alleged assassination attempt against President Niyazov.

Under the Moscow Mechanism, a rapporteur, Professor Emmanuel Decaux, was appointed. The Turkmen authorities decided not to avail themselves of the opportunity to appoint their own rapporteur in addition (*see page 4*).

“I have appealed to President Niyazov that Turkmenistan should react to this report [by Professor Decaux],” the CiO said. “I favour the Turkmen authorities’ involvement in the Moscow Mechanism, whatever the difficulties. I am hopeful that the President will take my words to heart and that I have prepared the ground for a reaction from the

Turkmen side.”

The Netherlands Chairman-in-Office also mentioned that he had drawn President Niyazov’s attention to specific human rights concerns, such as the detention of the environmental activist, Farid Tukhbatullin.

Mr. Tukhbatullin had been accused of receiving advance word of the alleged assassination attempt from exiled opposition members, while attending a conference in Moscow organized by an international human rights group. He was convicted of concealing a criminal act and of illegally crossing the border, owing to the absence of an entry stamp in his passport.

“The President has assured me that

Winner of journalism ... continued from page 2

Politkovskaya: Just doing a “normal” job

The OSCE Newsletter’s Editor, Patricia Sutter, spoke with Anna Politkovskaya after the award ceremony. Julia Osadchaya, Research Assistant in the Parliamentary Assembly’s International Secretariat, served as interpreter.

There must be at least 26,000 items on the Internet mentioning your name. How do you feel about being so widely known?

Politkovskaya: I don’t feel that I’m widely known! I don’t feel special, and I don’t feel different. Nothing has changed the business I’m involved in. I’m a journalist. I am just doing my job, which is absolutely normal.

How did you find out about your award and what was your reaction?

The Parliamentary Assembly office called me in Moscow from Copenhagen. It came as a complete surprise.

This is not the first time your work has been recognized through an award. What does this latest prize mean for you?

All the awards I have received simply mean I have been doing the right thing. It’s a difficult situation in Russia right now; there is great pressure on the mass media and any inter-

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Harvill Press

do with the \$20,000 prize?

It’s a great sum of money. I’ve never had such an amount in my life! I have to think really hard about what to do with it. It is obvious that I will share it with the people of Chechnya who are in a disastrous situation. Some of it I will use to help provide housing for Grozny’s elderly and orphans. I will also pay off my debts. The newspaper I work for pays the lowest salaries in Moscow because it is independent and is in opposition to the Government and to the President.

What do you think about the role of the OSCE in conflict and post-conflict zones?

Today they [parliamentarians] discussed the OSCE’s field missions, and I listened attentively to the discussion on Chechnya. I think having a mission in Chechnya would be good, provided its work is not interrupted.

I also think it’s important to be defending human rights, both from the independent, non-governmental side, as is done by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, and from the official side, as is done by the OSCE.

national recognition that a person receives is a kind of protection against Government and official powers. I very much value the awards, as they help me continue my work in the pursuit of freedoms.

Have you thought about what to

Mr. Tukhbatullin will be released soon,” Minister de Hoop Scheffer said, after a 90-minute meeting in Ashgabad.

The CiO also raised another human rights issue: two recent pieces of legislation concerning the crime of ‘betrayal of the Motherland’, and the travel ban imposed on Turkmen nationals.

The President said the new laws were related to terrorist acts which the country had been confronted with in the aftermath of the assassination attempt.

While saying he fully shared the President’s concern about all forms of terrorism, the CiO urged that due process should be observed in trials. He suggested that the OSCE Centre in Ashgabad should be allowed to send observers to judicial proceedings.

The CiO stressed once again the importance of not seeing the door closed on OSCE activities in the country. He said that the fate of prisoners of conscience and the conditions of imprisoned people in general in Turkmenistan had

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Peter-Vincent Schmid

Keeping communication lines open: Turkmen President Saparmurat Niyazov and Chairman-in-Office Jaap de Hoop Scheffer

also been taken up in his meeting with President Niyazov.

Kiev visit

On his way back to The Hague, the CiO stopped over in Kiev for a meeting with the Ukrainian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Anatoly Zlenko. The discussions focused on the ongoing efforts to seek a political solution for the dispute in the Moldovan/Transnistrian region.

The CiO and his counterpart agreed that constructive engagement by all parties was needed to build on the agreement to work jointly in a constitutional

commission. This would require the active involvement of the international community.

They also agreed on the need to establish effective border controls on the Ukrainian-Moldovan border, including the segment along the Transnistrian region.

Foreign Minister de Hoop Scheffer also announced the appointment of the former President of Finland, Martti Ahtisaari, as the CiO’s Personal Envoy for Central Asia.

The appointment reflects the significance attached by the Netherlands Chairmanship to relations between the OSCE and the five Central Asian States.

“It is important to continue the dialogue with these States within the framework of the OSCE, as this is the only Euro-Atlantic security organization they participate in,” he said in announcing former President Ahtisaari’s appointment.

Keith Jinks is Senior Press and Public Information Officer in the OSCE Secretariat.

Moscow Mechanism invoked by OSCE States

Ten participating States agreed on 20 December 2002 to invoke the rarely-used compulsory stage of an OSCE process known as the Moscow Mechanism, which was established in 1991 at the Moscow Ministerial Council and amended in Rome two years later. The process is intended to assist in obtaining information on human rights issues that are considered “a particularly serious threat to the fulfilment of the provisions of the (CSCE) human dimension”.

The ten States were of the opinion that this was now the case in Turkmenistan.

Under the Mechanism, any participating State can request information from other States on a human dimension issue and should normally receive a response within ten days. However, other parts of the Mechanism, including paragraph 12, which was invoked in this case, permit the appointment of up to three special rapporteurs from an approved list that is maintained by the OSCE’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

The ten States decided to appoint a special rapporteur, and through the ODIHR, invited Turkmenistan to select its own rapporteur from the same list by 22 January. Since no one was appointed, the single rapporteur, Professor Emmanuel Decaux, a noted French human rights expert, began to work on his report in February. He was prepared to travel to Turkmenistan to collect data for his report; however, he did not receive an entry visa.

Professor Decaux therefore had to compile his report from outside the country, using whatever sources were available to him, including official Turkmen transcripts from the investigations of an alleged presidential assassination attempt on 25 November. This investigation, and the legal process, had given rise to the original concern of the ten States.

The 53-page report (with a 53-page annex) was submitted to Turkmenistan and to the ten States. After the confidential period for comment expired, it was discussed by the Permanent Council on 13 March. *Keith Jinks*

Parliamentarians urged to help strengthen democratization

Iraqi crisis debated

By Jan Jooren

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OSCE/Ayhan Evrensel

Some 250 parliamentarians took part in the PA's Winter Meeting on 20 and 21 February

A special debate on the situation concerning Iraq was one of the highlights of the Winter Meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly (PA) in Vienna on 21 February. The debate was the first in the PA on a current international crisis, and demonstrated the Assembly's importance as a forum for inter-parliamentary dialogue. The subject had been placed on the agenda by the PA's Standing Committee on the recommendation of Assembly President Bruce George.

Twenty-five parliamentarians representing countries in Europe, North America, Central Asia, Asia and North Africa offered a full spectrum of national and personal views

on the crisis. Before an audience of more than 400 parliamentarians and members of OSCE national delegations, they spoke candidly and passionately about the probability of war and their hopes for a peaceful solution.

The Winter Meeting was opened on 20 February by PA President Bruce George, Austrian President Thomas Klestil and the OSCE Chairman-in-Office (CiO), Netherlands Foreign Minister Jaap de Hoop Scheffer.

The CiO urged 250 parliamentarians present to use their influence to help reinforce democratic structures and institutions throughout the OSCE region. "Your wisdom and insights are needed on many levels," he said. "If

there is nothing that can replace experience, there is certainly nothing that can replace parliamentary experience. In many OSCE regions, a reinforcement of democratic structures and institutions is urgently needed. That is something that cannot be achieved through government alone. It requires parliamentary action as well."

Minister de Hoop Scheffer expressed the Dutch Chairmanship's wish to involve the Parliamentary Assembly in positioning the 55-nation OSCE in a constantly changing security landscape. "This Assembly contributes to preventing the OSCE from existing in a void and floating freely with no connection to the peoples of its 55 participating States.

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Their voices can and should be heard through you," he said.

The Role of the OSCE in the New Architecture of Europe, the theme of the OSCE PA Annual Session, to be held in Rotterdam from 5 to 9 July, was discussed after the three General Committee Rapporteurs, Clifford Lincoln, Leonid Ivanchenko and Nebahat Albayrak, had

presented their draft reports.

OSCE Secretary General Jan Kubis and other senior OSCE officials addressed the parliamentarians on politico-military affairs, economic development and human rights, followed by question-and-answer sessions.

The Belarusian Delegation resumed its seat in the Assembly after a Standing

Committee debate on the issue of representation of the Delegation of the Belarusian National Assembly in the OSCE PA.

President Bruce George announced that Greece had offered to host the OSCE PA's autumn conference in 2004.

For more on the Winter Meeting, please see page 21.

Ten years of the High Commissioner on National Minorities: "More of the same"

By Walter Kemp

In January 1993, the first High Commissioner on National Minorities, Max van der Stoep, along with three advisers and a secretary, launched their operations from the top two floors of a historic building overlooking a canal in The Hague. Their task: to track inter-ethnic relations in the CSCE area and provide early warning on tensions involving national minority issues that have the potential of developing into conflict. If necessary, the High Commissioner would take early action to prevent tensions from erupting.

This mandate, adopted by the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) at the Helsinki Summit of July 1992, was ambitious, considering the instability that plagued parts of the CSCE (now OSCE) area at the beginning of the 1990s. It was also a tall order to ask one senior politician and his lean team to deliver.

But the mandate's uniqueness provided the High Commissioner with considerable scope for intrusiveness: depending on the situation, he could decide when and where to go. At the same time, he was expected to work impartially and discreetly.

Over the past decade, the High Commissioner and his staff have played a crucial role in reducing a wide range of tensions revolving around minority-majority relations. The Office has also been assisting governments to implement minority-related policies in line with

international standards.

"In its ten years of existence, the HCNM has been able to turn itself into a valuable instrument in the field of conflict prevention," Daan Everts, Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office, told an audience who had gathered at the Dutch Foreign Ministry on 31 January to commemorate the Office's tenth anniversary.

He noted that at a time when some argue that diplomacy is a thing of the past, "the HCNM has reinvented the use of some good old tools of diplomacy ... The past ten years have stressed time and again the simple truth that prevention is obviously best in terms of stability, preventing human misery and financial distress".

The following day, 1 February, the current High Commissioner, Rolf Ekeus, brought together a group of specialists in conflict prevention, inter-ethnic relations and minority rights in The Hague for a candid and constructive off-the-record dialogue on *Preventing Conflict through Integrating Diversity*. The seminar, supported by the Netherlands Foreign Ministry, examined potentially problematic minority-related issues in the OSCE area, emerging minority issues in an expand-

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The current High Commissioner of National Minorities, Ambassador Rolf Ekeus of Sweden (left), and his predecessor, Max van der Stoep of the Netherlands

ing Europe, and the challenge of achieving a delicate balance between security and human rights.

The participants remarked on the success of the HCNM over the past decade and encouraged the High Commissioner to go on doing "more of the same". At the same time, they debated the merits of tackling Western Europe's "new" minority issues relating to integration, anti-discrimination and xenophobia, and also considered examining socio-economic issues and the media in relation to minorities.

The High Commissioner was encouraged to deepen his engagement in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Ways of improving co-operation with inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations were also explored.

During the tenth anniversary commemorative events, Ambassador Ekeus, High Commissioner since July 2001, praised the supportive role that the Netherlands has been playing in the High Commissioner's activities, noting that the Netherlands had been instrumental in

drafting the Office's mandate, the first High Commissioner had been Dutch, and the High Commissioner's Office was located in the Hague.

And it looks as though The Hague will continue to serve as the High Commissioner's home ground: the Nether-

lands Government, in a statement on 31 January, offered to extend the stay of the Office beyond 2004.

Walter Kemp is Senior Adviser to the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities.

Plan of action against trafficking in human beings to sharpen focus

INTERVIEW

For about a year now, the Informal Group on Gender Equality and Anti-Trafficking in Human Beings has brought together participating States and other partners at monthly meetings at the Hofburg to discuss how to best implement commitments on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings.

With action to combat trafficking a declared priority of the Netherlands Chairmanship, the work of the Informal Group has assumed even more importance. The co-chairpersons of the Informal Group, Ambassador Danielle del Marmol, Head of the Permanent Mission of Belgium, and Dr. Vera Gracheva, Senior Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation, spoke to the OSCE Newsletter about how they see the Group's contribution.

This "modern-day slavery" now dominates Europe's efforts to combat organized crime. How does one begin to tackle the complex web of issues involved?

Ambassador del Marmol: Well, perhaps "dominate" is not the right word – but it is at the core of our efforts, yes. Organized crime – and its link to terrorism – is a monster, not something abstract. It is extremely difficult even to put a finger on actual numbers of victims. Trafficking is hugely sophisticated and involves a colossal amount of money.

We are perfectly aware of the enormity of the task.

The OSCE has already been quite active in preventing and combating trafficking for the past few years. The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) has been implementing projects since 2000. Projects range from research resulting in material such as the *Reference Guide for Anti-Trafficking Legislative Review* to setting up hotlines for victims and arranging for training for law enforcement officers. Important meetings have been held on the topic. In October 2001, for instance, a conference was held in Berlin, focusing on the response in countries of destination. The Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw in the autumn of 2002 also devoted a special session to the topic.

The Working Group on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, our group's former name, under the Chairmanship of Ambassador Maria-Pia Kothbauer, prepared a Gender Action Plan, which has proved very useful to our work. We have a Senior Gender Adviser in the Secretariat and we have a Code of Conduct for OSCE personnel in the field. We function in perfect harmony with the Senior Gender Adviser, as well as with the Chairperson of the Stability Pact Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings, which focuses on south-eastern Europe and operates under the auspices of the OSCE.

When we started down this road, in terms of co-operation within the Organi-

zation and its institutions, as well as with our partners, there was room for improvement. As for the participating States, I felt the same way with regard to the implementation of commitments. And then, there is also the problem of resources and their allocation. Money may be available; how to spend it usefully and without duplicating someone else's work is the trick.

We needed to bring together all the major actors. During the monthly discussions at the Hofburg, most of the participating States as well as the ODIHR, the Secretariat and a number of other actors have been present and have been active in the discussions.

I daresay that we have been successful. Minister Helga Konrad, on behalf of the Stability Pact Task Force, as well as the International Organization for Migration, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, have been taking part in each of our meetings. The European Commission, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the International Labour Organization, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development and the Council of Europe are also significant "external" partners in this effort.

Ms. Gracheva: The trafficking issue is more tragic, more complex, more risky and has a deeper impact on European security than I ever thought.

What our group has been aiming to

do is to bring the process to the next level – whether by helping participating States to gain a better awareness of the serious character of trafficking, or by improving our co-operation with international organizations, or by giving impetus to the implementation of existing commitments in the human rights sphere.

So far our regular meetings have enabled us to further clarify the role of the Organization *vis-à-vis* those of others, and to assess our capabilities, taking into account our unique comprehensive approach to security and our presence in the field. Because of the regular attendance of our partner organizations, we are able to look at what we are all doing so that we avoid duplicating each other's work and see where we can combine efforts.

So is the OSCE on the right track?

Ms. Gracheva: I think the declaration adopted by the Ministerial Council in Porto in December 2002 sums up the OSCE's basic role. It's not just rhetoric. It mobilizes participating States to combat trafficking and render assistance to victims through national referral mechanisms to ensure that victims do not face prosecution solely on the grounds that they have been trafficked, and that they are treated with respect and dignity.

Ambassador del Marmol: It was also this declaration that asked the Permanent Council, through our Informal Group, to draw up a new Action Plan. The idea is to complement and update the ODIHR's action plan – which is excellent – but mainly intended for internal use.

Ms. Gracheva: The Action Plan will set out clear and realistic recommendations to participating States. The recommendations will aim at creating the proper conditions for regular and efficient co-operation in combating trafficking at various levels among States, within the Organization, with international organizations and with non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Of course the OSCE can do much more to assist participating States in devising, implementing and monitoring its commitments. It has the advantage of its field offices and it also deals with vulnerable groups. The process is a very

long one and many projects depend on voluntary contributions, which are not always forthcoming. Here I might point out that the ODIHR's Anti-Trafficking Project Fund responds to urgent calls for action and supports OSCE field missions in integrating action against trafficking into their work. So far, the Fund has supported 25 projects in 11 countries, in addition to regional activities.

What do you foresee as the highlights of the Action Plan?

Ambassador del Marmol: We started discussing the first draft on 4 February, and our aim is to finalize it by the end of July and have it endorsed formally at this year's Ministerial Council. Everybody knows more or less what has to be done. At this stage, I can say that the text will be structured around the concepts of "prevention, protection and prosecution", as well as co-ordination among international organizations.

The root causes in countries of origin will have to be addressed – people falling into the trap of trafficking when they cannot make a decent living in their own countries, and similar problems. We also need to address factors relating to the so-called demand side of the problem, such as measures to regulate and monitor the employment of immigrants, and the demand-cheap supply dilemma. We will also make sure special measures in the fight against trafficking of children will be a prominent part of the plan.

How do you plan to address the demand-cheap supply dilemma?

Ms. Gracheva: Gradually, countries of origin, transit and destination have become more willing to confront the issues. The OSCE has been careful not to engage in finger-pointing. The issue concerns all countries and our efforts must be geared towards equalizing the responsibilities between them. Even if the level of awareness in supply countries were higher, as long as demand exists, there will always be sources of supply. And, as Ambassador del Marmol has said, we should not underestimate the power of organized crime.

The Action Plan will urge greater awareness-raising and will strongly rec-

ommend educational systems that consciously promote equality between men and women. We will also propose strong regulations and control over employment, marriage and adoption agencies and specific industries that use migrant labour. And we will advocate the training of police and border services.

Trafficking in women is obviously tied in with gender awareness. Is the OSCE paying sufficient attention to this aspect?

Ms. Gracheva: We have to face the fact that a long tradition of inequality between men and women cannot be wiped out overnight: it still needs a great deal of effort, more education, more economic progress and more enlightened decision-makers and societies. Gender inequality is one of the root causes of trafficking in women, but at the same time, trends show a growth in numbers of trafficked children and men – involving not only the sex industry, but also other activities such as begging and crime syndicates and the agriculture and construction sectors.

Ambassador del Marmol: Violence against women is a constant in our societies. What we have learned is that violence against women increases in societies in conflict and in post-conflict situations. This, in turn, pushes many women into taking extraordinary risks to flee violence and misery. This, plus what Dr. Gracheva has just said, is indeed the link between the two issues.

How has your group been progressing on the exchange of country information?

Ms. Gracheva: With the help of a format designed by the ODIHR, close to 30 participating States have so far shared information on a purely voluntary basis. They outlined their legislation and described how they co-operate with local NGOs, the referral mechanisms they have made available for victims, and other data. These reports, which are constantly being updated, are available on the ODIHR website and serve as a very useful resource for countries that are currently designing legislation or wish to learn from best practices.

In many traditional societies with strong ethnic ties, the issue is still taboo. How does this affect efforts to solve the problem?

Ambassador del Marmol: “Ethnic ties” are not the only reason why the issues of gender and action against trafficking are still somewhat taboo in many societies. More and more of our interlocutors from these countries realize, however, that there is indeed a problem. This is where the OSCE’s awareness-raising role comes in!

Ms. Gracheva: This factor does pose serious difficulties, for example, in gathering and analyzing data – exactly what we need to be better at – because the safety of victims and witnesses has to be the prime consideration. Sensitive information can be used by traffickers, and let’s not forget the attitudes of families and communities towards the victims, which might make it difficult for them to be reintegrated into society. This is why the Action Plan will recommend a very strong system of victim protection, as well as investigation and prosecution of traffickers.

Having said that, the OSCE has made substantive progress in some areas. But as a rule, it is dangerous to stereotype traffickers, because criminals have no ethnicity and no religion. They are criminals, and compartmentalizing them is counter-productive and only serves to give rise to hostility and intolerance.

What do you think of the media coverage on this issue?

Ambassador del Marmol: I’ve seen reports that covered the issue quite well, that inform people properly and raise their awareness of the complexity of the issues. However, there have also been times when I have felt ill at ease with some television coverage; there is a bit of sensationalism and even some glamour in the way some of the victims are presented.

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Ambassador Danielle del Marmol (right) and Dr. Vera Gracheva, Chairpersons of the Informal Group on Gender Equality and Anti-Trafficking in Human Beings

Ms. Gracheva: We have some examples of the media’s involvement in awareness-raising campaigns. But the issue demands more than this. The media should actually play a major role in mobilizing society and authorities to combat trafficking. Media outlets should take a more responsible attitude towards the content of announcements of job opportunities abroad. Most of the victims are lured by this deceptive advertising. The media should also promote a more compassionate and humanitarian attitude towards victims and zero tolerance towards exploitation in any form.

In Warsaw, in September 2002, you moderated a panel devoted to trafficking in human beings at the ODIHR/OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. Kathy Bolkovac, an American police officer who once served with the United Nations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, was part of the panel. Any reflections on her experience?

Ms. Gracheva: Kathy is a real survivor of a frightening and depressing experience: serving as a whistleblower who [in 2000] uncovered international officials involved in trafficking and was later dismissed from her duties. Her tes-

timony has had a far greater impact than any report could have had. It was proof of the shameful direct involvement of international personnel in an activity they should have been trying to prevent.

The Bolkovac case made one realize the significance of an adequate Code of Conduct and effective disciplinary measures that raise awareness and hold staff of international organizations accountable for their behaviour. And it underlined how important the OSCE’s efforts are in urging other organizations to adopt regulations for this purpose.

Ambassador del Marmol: The fact that we no longer deny that the situation exists is progress; in fact, we draw attention to our field staff’s responsibilities in this area. A year ago, Ambassador Gerard Stoudmann, former Director of the ODIHR, and OSCE Secretary General Jan Kubis called on countries not to close their eyes, but to hold their citizens accountable for any involvement in criminal activities in their mission area. They stressed that training and codes of conduct were important, but without real accountability, international efforts to combat trafficking could not be credible. The Porto Declaration is very emphatic about the accountability of the Organization’s staff.

Internal trafficking in human beings: Kosovo's growing problem

New safe house opens for victims with no place to go

By Pekka Reinikainen

“Many of the problems surrounding trafficking in human beings are now better known,” says Ariana Qosaj-Mustafa, Legal Adviser in the Victim Advocacy and Support Section of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo (OMiK), “but one aspect that has not received enough attention is the fact that – at least in Kosovo – the number of people being trafficked internally is disturbingly high, even if the reported cases are far fewer than those involving trafficking across international borders.”

The report, *Trafficking in Human Beings in Southeastern Europe*, co-published by the OSCE in 2002, says there is growing evidence of internal trafficking of women and girls from Serbia into Kosovo, and within Kosovo itself, involving both Kosovo Serb and Kosovo Albanian women and girls. As there is no issue of cross-border migration or work permits for women from Serbia, the report says, the police do not detain or interview them.

This is the concern that is being addressed by a Memorandum of Understanding signed in December 2002 between the OSCE and a Kosovo non-governmental organization (NGO). Under the agreement, OMiK would provide the NGO with financing and other assistance to enable it to open a second safe house for victims of internal trafficking, this time for minorities, including those with special language needs.

“The fact that we are supporting the opening of the facilities especially for this group indicates how seriously the OSCE is taking the problems posed by

internal trafficking,” says Carsten Weber, Director of OMiK’s Human Rights and Rule of Law Department.

“In cases of trafficking across borders, victims are often repatriated, but those who are trafficked internally remain here,” explains Ms. Qosaj-Mustafa. “Their problems will have to be tackled locally and they may have to be relocated.”

The special problems of internally trafficked victims are among a comprehensive set of issues that will be considered by a working group to be set up in the spring specifically to draw up a com-

Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), is the driving force behind measures taken by the international community in counter-trafficking.

No stunts

Police operations are the most common way for women and girls to come to the attention of the OSCE and its partner, the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

“We do not raid bars, brothels and other suspect establishments in the way depicted in Hollywood movies,” says an international police officer serving with

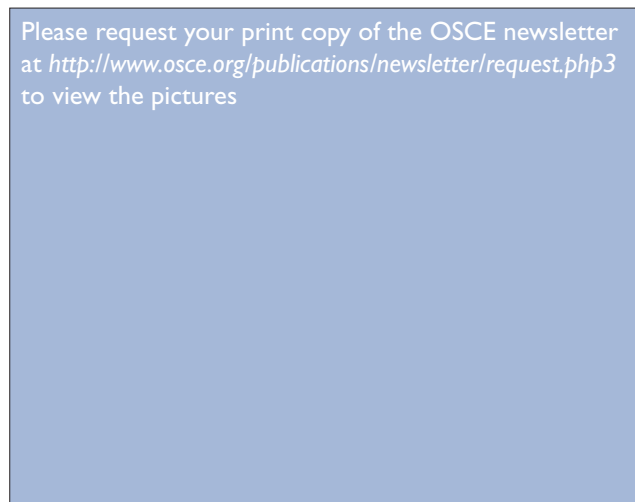
the UNMIK Police Trafficking and Prostitution Investigation Unit. “Breaking through doors, screaming orders and pointing guns at people would only make our task more difficult. We aim at results. That’s why we like to keep our profile as low as possible. No publicity stunts.”

The police usually enter premises quietly, identify themselves to the owners of an establishment and speak to the women in private. “It’s all very civilized. If we suspect that some of the women are victims, or if they actually indicate their wish to leave the establishment, we escort them to the police station.”

OMiK is putting the finishing touches to a memorandum of understanding with the

police and the UNMIK’s justice pillar – the UNMIK Police and the Department of Justice – to support the establishment of a new 24-hour “interim secure facility” for victims of trafficking. Within these safe confines, victims will be able to weigh the different options presented

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About this illustration: *The search for a work of art reflecting the many stories of tragedy and rescue in the fight against trafficking led to this painting of a young woman by Kosovo artist Musa Kalaveshi. Entitled simply “Damaged Portrait”, it was part of a collection of art pieces saved from total destruction during the conflict in Kosovo. The exhibition was organized by UNMIK’s Department of Culture earlier this year.*

Courtesy of Musa Kalaveshi/UNMIK Department of Culture

to them and will be able to remain in Kosovo to testify in court against their perpetrators.

The first step in a set of standard operational procedures involves an interview with the possible victim by one of OMiK's Human Rights Officers. If the victim, usually a woman, is suspected of being trafficked, then, following the initial screening by the OSCE, she is transported to Pristina for a more in-depth interview with the IOM and offered assistance for repatriation. As the main agency that provides direct assistance to trafficked persons who wish to return home voluntarily, the Geneva-based organization operates safe houses and programmes for rehabilitation, repatriation and reintegration into the victim's place of origin.

Legal framework

Experts in a working group chaired by the OSCE contributed significantly to the preparation of UNMIK's groundbreaking Regulation 2001/4, which made trafficking in people illegal in Kosovo. Punishments under the statute can be as severe as 20 years' imprisonment.

"To be able to counter-attack crime of this nature, a firm legal basis is absolutely necessary," says Carsten Weber. "The different arms of law and order should all give it their full attention. Trafficking is a violation of the most basic rights of human beings and is also extremely difficult to prosecute as an aspect of organized crime."

In 2002, the number of people convicted of crimes related to trafficking in human beings was 53, in contrast to ten

in 2001. So far, punishments have ranged from a suspended sentence of two years to four years' imprisonment. Some critics say that the Kosovo courts have been too lenient in their sentences.

Mr. Weber believes the OSCE is well positioned to advise its various host authorities in south-eastern Europe on how to harmonize their legislation. "The Organization's proven expertise in this part of the world – in training police and judicial professionals – opens up possibilities that we should seize," he says. "We are a major actor in the region and can significantly contribute to addressing trafficking in human beings."

Pekka Reinikainen is Senior Public Affairs Officer, OSCE Mission in Kosovo.

Trafficking in human beings in Kosovo: Facts and figures

International Organization for Migration (IOM) statistics reveal that, between February 2000 and September 2002, 53 per cent of the known victims trafficked to Kosovo were from Moldova. About a quarter were from Romania and 13 per cent were from Ukraine. Albania, Bulgaria, Kosovo and the Russian Federation accounted for very small shares.

Of the 322 people assisted by the IOM during this same period, almost 70 per cent came from either "poor" or "very poor" circumstances. Nearly 80 per cent had fallen prey to false job promises, while eight per cent had been kidnapped.

More than half of the women assisted said they had been recruited by an acquaintance or a friend. Neighbours, boyfriends, family friends and relatives were mentioned in the list of people who lured the victims into the trafficking net. There were also cases of "twilight-zone marriages", in which the husband sells his wife to slave traders.

More than three-quarters of the victims were exploited for sexual services. Six per cent identi-

fied themselves as dancers or striptease performers. Almost three per cent had been sold for the purpose of becoming private sex-slaves.

The victims reported that more than half of their clientele in Kosovo were local residents, contradicting the commonly held view that expatriates form the customer base for the sex industry.

The report, Trafficking in Human Beings in South-eastern Europe (see page 10), does mention that the majority of the customers are local men, "although members of the international community, mostly KFOR soldiers", constitute a sizeable 40 per cent of the clientele. In terms of revenue, however, the international community accounts for a disproportionately large share.

The report is a joint publication of UNICEF, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

OMiK Public Information staff

“Modern-day slavery”: Economic impact examined

By Ivo Kersten

Although trafficking in human beings and efforts to combat it have been high on the international policy agenda in recent years, the economic aspects of this “modern-day slavery”, as it is often called, have not been sufficiently analyzed. To examine its root causes as well as the links between trafficking networks, financial flows, transportation routes and the impact on the economy, a seminar was organized by the OSCE in Ioannina, Greece, on 17 and 18 February.

Keynote speaker Roger Plant, Head of the International Labour Organization’s Special Action Programme to Combat Forced Labour, noted that the seminar – organized by the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities – was markedly different from other meetings on trafficking. Its emphasis on the economic dimension, he said, encouraged participating States and other actors to take a holistic, “big-picture” approach to the problem.

“Trafficking not only causes human misery, it also devastates economies and puts intolerable pressure on political systems,” said Frank Majoor, Secretary-

General of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. “The growing role of criminal networks is extremely worrying.” He was representing the OSCE Chairmanship, which co-operated in organizing the seminar.

The issues were discussed from complementary perspectives: the demand for sexual services and the demand for cheap labour, and the causes underlying the supply of victims from countries in transition as well as from developed countries.

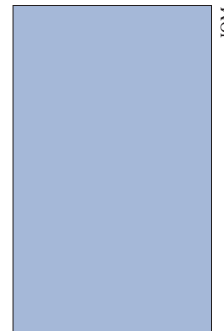
The seminar recognized that both supply and demand were subject to the influence of ruthless criminal networks which defied national and international law, bribed authorities, trampled on the rights of victims, and laundered illegal profits. The discussions underlined the fact that the economic aspects of trafficking in human beings were interrelated, and so required joint action by the OSCE participating States.

A cross section of representatives from international and non-governmental organizations, OSCE delegations and OSCE field missions drew up recommendations on strengthening their co-operation and their own activities. The

proposals will serve as a substantive contribution to the 11th meeting of the OSCE Economic Forum, scheduled to take place in Prague from 20 to 23 May, and to the OSCE’s action plan to combat trafficking in human beings, which is currently being prepared.

As the *OSCE Newsletter* went to press, the third and final preparatory seminar leading up to the Economic Forum was under way in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on 17 and 18 March, focusing on the obvious and hidden consequences of trafficking in drugs for the economies of OSCE countries. The Prague Forum will examine the interlinkages between trafficking in human beings, drugs, and small arms and light weapons, a priority concern of the 2003 Netherlands Chairmanship.

Ivo Kersten is an Adviser in OCEEA.



100M

Why the OSCE is equipped to act against human trafficking

“Because human trafficking involves human rights abuses, poor border controls, unlawful treatment of victims, ineffective police forces and other shortcomings of weak states, it touches upon everything the OSCE field missions are all about. What’s more, the OSCE and its missions deal not only with the human dimension of human trafficking but with the economic one as well: the illegal money flows resulting from it. The Netherlands will therefore push to give human trafficking higher priority on the OSCE’s list of focus areas.

“There are already some excellent examples of what concrete measures the OSCE can take to fight human trafficking. For instance: preventive campaigns including the economic empowerment of potential victims (in the Ukraine, women receive special training and educa-

tion); better prosecution of criminals through training programmes for police and legal authorities (as in the Balkans); or setting up witness protection programmes for victims (as is being done in Serbia).

“Again, we will need to work with other organizations to be most effective. In Ioannina, Greece, we had a joint OSCE-EU debate about human trafficking. That is the way forward: using the particular assets of the respective organizations – in the case of the OSCE, expertise and field missions – and then formulating a well co-ordinated strategy.”

Chairman-in-Office Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, addressing the Parliamentary Assembly on 20 February 2003

Doing right by Bosnia and Herzegovina's returnees

OSCE Mission to BiH/Mersha Causevic

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A question of fairness

By Emir Salihovic and Kevin Sullivan

management policies and practices to make sure they do not encourage discrimination in training, salaries, promotions and dismissals. The companies have also agreed to keep a close watch for any form of harassment on the job.

"The project is crucial to the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina, since its

best and brightest could well end up leaving the country if they cannot find work," says Mr. Mandic.

The companies selected are in areas where many residents have returned to their pre-war homes. They have been given a deadline and clear goals to prove their commitment to change.

Right now job-seekers generally turn to firms and companies that are owned and operated by people of the same ethnicity. But the Fair Employment Project hopes to change that mindset.

The Splonum Company, which is in Bosniac-dominated Sanski Most in northeastern BiH, recently acted on the recommendation of OSCE experts to advertise vacancies in Republika Srpska. The manufacturer of construction materials has been swamped with applications from Serbs who plan to return to the area.

"Since we joined the project, we have been noticing significant improvements in the interaction between our employees

and our managers," says Mira Lendic, a manager from the Metal AD Company in Gradiska, a town close to the northern border with Croatia. "We are communicating more and understanding each other better, and I feel this reflects positively on our work."

She adds that management has asked workers to report any incidents that they believe to be discriminatory.

Josko Mandic sees the Fair Employment Project as the best hope for creating a dynamic workforce in Bosnia and Herzegovina. "Even though the labour laws are apparently in tune with standard practices elsewhere in the world, there are no provisions to enforce them. Through the project, companies have a better chance of bringing the most qualified candidates on board. At the same time, returnees will have access to desperately needed jobs. And fair and equal treatment will bring out the best in employees."

Goran Turudija, the OSCE Fair Employment Officer in Banja Luka, the capital of the BiH entity Republika Srpska, agrees. "The project is enabling employers in the public and private sectors to attract investment from the outside and to integrate themselves into the international marketplace by applying up-to-date methods," he says.

Emir Salihovic is Press Officer and Kevin Sullivan is Senior Public Information Officer at the OSCE Mission to BiH.

Splonum is one of several companies in Bosnia and Herzegovina that has agreed to improve its hiring practices

Srebrenka V., 52, a university professor with a multi-ethnic heritage, is among the thousands in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) who lost their jobs during and immediately after the conflict. Now, the OSCE Mission is helping people like Srebrenka return to the workforce through the Fair Employment Project, which was launched in April 2002.

Our goal is to promote equal access to work and equal treatment in the workplace for everybody, regardless of ethnicity, gender or political affiliation," says Josko Mandic, Fair Employment Officer in the OSCE Human Rights Department in Sarajevo.

Under the project, more than 20 private and state-owned companies have signed a memorandum of understanding with the OSCE to increase diversity in offices and factories through recruitment procedures that reach out to people of different ethnic backgrounds. The firms are also reviewing their overall

OSCE and UNHCR discuss refugee returns

The OSCE and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) held a regional meeting of senior officials on 21 February to discuss problems related to the return of refugees to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro.

Discussions highlighted the interna-

tional community's continuing concern about the return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes. The OSCE and the UNHCR emphasized the need for returnees to have an unconditional right to repossess their property, and for workable solutions to be found on behalf of those who used to live in formerly socialized

housing. Governments were also asked to intensify their efforts to create conditions conducive to the return of refugees.

The meeting, which took place at the OSCE Mission to Croatia, was one of a series of regular consultations between the two organizations. A similar meeting was held in Sarajevo in October 2002.

OSCE

NEWSLETTER



FROM THE FIELD

Belarus and OSCE turn new page

"I would like to recall the resolve of Belarus and the OSCE, expressed during their negotiations in December, to turn a new page, to make a fresh start," said the new Head of the OSCE Office in Minsk, Ambassador Eberhard Heyken, at a meeting with the press in the Belarusian capital on 17 February. "My endeavour will be to establish an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. My work will be done in the spirit of sincerity and reliability."

society and economic and environmental affairs. Ambassador Heyken said he and his staff would monitor those areas and report accurately on them.

"This co-operative approach reflects a development which has been more and more recognized within the OSCE system in recent years, that is, in a period during which field missions in nearly 20 OSCE participating States came into being," he said. "An OSCE mission cannot function properly if it is separated or isolated from the State, the government and the society of the host country."

Ambassador Heyken said he had received a friendly welcome in meetings with Belarusian Foreign Minister Mikhail Khvastov and Foreign Policy Adviser to the President, Igor Leschenya. He expressed the hope that the spirit of co-operation and good will would continue.

The Ambassador also said that the Office would use its right to maintain contacts with all national and local authorities, as well as with every person, individually or in association with others.

Ambassador Heyken read law and, in 1966, joined the diplomatic service of the Federal Republic of Germany. After postings in Calcutta and Washington, D.C., he served as his Government's Minister in Moscow. He retired from the diplomatic service in 2000 after his ambassadorial posts in Switzerland and Ukraine. Born in Ahausen in Lower Saxony, Germany, Ambassador Heyken speaks Russian.

The Deputy Head of the OSCE Office in Minsk is Vahram Abadjian, an Armenian national.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Armed forces hold joint exercise

The armed forces of both entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina – the Federation and Republika Srpska – conducted a command post exercise on 5 February, which simulated a natural disaster along the boundary line separating the two entities.

The exercise, the first held jointly in

more than ten years, served as an opportunity for the entity armed forces to practise working together in a simulated emergency situation, and to test the effectiveness of civil and military procedures in managing an actual natural disaster. The event took place under the auspices of the Joint Consultative Commission and its Chairman, General Claudio Zappulla, the OSCE's Personal Representative for Annex 1B of the Dayton Peace Accords.

Serbia and Montenegro: Interpol receives technical assistance

Special equipment, financed by the Dutch Embassy in Belgrade, was handed over to the Interpol bureau in Belgrade on 19 February. The assistance, part of a project co-ordinated by the OSCE, will enable the Interpol bureau to have equipment with the highest standards for fighting international crime, directly benefiting the Interior Ministries in both Serbia and Montenegro.

The project is part of the OSCE Mission's police reform process, which includes police training in human rights, assistance in border policing, multi-ethnic police training in southern Serbia, and tangible support in the fight against organized crime and corruption.

OSCE Mission to Skopje: Youth conferences continue

The second joint Youth Leadership Conference of the OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje and the Nansen Dialogue Centre took place in Mavrovo, near Skopje, from 28 February to 2 March. Through lectures, role-playing and debates, secondary school students from the Kumanovo/Lipkovo area developed skills in leadership, conflict resolution, team-building, and seeking and implementing solutions to problems in their communities.

The event built on the first successful youth leadership conference for secondary school students in Tetovo in December 2002. Students from Skopje

OSCE/Ayhan Evrensel

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Ambassador Eberhard Heyken

The former German Ambassador to Switzerland (1994-96) and Ukraine (1996-2000) was appointed to his new post by the Dutch Chairmanship on 30 January.

The OSCE Office in Minsk was officially established by the Permanent Council on 1 January 2003, replacing the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group, which ceased its activities on 31 December 2002.

The new Office, to be composed of five international staff and up to eight local staff, will co-operate with the Government and focus its activities on institution-building, the rule of law, civil

and Ohrid/Struga will be the next target groups. The conferences are funded by the Canadian International Development Agency.

Kosovo: Municipal governance to incorporate gender issues

Local leaders and community groups in Kosovo met on 27 February to explore ways of taking gender issues into account in municipal structures and day-to-day municipal administrative practices. The participants in the event, which was organized by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the OSCE, shared their knowledge and insights gained from previous OSCE-UNIFEM information and training sessions for governmental institutions, women's groups and the media.

The participants included the presidents of Kosovo's municipalities and their chief executive officers, municipal gender officers, UN municipal administrators, and women's groups from all over Kosovo, as well as members of the Kosovo Assembly's Gender Equality Commission.

Kosovo: Albanian-language human rights texts now available

European standards relating to human rights are finding their way into the courtrooms of Kosovo. The OSCE is providing each judge, prosecutor, attorney and law professor with an Albanian-language text containing decisions of the European Court of Human Rights. On 24 February, Pascal Fieschi, Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, handed the first texts to the President of the Supreme Court of Kosovo, the Public Prosecutor and the President of the Chamber of Advocates.

The European Court in Strasbourg is the international judicial body that applies and interprets the European Convention on Human Rights, which has been made applicable to Kosovo's courts. The first 40 cases have been translated

OSCE/Ljubomir Kotek

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Kazakhstan's judges and journalists are learning more about the issue of defamation

into Albanian by the Albanian Centre for Human Rights in Tirana. The OSCE Mission will tap a similar resource for Serbian-speaking legal professionals.

Kosovo: Efforts to reform local government continue

The second of three conferences on decentralization and reform of local government in Kosovo was held in Pristina on 17 and 18 February. Since the second municipal elections in October 2002, municipal governments have been acquiring greater competence in administering local affairs, particularly in dealing with financial issues. However, people's expectations have also grown and will need to be met through a new culture of local governance.

The event was organized by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo and the Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development. Recommendations from the conferences will be shared with the Council of Europe, which is leading efforts to develop proposals for the reform of local government in Kosovo.

Serbia (Serbia and Montenegro): Environmental centre opens

The Centre for Cross-Sectional Cooperation and Inter-Agency Co-ordination, specializing in environmental issues, opened in Belgrade on 25 February. A joint endeavour of the OSCE Mission to Serbia and Montenegro and the

Serbian Ministry for Natural Resources and the Environment, the Centre will serve as a co-ordinating link between the Serbian Government and international and local environmental organizations.

The Centre will also act as a structure supporting the implementation of environmental legislation and will develop a strategy for the creation of an environmental information system for Serbia. The OSCE Mission will provide the Centre with five environmental experts.

Kazakhstan: Media seminar to discuss defamation

A seminar in Almaty on 27 and 28 February improved the expertise of judges and journalists in matters concerning defamation in the media and legal precedents in democratic States. The seminar was organized by the OSCE Centre in Almaty, the International Foundation for Protection of Freedom of Speech (*Adil Soz*), and the Delegation of the European Commission in Kazakhstan. The participants included representatives from the Union of Judges of the Republic of Kazakhstan and non-governmental organizations such as *Article 19*, the Global Campaign for Free Expression.

Montenegro (Serbia and Montenegro): Police programme under way

A police training programme designed to improve police competence in handling traffic, border control and criminal investigation was inaugurated on 17 February by the OSCE Mission to Serbia and Montenegro and the Montenegrin Ministry of the Interior. The training will cover issues ranging from improving communication between police and citizens to drug identification.

The new programme plans to train 1,200 Montenegrin police officers before the end of July. The inaugural ceremony took place at the Police School in Danilovgrad in Podgorica.

Azerbaijan: OSCE and BBC train journalists in election reporting

A two-week training course on election reporting was organized from 12 to 21 February by the OSCE Office in Baku together with the BBC Training Centre, which is based in Yekaterinburg, Russia. Experts helped some 25 staff members of local independent radio and television stations as well as press officers of political parties to improve their professional skills and to strengthen their role as the main vehicles of information on elections.

The programme is the first in a series of seminars planned by the OSCE Office in Baku for Azerbaijani media throughout the country, in preparation for the presidential elections scheduled later this year. The aim is to strengthen the capability of media outlets to educate voters, report on the election campaign and serve as a platform for communicating the political parties' messages to the electorate.

Azerbaijan: Proposed Election Code debated at conference

A draft of a new Unified Election Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan was the main topic of a conference in Baku on 26 and 27 February. The Code will be considered and adopted at the spring session of the *Milli Mejlis* (Azerbaijani parliament). Discussions among some 120 participants were broadcast on State television.

Ambassador Peter Burkhard, Head of the OSCE Office in Baku, said the conference was especially important in providing the public with an opportunity to become familiar with election law provisions before the presidential elections in October. The event was organized by the OSCE Office in Baku, with the support of the International Foundation for Election Systems.

Georgia: Long-term project to destroy munitions launched

Georgian authorities and the OSCE

signed an agreement on 30 January establishing a project to destroy or recycle vast munitions dumps that had been left behind on former military bases at

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Destroying or recycling Georgia's munition dumps is expected to take several years

various locations in Georgia. The stockpiles of ammunition and bombs are considered a threat to the country's ecology and security.

The project's preparatory stage will lay the foundations for a process that is expected to take several years. The \$100,000 financing for the three-month initial phase came from the OSCE Voluntary Fund, which was set up pursuant to agreements between Georgia and the Russian Federation reached at the Istanbul Summit in 1999. Financial support for the project has been assured by the Governments of Finland, Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Sweden and Turkey.

Kazakhstan: Central Asia takes lessons from EU economic model

The experience of the European Union in economic integration was presented as a possible model for Central Asian countries at an international conference on 5 March. The discussions and the background material, which will be published in the form of a brochure, covered the history of Europe's economic co-operation and integration, legal and administrative structures, the impact of EU enlargement, relations with other regional economic organizations, and the influence of the political situation on the integration process.

The event was organized by the OSCE Centre in Almaty, in close co-operation with the Delegation of the European Commission in Almaty and the Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan

OSCE/Alexander Nitzsche

Kyrgyzstan: Central Asia examines comprehensive security

Participants in an OSCE workshop on the economic and environmental dimension as it relates to Central Asia said more attention should be paid to these aspects of the Organization's approach to security. Issues dealing with water supply and nuclear waste in the Osh region were of utmost concern to the audience.

The workshop, held in Bishkek on 20 February, was organized by the newly founded OSCE Academy and the OSCE Centre in Bishkek on the premises of the Kyrgyz National University.

One of the speakers, Professor Turar K. Koichuev, Director of the Centre for Economic and Social Reforms under the Kyrgyz Ministry of Finance, compared the economic situation of the Central Asian countries with those of other countries of similar size. "Foreign investors are interested in the whole region and not only in one country," he said. "The whole region should become an attractive partner by developing more specialization, expertise and international co-operation."

Serbia and Montenegro

The OSCE Mission to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has been renamed the OSCE Mission to Serbia and Montenegro. The change came into effect on 13 February, following the adoption and promulgation of the Constitutional Charter of Serbia and Montenegro by the parliament of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on 4 February.



PRESS PROFILE

Excerpts from a recent selection of articles on the OSCE and its activities

OSCE FIELD AREAS

AFP, 27 January

A scandal broke in December when [Montenegrin Deputy State Attorney Zoran] Piperovic and six other men were arrested on the evidence of a Moldovan woman who claimed she had been held as a sex slave for several years in the Montenegrin capital Podgorica ... On Sunday, the 28-year-old woman ... was allowed to leave the country after investigative judge Ana Vukovic decided that her presence was no longer necessary to the investigation. The OSCE mission in Yugoslavia welcomed Vukovic's decision, saying it "comes as a response to (the victim's) wish to return to her family."

HINA, Croatian news agency, 26 January

The OSCE, which has several times forwarded its remarks concerning the matter [a final legislative bill on Croatian Radio and Television, designed to make it more independent], has described the last bill before the final one as an improvement over the previous drafts and expressed the belief that with several changes it could provide a good basis for a new law.

The Economist, 22 February

Officially the OSCE, which had sent 200 observers [to Armenia's presidential election] said the election process culminating in the vote on February 19th "fell short of international standards in several key respects". Privately, one experienced OSCE team member called it "a disaster" ... At the last moment somebody's nerves must have cracked, under a bit of OSCE arm-twisting, maybe. By the afternoon, the election commission was announcing that Mr. Kocharian had fallen just short of an absolute majority ...

AFP, 5 February

More than a dozen people were

injured after police raided a town in Azerbaijan which has been a stronghold of opposition to President Heidar Aliyev, residents said ... The incident brought immediate condemnation from local human rights activists and the OSCE said it was preparing to issue a statement on the raid.

Washington Post, 19 January

Russia ended a seven-year-old mission by the OSCE that monitored human rights in the war-torn Russian republic of Chechnya ... Vladimir Lukin, deputy speaker of the Duma, said the Kremlin is right that Chechnya is an internal matter. But he said to ban the OSCE entirely "is a very serious mistake" that will isolate Russia and hurt Putin's reputation in the West.

AP, 3 March

Two top European human rights bodies expressed concern Monday over the upcoming constitutional referendum in Chechnya, saying Russian authorities need to do more to ensure a fair and accurate ballot in the war-ravaged republic. The OSCE and the Council of Europe sent a joint mission to Chechnya to assess conditions ahead of the March 23 vote, in which Chechens will be asked to vote on a new constitution subordinate to Russian law. In a statement, the groups noted the continuing violence in Chechnya and urged Russian officials to make it easier for thousands of Chechen refugees living outside the republic to cast ballots.

Interfax, 21 February

The Russian Foreign Ministry has hailed steps to reinstate Belarusian deputies into the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE ... [Foreign Ministry spokesman Aleksandr] Yakovenko expressed hopes that Belarus' return to the Assembly "will contribute to its further integration in the community of European institutions".

Reuters, 27 February

The EU and the US agreed to impose a travel ban on 17 members of the separatist authorities in the Transdniestrian region of Moldova ... In a joint statement, the EU and the US said, "We stress our support for the efforts of mediators within the framework of the OSCE to reach an early political settlement to the conflict."

Radio Free Europe, 3 March

As part of its efforts to strengthen the judiciary system in Tajikistan, the Dushanbe mission of the OSCE has initiated the creation of regional bar associations in Sughd and Khatlon provinces. Such regional organizations will permit the establishment of a National Association of Barristers in Dushanbe by the end of March.

Reuters, 5 March

Turkmenistan ... has sentenced an environmental activist a day after promising to free him, a human rights group said on Wednesday. The prison term for activist Farid Tukhbatullin was an apparent slap in the face to efforts by Europe's largest security and rights group, the OSCE, to rein in Turkmenistan's autocratic president-for-life, Saparmurat Niyazov ... The OSCE chairman, de Hoop Scheffer, met Niyazov in the Turkmen capital Ashgabat on Monday to talk about rights concerns following mass arrests since the reported attack on the president. "The president has assured me that Mr. Tukhbatullin will be released soon," de Hoop Scheffer said afterwards. Instead, a Turkmen court on Tuesday convicted Tukhbatullin of concealing a criminal act.

Institute for War and Peace Reporting (London), 20 February

A big increase of ethnic Albanians in the Macedonian police appears to be encouraging trust between the rival communities ... The interior ministry orga-

nizes three courses a year in conjunction with the OSCE. About 500 minority recruits were trained in 2000 and 600 more should be ready by July 2003. The campaign has already started bearing fruit with the introduction of mixed patrols, each consisting of three Macedonians and three Albanians, in areas dominated by the latter.

OSCE IN GENERAL

Radio Free Europe, 24 February

The new chairman of the OSCE, Dutch Foreign Minister Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, describes human trafficking as a “stain on democratic society”. Scheffer told parliamentarians from the 55 OSCE member States that they could help the fight against human trafficking by introducing tough new laws in their national parliaments and tightening present ones ... The next step in the OSCE’s campaign against human trafficking will come at a meeting in Prague in May. Scheffer said he hopes it will take initial steps toward introducing a common set of anti-trafficking measures that can be enforced in all 55 States.

Rompres, 24 February

As well as terrorism and the arms of mass destruction, small arms and light weapons are an important issue of world security; the implementation of legislation in this field in Romania is able to contribute to the fight against organized crime, Romania’s Foreign Minister Mircea Geoana told the opening of an ongoing regional seminar in Bucharest on the implementation of the OSCE Document and the UN Action Plan on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Frankfurter Rundschau, 28 January

[From a letter to the editor by the Chairman of the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, Mr. Romani Rose] The UN study on the Roma in eastern Europe ... is another paper in the senseless series of similar “opinions” and “recommendations” that have been issued by

the UN, the EU, the OSCE and the Council of Europe. The political will to act to improve the – in some cases catastrophic – living conditions of Roma minorities in eastern European countries is still lacking.

Washington Post, 17 January

[From a commentary entitled *First Wars First*, by Wolfgang Ischinger, Germany’s ambassador to the United States] Since September 11, 2001, the West has had a new agenda. The single new strategic challenge for the West in the decade ahead will be how to shape its relationship with the greater Middle East. This includes the issues of terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction ... the West should develop and encourage an intensified dialogue with the countries of the region to help prevent the “clash of civilizations”. During the Cold War, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) was a valuable instrument for the West. Our experience with the three “CSCE baskets”, which allowed us to discuss security, economic and human rights issues, will be useful as we look for ways to bring Europe, the US, Russia and the countries of the Middle East closer together.

AP, 24 January

Freimut Duve of the OSCE condemned the FBI and the US Immigration and Naturalization Service for monitoring library records and bookstore receipts under the USA Patriot Act ... Though the OSCE is powerless to actually force any change in American law, Duve hopes his criticism will help spark debate on the issue. The 55-nation OSCE largely monitors human rights and elections across Eastern Europe, the Balkans and the former Soviet Union. But as an OSCE member, the US is also subject to its scrutiny.

Water 21 magazine (London), February 2003

OSCE’s background is one of dealing with political, military and human rights

issues, but it has in recent years been given a mandate for the economic and environmental dimensions of security. Stretching from Alaska to Vladivostok, there are more than 100 international watersheds in the region and, as Marcin Swiecicki, coordinator of OSCE economic and environmental activities, pointed out at the Delft conference [in November 2002], there have been ‘intensive territorial changes’ in the region. There are now 55 sovereign states, compared to just 35 in 1989.

OSCE’s mandate includes conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict resolution. Not only has the organization turned its attention to water as a means of fostering co-operation – its 2001 annual economic forum had water management as a focus – but it is already using water in each of those types of situations ... Gianluca Rampolla, who works for Swiecicki ... gives as an example of conflict prevention OSCE’s work in the Aral Sea region.

Break-up of the Soviet Union brought the sudden loss of an integrating mechanism, and there is a risk of conflict or instability, he says. The region is a priority for OSCE, but it has been less clear how to intervene. What OSCE is doing, in partnership with the UN Economic Commission for Europe and the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific, is to help the governments of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan create an intergovernmental transboundary commission for the Chu and Talas rivers.

AP, 27 February

Afghanistan asked the OSCE to grant it “partner for co-operation” status. Afghan Foreign Minister Dr. Abdullah told the current OSCE chairman, Dutch Foreign Minister Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, that he hoped for closer co-operation and an exchange of views and information on issues of mutual interest ... “It is now up to the 55 member States of the Organization to decide how they want to proceed and on what forms co-operation might take,” Richard Murphy, an OSCE spokesman, told the AP.

Visit the OSCE website: www.osce.org





UPDATE

OFFICE FOR DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

ELECTIONS

Kyrgyzstan: Constitutional referendum, 2 February

The ODIHR received an invitation on 13 January to observe the referendum on constitutional amendments in Kyrgyzstan. Because of the short notice and the changes to the proposed amendments still under way two weeks before the referendum, the invitation was declined.

The ODIHR called for the postponement of the referendum to allow more time for consideration of the proposed amendments. However, the Kyrgyz Government responded that discussions on the amendments had been under way since the establishment of the Constitutional Council in September 2002, and that no additional time was required. Although the ODIHR stood by its decision not to observe the process, it sent two election experts to Kyrgyzstan to conduct an assessment of the referendum, in co-ordination with the OSCE Centre in Bishkek.

The ODIHR did not observe the voting and counting on the day of the referendum. However, reports from other observer groups reflected some of the negative trends that had been identified by the ODIHR election observation mission at the presidential election in 2000. Notably, these concerned the scale of interference in – and control of – the process by State and local government officials, as well as the lack of adherence to proper procedures in the conduct of the vote.

Montenegro (Serbia and Montenegro): Repeat presidential election, 9 February

The ODIHR observed the repeat presidential election in Montenegro, which failed again due to insufficient voter turnout. The post-election state-

ment, issued on 10 February, concluded that, although the administration of the election had been generally in line with international standards, the election had been marred by the opposition's continuing boycott and by pressure on State employees to vote.

The observer mission repeated its call to abolish legal provisions allowing for endless cycles of unsuccessful elections. The mission commended the election administration for its efficient and transparent work, and reported that no major irregularities had been observed on election day.

The ODIHR long-term observation mission was composed of 17 observers based in Podgorica and four regional centres. On election day, 65 short-term observers from 22 participating States monitored the polls.

Estonia: Needs assessment mission

Following an invitation to observe the parliamentary elections in Estonia, held on 2 March, the ODIHR undertook a needs assessment mission to Tallinn from 2 to 5 February. The mission concluded that, given the high level of confidence in the electoral process across the full spectrum of political interests, the deployment of an observation mission would not be necessary.

Serbia (Serbia and Montenegro): Final election observation report on presidential elections

The ODIHR has released its final report on the presidential election in Serbia held on 29 September (first round), 13 October (second round) and 8 December (repeat election). The report, released in February, is available on the ODIHR website at: www.osce.org/odihr/documents/reports/election_reports

Albania: Electoral reform process

The OSCE Presence in Albania and

the ODIHR commended the work of the Bi-partisan Committee of the Albanian Parliament, which had been set up after the contested 2001 ballot to improve the country's election laws in line with ODIHR recommendations. At a meeting in Vienna on 6 February, both the Presence and the ODIHR, supported by delegations represented on the OSCE Permanent Council, also urged the Committee to redouble its efforts to reach agreement on outstanding issues before the expiry of the body's mandate at the end of March.

ODIHR website: New comparative study on opinion polls

The ODIHR has released the English and Russian versions of the paper, *Comparative Study on Laws and Regulations Restricting Publication of Electoral Opinion Polls*. It can be accessed at: www.osce.org/odihr/documents/elections



DEMOCRATIZATION

Kazakhstan: Assistance to Judicial Training Centre

As part of ODIHR's continuing support to the Judicial Training Centre in Almaty, an expert mission visited the Centre from 3 to 8 February to assess opportunities for future co-operation. The assessment was carried out with the Prague Institute of the American Bar Association/Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative.

The ODIHR supported an international conference that took place on 17 and 18 February, aimed at strengthening human rights in the justice process. The ODIHR contributed to the discussions through a presentation on the role of defence lawyers in the criminal justice system and in the safeguarding of vic-

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Ambassador Christian Strohal (right), assumed the post of Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights on 1 February, succeeding Ambassador Gerard Stoudmann (left).

tims' rights. The event was jointly organized by the Kazakhstan Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law and the OSCE Centre in Almaty.

Kyrgyzstan: Support for student Criminal Law Clinic

As part of the ODIHR's ongoing support, an expert mission visited the student Criminal Law Clinic in Osh from 10 to 16 January to provide further training to the students and staff, as well as to assess the clinic's future needs. A follow-up visit took place from 27 to 29 January to discuss the clinic's plans and activities.

Caucasus: Needs assessment for Ombudsman offices

The ODIHR conducted a needs assessment mission in February in each of the Ombudsman offices of Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan. The ODIHR has played a substantive role in their establishment and development. Taking account of the fact that each is at a different stage of development, the ODIHR supports the exchange of know-how and experiences among the Ombudsman offices in the region, and with those in Central and Eastern Europe.

Chechnya: Training for human rights lawyers

The third in a series of training seminars for Chechen lawyers, aimed at raising their awareness of human rights and strengthening their co-operation, took place in Moscow from 3 to 8 February. The training was organized in co-operation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Russian NGO *Memorial*. It brought together 15 lawyers, including representatives of the Russian President's human rights envoy in Chechnya, for interactive training sessions conducted by prominent Russian legal experts.

The three sessions have enabled 39 members of the Chechen bar to be briefed and updated on the latest developments in the legislation of the Russian Federation. Through these training efforts, the ODIHR has sought to contribute to the restoration of the rule of law in Chechnya and to fill the legal vacuum prevailing in this conflict-ridden region.

Grants available: Small-scale human rights monitoring

Some 20 representatives from non-governmental organizations, as well as three government representatives, were

taught techniques for monitoring human rights, preparing project proposals and reporting to donors.

The sessions took place from 1 to 5 February, in the third phase of an ODIHR training project for Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan on human rights monitoring. The project is being implemented with the assistance of the Polish Helsinki Foundation and under the sponsorship of the European Commission.

As the next step, participants are being encouraged to submit proposals for their own small-scale monitoring projects. Projects that meet specific criteria will be awarded an implementation grant of up to 2,000 euros. Results will be discussed with the relevant government body.

Available online: Daily updates on law reform in the OSCE region

Within days of the promulgation of the Constitutional Charter of the new State union of Serbia and Montenegro in February, the Charter was accessible for reference on *Legislationline.org*. The legislative website, run by the ODIHR and sponsored by the European Commission, provides daily updates on major legal developments in the OSCE region via a news service. The *Legislationline.org* database contains legislation related to human rights from 55 OSCE countries, and currently covers 13 topics, ranging from elections to trafficking in human beings.

Besides providing constantly updated information on legal reform initiatives in the OSCE region, the website highlights areas that need improvement and serves as a repository of legislation that the region's lawmakers can look to as a model. More information is available at www.legislationline.org

Central Asia: Technical assistance on action to combat terrorism

The ODIHR, in co-operation with the OSCE Action Against Terrorism Unit, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and the United Kingdom Foreign Office, organized a seminar in London on 10 and 11 February on the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373 on

terrorism and related UN conventions and protocols.

The aim was to provide information and offer technical assistance to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Delegates from these four Central Asian states agreed that technical assistance for the implementation of the United Nations instruments would be useful and welcome. The ODIHR is planning to send a needs assessment mission to the region in April and May to follow up on specific issues raised at the meeting.

South-eastern Europe: Regional meeting on parliamentary role

The ODIHR and the OSCE Presence in Albania facilitated a meeting of parliamentary experts from OSCE institutions and missions that are active in south-eastern Europe. It also served as a forum for an exchange of programming ideas and for planning joint initiatives. The event, held on 27 and 28 January, was part of an ongoing OSCE internal co-ordination process initiated by the ODIHR.

The participants agreed to intensify support for projects aimed at bringing together parliamentarians from south-eastern Europe to discuss regional issues ranging from organized crime and trafficking, to economic and environmental matters. These activities were seen as a means of promoting greater parliamentary involvement in legislative reform, in

addition to encouraging the opposition to participate in the process.



ROMA & SINTI

South-eastern Europe: Roundtable on Roma refugees and IDPs

A roundtable on the situation of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in south-eastern Europe was organized in Sarajevo from 26 to 28 January by the ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues and the OSCE Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

One of the conference's main conclusions dealt with the need to develop national and regional action plans addressing issues of concern to Roma returnees, refugees and IDPs. The participants agreed that refugees and IDPs should not be forced to return to their previous home base, but that confidence-building measures were necessary to encourage voluntary returns. It was also stressed that much could be done by the Roma themselves, for example, by educating children on human rights and strengthening co-operation with local authorities.

Albania: Roundtable on national strategy for Roma

Further to an agreement reached in January, representatives from govern-

ment ministries and Roma non-governmental organizations in Albania met to plan the development of a national strategy aimed at improving the living conditions of the country's Roma minority.

Under a memorandum of understanding that resulted from the roundtable, the signatory parties will establish a working group to develop a strategy addressing education, shelter and poverty, among other issues, and incorporating proposed solutions. The roundtable was supported by the ODIHR and various government ministries, with the co-operation of the OSCE Presence in Albania.

Stability Pact programme for Roma: Evaluation of results

An evaluation meeting of the two-year project on Roma under the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe took place in Bucharest from 6 to 9 February. The project has been implemented by the ODIHR and the Council of Europe with funding from the European Commission.

The participants emphasized the uniqueness of the project, which has sought to encourage and empower Roma NGOs and individuals to be directly involved in project management and related activities. It was agreed that the project would continue for another two-year period, with a special focus on Roma electoral participation.

OSCE OFFICE FOR DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS (ODIHR)

Aleje Ujazdowskie 19, PL-00 557 Warsaw, Poland

tel: (+48-22) 520 06 00, fax: (+48-22) 520 06 05, e-mail: office@odhr.pl

UPDATE

OSCE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

PA President reports closer OSCE-PA co-operation

The Parliamentary Assembly's Winter Meeting was preceded by a meeting of its Standing Committee, which was addressed by the Speaker of the Austrian

Parliament, Andreas Khol.

In a summary of his activities, OSCE PA President Bruce George said that improved co-operation between the governmental and parliamentary dimensions of the OSCE had been one of the main

achievements of the first six months of his presidency.

The Assembly's Treasurer, Jerry Grafstein, reported on the positive annual assessment by the external auditors, KPMG. He commended the PA Secre-



NEWSLETTER

tary General for his sound financial management of the PA Secretariat, and expressed appreciation for the Assembly's efforts to keep expenses within the budget.

In his overview of the activities of the Assembly's International Secretariat, Secretary General Spencer Oliver reported that, at the request of the participants, the Secretariat had produced an extensive follow-up report to the Assembly's Annual Declarations, including comprehensive answers from national delegations to a questionnaire. He noted the substantial growth of PA activities, which now comprised two annual ses-

ing on the draft budget. He also underlined the positive role of the new OSCE PA Liaison Office in Vienna.

The Standing Committee approved an amendment to Rule 24 of the Assembly's Rules of Procedure regarding the procedure for raising questions of urgency.

Bruce George meets OSCE Mediterranean Contact Group

OSCE PA President Bruce George addressed the OSCE Contact Group with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation on 19 February, prior to the PA Winter Meeting. He was accompanied by several members of the OSCE PA. The PA President briefed the Contact Group on the OSCE PA's Mediterranean activities, including the conference in Madrid in October 2002 and the Mediterranean Forum, which will take place in Rome in October. He also had discussions with the parliamentary delegations from Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan and Tunisia. On 21 February, the PA President held a special meeting with the Speaker of the Moroccan parliament.

Bilateral discussions held at Winter Meeting

The PA President held bilateral meetings on the Assembly's activities and action plans. He met Gennady Seleznev, Vice-President of the OSCE PA and Speaker of the Russian Duma, to discuss recent international political developments, including the situations in Iraq and Chechnya. He also reviewed the activities of the ad hoc Committee on Moldova, including the planned parliamentary seminar on federalism, with the Speaker of the Moldovan Parliament and President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation, Eugenia Ostapciuc. He met the Speaker of the Kazakh Senate, Oralbai Abdykarimov, and the Head of the Thai Delegation, Kobsak Chutikul, to discuss

the Trans-Asian Parliamentary Forum. He exchanged views on Nagorno-Karabakh with delegates from Azerbaijan, led by Sattar Safarov.

Almaty forum to focus on trans-Asian dimension

A Parliamentary Forum on the *Trans-Asian Dimension of the OSCE: A Vital Security Link*, is being organized by the OSCE PA from 7 to 9 June in Almaty, at the invitation of the parliament of Kazakhstan and with the co-operation of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The forum will explore ways for parliamentarians from OSCE participating States to co-operate and contribute to regional security by promoting positive developments in the Organization's three dimensions. The President of the OSCE PA and the Speakers of Kazakhstan's senate and *majlis*, as well as senior UNDP and OSCE officials will be the main speakers.

Conference to focus on small and medium-sized businesses

The OSCE PA will hold a *Sub-Regional Conference on Small and Medium-Sized Business* from 14 to 16 May in Berne, Switzerland. It will be the third PA conference dealing with sub-regional economic co-operation, following Monaco (1997) and Nantes (1999). The conference in Berne will seek to increase awareness of the important role of small and medium-sized enterprises in economic development, and will urge parliamentarians to take this role into account in their legislative work. The conclusions of the conference could potentially contribute to a code of conduct to be used in promoting small and medium-sized businesses in the OSCE area.

Federalism for Moldova is subject of PA seminar

An OSCE PA *Seminar on Federalism* will take place in Chisinau and Tiraspol on 28 and 29 April. The event is an initiative of the Assembly's Parliamentary Team on Moldova, which was established in early 1999 to help find a solution to the status of the Transdnestrrian region. Organized in close co-operation with the

OSCE PA

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PA President Bruce George and Speaker of the Moldovan Parliament, Eugenia Ostapciuc, at the PA Winter Meeting

sions, an autumn conference, three meetings of the Standing Committee each year, the ongoing work of five ad hoc committees, the activities of four special representatives, leadership in election monitoring projects and frequent visits to OSCE field missions.

The Chairs of the five ad hoc Committees of the Assembly – on Transparency and Accountability, Belarus, Kosovo, Moldova and Abkhazia – gave presentations on their activities.

Congressman Steny Hoyer (United States), Chairman of the ad hoc Committee on Transparency and Accountability, reported that the Committee's efforts had led to strengthened co-operation between the OSCE and the OSCE PA. He stressed the importance of the new practice of receiving feedback from the OSCE's governmental side on the Assembly's Annual Declarations, as well as of the OSCE Secretary General's annual brief-

OSCE Mission to Moldova, the seminar will invite key political leaders to discuss different models of federalism and their relevance to Moldova.

In May 2001, the Parliamentary Team, chaired by OSCE PA Vice-President Kimmo Kiljunen, had organized a similar seminar in Finland, focusing on the theme of self-government. The participants included representatives of the Moldovan parliament and the Transdniestrian Supreme Soviet, as well as parliamentarians from several OSCE countries, including the Russian Federation and Ukraine. Government representatives of Moldova, Russia and Ukraine were present, as were members of the Transdniestrian authority.

PA President George visits Moscow

OSCE PA President Bruce George visited Moscow from 2 to 4 February at the invitation of the Chairman of the Russian State Duma, Gennady Seleznev, who is a Vice-President of the OSCE PA. Mr. George had talks with Mr. Seleznev and other senior members of the Russian Delegation to the OSCE PA, as well as with the Chairmen of key State Duma committees. Mr. George also met with Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Chizhov.

The PA President's discussions in Moscow dealt with the most urgent issues on the OSCE agenda, including Belarus, Chechnya, Moldova, Central Asia and the future role of the OSCE in the new architecture of Europe. Secretary General Spencer Oliver and Deputy Secretary General Vitaly Evseyev also took part in the visit.

PA Vice-President attends OSCE-CoE leaders' meeting

The leaderships of the OSCE and the Council of Europe (CoE) met in The Hague on 5 February, hosted by the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, Dutch Foreign Minister Jaap de Hoop Scheffer. Other participants were Joseph Borg, Chairman-in-Office of the CoE and Foreign Minister of Malta; Gert Weisskirchen, Vice-President of the OSCE PA; Peter Schieder, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE; Jan Kubis, Secretary General of the OSCE; Walter Schwimmer, Secretary General of the CoE; and Pentti Vaananen, OSCE PA Deputy Secretary General. They discussed co-ordination and co-operation on matters concerning Belarus, Chechnya and Moldova, as well as on trafficking in human beings.

The delegation met the President of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, Claude Jorda, and members of the Prosecutor's Office, who explained the difficulties stemming from some governments' lack of co-operation. They asked the OSCE and the CoE to use their influence, in particular on Belgrade and Zagreb, to persuade the authorities to be more co-operative. The delegation also attended part of a court session concerning the former Yugoslav leader Slobodan Milosevic.

Parliamentarians visit Croatia

An OSCE PA Delegation, led by PA Vice-President Rita Süßmuth, visited the OSCE Mission to Croatia to learn more about the Mission's work and the general situation in the country.

The parliamentarians, representing

12 countries, were briefed on the mandate and activities of the Mission by its Head, Ambassador Peter Semneby, and his staff. The Delegation also met the Speaker of the Croatian parliament, Zlatko Tomcic, members of the Croatian Delegation to the OSCE PA, and representatives of the international community and non-governmental organizations. After a briefing at the OSCE Field Centre in Sisak, the Delegation visited refugee return areas in Sisak-Moslavina county, including Petrinja, Hrvatska Kostajnica and Sunja.

Belarus group assesses progress in Minsk

Three members of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly ad hoc Working Group on Belarus – Uta Zapf (Germany); Urban Ahlin (Sweden), the Chair of the Group; and Lord Ponsonby (United Kingdom) – visited Minsk to assess progress in improving electoral legislation, strengthening parliamentary functions, and ensuring freedom of the media and non-harassment of the opposition.

The parliamentarians met the leadership of the Council of the Republic and the House of Representatives, as well as parliamentarians from the two chambers of the National Assembly. They also met the families of individuals who had disappeared and who had been imprisoned in circumstances widely believed to have been politically motivated. Meetings took place with Foreign Minister Mikhail Khvastov and Minister of Information Mikhail Podgainy and with representatives of opposition parties, civic organizations, independent media outlets and trade unions.

Erratum

The photo caption on page 24 of the January-February 2003 *OSCE Newsletter* should have read: "OSCE PA President Bruce George and Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Walter Schwimmer".

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly regrets the error.

SECRETARIAT OF THE OSCE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

Rådhusstræde 1, DK-1466 Copenhagen K, Denmark
tel: (+45-33) 37 80 40, fax: (+45-33) 37 80 30, e-mail: osce@oscepa.dk





UPDATE

REPRESENTATIVE ON FREEDOM OF THE MEDIA

Tajikistan: Improving the media's working conditions

By Hanna Vuokko

Licences being distributed behind closed doors; fees and fines bankrupting media outlets and putting them out of business; journalists being put behind bars for expressing their opinions on political affairs: these are all issues that the Representative on Freedom of the Media encounters regularly in many of the OSCE participating States.

Each of these concerns has its roots in a country's media legislation: some laws and regulations are clearly incompatible with OSCE media commitments and international standards, while others are either ambiguous or completely missing from legislation.

For the past two years, the Representative has been helping the OSCE participating States to address these problems. In some cases, independent legal experts are called in to review existing legislation and new draft media laws, as well as to propose specific measures to rectify irregularities and discrepancies *vis-à-vis* international media norms. In other cases, experts participate in the actual drafting of legislation.

Tajikistan is one country which is benefiting from both approaches.

Under a joint project of the OSCE and *Internews*, a non-governmental media organization, a 15-member working group was set up in 2001 to prepare the draft for a new media law for Tajikistan. The group – made up of parliamentarians and government experts, media lawyers, print and

broadcast journalists and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) – completed its work in the spring of 2002, after meeting regularly for six months

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OSCE/Ljubomir Kotek

This television production company in Dushanbe is expecting to be granted a licence in broadcasting

to scrutinize every legal aspect of Tajikistan's media landscape.

The project, financed by the Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media, also commissioned *Article 19*, a British media NGO, to review all the laws in Tajikistan regulating the mass media for their compliance with international standards. In a detailed report issued in November 2002, *Article 19* highlighted key concerns and set out recommendations for improvement.

In December 2002, the country's key media and information professionals, outside experts and representatives from government and civil society came together at a conference at the OSCE Centre in Dushanbe to discuss the results of the NGO review and the working group's draft. The participants agreed that the legislative framework governing the media no longer corre-

sponded to the realities of today's Tajikistan and needed to be adapted to the fundamental social, economic and structural changes of the past decade.

The conference urged that a new, comprehensive media law be adopted, and presented a set of recommendations for consideration by the Tajik Government and parliament. The proposals – on subjects ranging from the process involved in granting broadcasting licences, to safeguarding of the right to free expression and information – were introduced to the country's media professionals on 31 January at one of the monthly gatherings hosted by the OSCE Centre

in Dushanbe.

The OSCE Media Representative has forwarded the recommendations to the Foreign Minister of Tajikistan, Talbak Nazarov, and has conveyed the OSCE's readiness to continue assisting the country in meeting its obligations in the area of freedom of expression under international law.

The reviews and recommendations can be found on the RFOM website: www.osce.org/fom. See also *The Media Situation in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan: Five Country Reports*, published by the Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Vienna, 2002.

Hanna Vuokko is Adviser in the Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media.

Freedom of the media has deteriorated, parliamentarians told

“Across the board, freedom of the media has deteriorated over the past five years [in the OSCE region]. This trend still continues,” Freimut Duve, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, told OSCE parliamentarians at their Winter Meeting on 21 February. He cited several reasons for this unhealthy development, which ranged “from a general frustration among officials in the newly emerging democracies with the scrutinizing approach to their work by journalists to the aftermath of 11 September”.

The OSCE Representative referred to the cross-ownership of media in the Russian Federation; to the state of the broadcasting media in Italy, where pluralism was in jeopardy because of an ownership situation that allowed the executive to control both public and private broadcasting media; to the continued use of defamation suits against independent media in several countries; and to the complete lack of any freedom of expression in Turkmenistan.

Mr. Duve also commented on the trans-Atlantic debate currently under way on Iraq and on the need to do more to protect journalists who cover conflict areas.

Basque newspaper closes down in Spain

Euskaldunon Egunkaria, a Basque daily newspaper based in the northern town of Andoain in Spain, was ordered

to close down by the courts on 20 February because of its alleged links to the armed terrorist group, *ETA*. The paper reappeared on newsstands the next day under a new name, *Egunkaria*. Hundreds of *Guardia Civil* police officers raided the paper’s offices and the homes of its senior staff throughout the Basque region after the court order. The case was raised by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media in a letter to Spanish Foreign Minister Ana Palacio Vallelersundi and in his regular statement to the Permanent Council.

Journalists harassed in Uzbekistan

Several journalists in Uzbekistan have recently been encountering difficulties with the authorities. In a letter addressed to Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov of Uzbekistan, Freimut Duve raised the cases of:

- Opposition journalist Ergash Bobojanov, who was arrested on 17 February and charged with criminal defamation, revealing State secrets and making death threats;
- Gayrat Mehliboev, a reporter on religious issues for the newspapers *Khuriyat* and *Mokhiyat*, who was sentenced on 18 February to seven years in prison for supporting the banned *Hizb ut-Tahrir* Islamic group, and thereby undermining the constitutional order;
- Tokhtomurad Toshev, editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Adolat*, who was

arrested in his office on 20 February on unspecified charges; and

- Oleg Sarapulov, an independent Internet journalist, who was detained on 22 February. A criminal investigation has been launched to look into his alleged support for *Hizb ut-Tahrir* and acts undermining the constitutional structure.

Mr. Duve wrote that when several independent and opposition journalists were confronted with legal problems, especially within such a short span of time, it gave rise to immediate concern. “The OSCE media commitments – to which all participating States have subscribed – protect freedom of expression of all the media in the entire OSCE region, with special protection for independent and opposition media, which perform an important corrective function in society,” the Representative said.

OFFICE OF THE
OSCE REPRESENTATIVE ON
FREEDOM OF THE MEDIA
(RFOM)

Kärntner Ring 5-7
A-1010 Vienna Austria
tel: (+43-1) 512 21 45-0
fax: (+43-1) 512 21 45-9
e-mail: pm-fom@osce.org

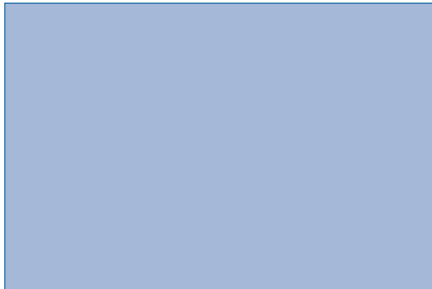
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UPDATE

SECRETARY GENERAL AND THE SECRETARIAT

SG addresses Ministerial Troika

Secretary General Jan Kubis opened the annual meeting of Heads of Mission, which took place in Vienna on 13 January. The group was also addressed by the Chairman-in-Office (CiO), Dutch Foreign Minister Jaap de Hoop Scheffer. On 14 January, the Secretary General took part in the first meeting of the Ministerial Troika of the Netherlands OSCE Chairmanship. The discussions focused on the Organization's work priorities for 2003.



Ambassador Aleksi Harkonen assumed his post as Head of the Permanent Mission of Finland on 14 October 2002

UNDP Regional Director visits OSCE Secretariat

The Secretary General and staff members representing various sections in the Secretariat met Kalman Mizsei, Assistant Administrator and Director of the United Nations Development Programme's Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent

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Ambassador Yves Doutriaux, Head of the Permanent Representation of France, started his assignment on 18 February

States (RBEC). The discussions, on 23 January, focused on possibilities for developing joint projects and other types of enhanced co-operation in a number of OSCE regions. UNDP Resident Representatives are often key partners of OSCE missions and offices. The OSCE also co-operates closely with the RBEC centre in Bratislava.

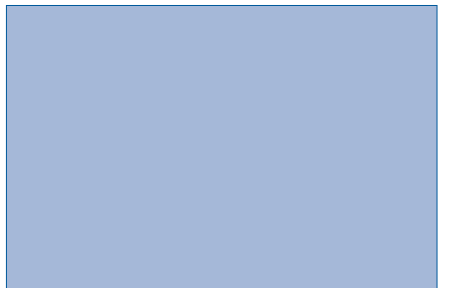
New offices for OSCE discussed

The Secretary General and Austria's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, met on 24 January, mainly to discuss implementation of Ministerial Council Decision No. 9, which was adopted in Porto in December 2002. Under the decision, the Austrian Government would make a centrally located building at Wallnerstrasse 6/6a, Vienna, available to the OSCE Secretariat and the Representative on Freedom of the

Media. The plan for the building's refurbishment and for cost-sharing arrangements will be discussed with the participating States, who will be requested to approve a cost-sharing agreement through a Permanent Council decision.

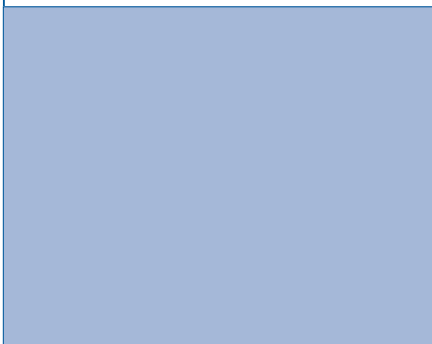
SG meets new UNHCR representative in Vienna

The new representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Austria, Gottfried Köfner, paid a call on the Secretary General on 29 January. They reaffirmed the good working relationship between the two organizations, both at the headquarters level and in the field. They also noted that OSCE missions assist UNHCR offices by monitoring specific cases dealing with refugees and displaced persons and by providing political support in involving the host authorities.



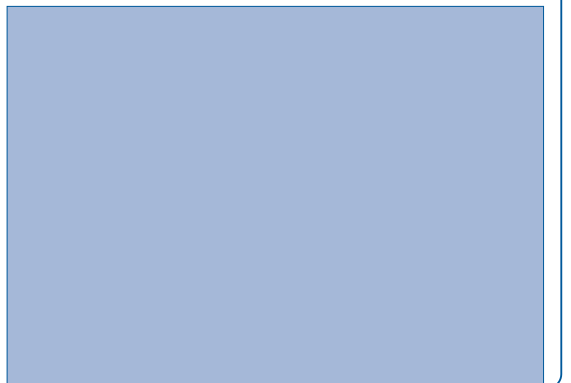
Ambassador Erkin Kasimov (left), Head of Delegation of Tajikistan since 18 January, with Secretary General Jan Kubis

Partners for Co-operation



Hiroshi Hashimoto was appointed Ambassador of Japan starting 25 February

Ambassador Somkiati Ariyapruhya of Thailand, in his post since 22 January, with the Secretary General



OSCE Ball raises 30,000 euros for charity

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Tbilisi, Georgia: Money raised at the 2002 OSCE Ball is making it possible for more than a hundred children, whose families lost their homes after an earthquake, to receive material, medical and psychological support

With close to 1,200 guests, the 2003 OSCE Ball, which took place on 7 February in the magnificent *Festsaal, Zeremoniensaal and Metternichsaal* of the imperial Hofburg, broke all previous records. In line with tradition, this year's proceeds – nearly 30,000 euros – will be donated to charities that will be selected in the next few months.

“In 1994 – when the OSCE was still known as the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe – we had a modest attendance of about 530 people,” recalls Micky Kroell, who has been organizing and co-ordinating the event for the past nine years, with the support

of colleagues in the Secretariat's Conference Services. Just as the number of guests has steadily increased, so have the proceeds.

Guests at last year's OSCE Ball will be pleased to know that the money they helped raise – a total of 22,982 euros – has gone towards helping children affected by an earthquake in Tbilisi, Georgia (3,621 euros), upgrading a children's hospital in Chechnya (9,171 euros) and restoring a school playground and restrooms for pre-school children, also in Chechnya (10,190 euros).

This year's OSCE Ball was made possible through the generous contributions

of the Hofburg Conference Center (the premises as well as the buffet, which was prepared by the Vienna Intercontinental Hotel); the Permanent Mission of Greece to the OSCE (wine); the City of San Remo, Italy (7,000 orange flowers, symbolizing the House of Orange, to honour the OSCE Chairmanship held by the Netherlands); and the Dutch Chairmanship (national delicacies and some of the musical and dance presentations).

Music provided by several bands helped make the 2003 OSCE ball the longest ever: the last waltz was danced at 3:30 in the morning. **Florence Le Clezio, Press and Public Information**

Erratum:

The last name of the Hungarian Ambassador, Marianne Berez, was misspelled in the January-February issue. The *OSCE Newsletter* regrets the error.

OSCE SECRETARIAT

Kärntner Ring 5-7, A-1010 Vienna, Austria

tel: (+43-1) 514 36-0, fax: (+43-1) 514 36-96, e-mail: pm@osce.org





Courtesy of Xpose Fotostudio, Vienna

The 2003 OSCE Ball opened in classic Viennese style with a performance by young Austrians. The annual event raised almost 30,000 euros for various charities.

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Kärntner Ring 5-7, A-1010 Vienna, Austria
Tel.: (+43-1) 514 36-180 / Fax: (+43-1) 514 36-105 / E-mail: info@osce.org
Patricia Sutter, Editor / Alexander Nitzsche, Deputy Editor / Keith Jinks, Associate Editor
For more information, see the OSCE website: www.osce.org

