

Chairmanship: Ukraine**945th PLENARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

1. Date: Thursday, 21 March 2013

Opened: 10.10 a.m.

Closed: 11.05 a.m.

2. Chairperson: Ms. N. Galibarenko

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Permanent Council, welcomed the new Permanent Representative of Portugal to the OSCE, Ambassador P. Moitinho de Almeida.

3. Subjects discussed – Statements – Decisions/documents adopted:

Agenda item 1: REVIEW OF CURRENT ISSUES

(a) *Local elections in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, to be held on 24 March 2013:* United States of America (PC.DEL/186/13), former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (PC.DEL/189/13)

(b) *Recent developments in Latvia and Estonia:* Russian Federation (PC.DEL/196/13), Belarus (PC.DEL/190/13), Latvia (PC.DEL/194/13)

(c) *Abolition of the death penalty in the state of Maryland, United States of America:* Switzerland (also on behalf of Andorra, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and San Marino) (PC.DEL/193/13), Ireland-European Union, United States of America (PC.DEL/187/13/Rev.1)

Agenda item 2: REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE
CHAIRPERSON-IN-OFFICE

(a) *Thirty-second meeting of the Ergneti Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism, held on 18 March 2013:* Chairperson (CIO.GAL/30/13)

(b) *Visit by the Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Discussions to Moscow on 19 March 2013:* Chairperson (CIO.GAL/30/13)

- (c) *Participation of the Chairperson of the Permanent Council, Ambassador I. Prokopchuk, in the 2013 OSCE-Australia Conference on Improving the Security of Women and Girls held in Adelaide, Australia, on 18 and 19 March 2013: Chairperson (CIO.GAL/30/13)*

Agenda item 3: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL

- (a) *Visit by the Secretary General to Baku on 15 and 16 March 2013: Secretary General (SEC.GAL/58/13 OSCE+), Canada, Azerbaijan, Belarus*
- (b) *Meeting between the Secretary General and the Director General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Ambassador A. Üzümcü, held on 18 March 2013: Secretary General (SEC.GAL/58/13 OSCE+)*
- (c) *Mediation training for advisers of the Community Security Initiative of the OSCE Centre in Bishkek, held in Osh, Kyrgyzstan, from 11 to 15 March 2013: Secretary General (SEC.GAL/58/13 OSCE+)*
- (d) *Regional training course related to the recent revisions to the Financial Action Task Force International Standards on Combating Money Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism and Proliferation, organized by the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities and the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan, held in Tashkent from 12 to 14 March 2013: Secretary General (SEC.GAL/58/13 OSCE+)*
- (e) *Response to a statement made by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly at the 944th meeting of the Permanent Council: Secretary General (Annex), Canada, Chairperson, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly*

Agenda item 4: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- (a) *International Day of La Francophonie, celebrated on 20 March 2013: Switzerland (also on behalf of Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Cyprus, Croatia, Egypt (Partner for Co-operation), Estonia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, France, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco (Partner for Co-operation), Poland, the Czech Republic, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Thailand (Partner for Co-operation), Tunisia (Partner for Co-operation) and Ukraine) (PC.DEL/192/13)*
- (b) *International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, observed on 21 March 2013: Canada, United States of America (PC.DEL/188/13)*
- (c) *Co-operation between the ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly with regard to election observation: OSCE Parliamentary Assembly*

- (d) *2013 Annual Meeting of the OSCE Border Security and Management National Focal Point Network, to be held in Kyiv from 8 to 10 April 2013: Chairperson*

4. Next meeting:

Thursday, 11 April 2013, at 10 a.m., in the Neuer Saal



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council**

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Annex

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STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL

In my capacity as the Chief Administrative Officer of the OSCE I would like to raise two issues in response to last week's statement of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (PA) in the Permanent Council.

As far as political oversight of the activities of the Organization is concerned, it is obvious that the Ministerial Council (MC) is the central political decision-making and governing body of the OSCE. I report to the MC on plans and implementation of its decisions through OSCE Delegations throughout the year and directly in my annual report to Ministers at MC meetings.

Of course, the OSCE is accountable to parliaments, too. This line of accountability is facilitated by each participating State through its own parliament. This model, which has been decided by participating States, ensures proper parliamentary oversight of performance and actions of the governments of participating States of the OSCE. In my outreach to OSCE stakeholders and partners I meet with many parliamentary commissions and speakers of parliaments and help increasing awareness.

I would also like to point out that the method applied by the OSCE is based on the UN as a model. Therefore, the PA criticism on perceived lack of political accountability applies in the first place to the whole UN system, not only to the OSCE.

I am not aware of any specific decision by the MC assigning a direct oversight role to the OSCE PA. However, and notwithstanding this fact, I have accepted to continue the practice, initiated by my predecessor, of briefing the PA Standing Committee, in its Fall Session, about the OSCE budget, and discussing related management issues. This openness on my part, however, seems to have been misunderstood as a general acknowledgment that a degree of oversight role of the OSCE PA exists. To correct this false impression, I will be forced to discontinue this kind of briefings to the PA Standing Committee, and include more general information about budgeting and management matters in my remarks to the Winter Session.

As far as the OSCE Internal Control Framework is concerned, the Organization has over the years developed a very comprehensive framework of internal controls, which includes multiple layers including the Organization's Common Regulatory Management System, a state-of-the-art organization-wide risk management system, and proper oversight

mechanisms, and the accompanying internal and external oversight functions that ensure the highest level of transparency and accountability, and is in accordance with internationally accepted audit and financial management standards.

An important part of the OSCE's financial transparency, performance and accountability framework is the annual independent, external audit of the OSCE Financial Statements, conducted by the relevant Audit Institutions of all individual participating States. OSCE Financial Statements continuously receive an unqualified audit opinion, a so-called "clean bill of health"; a concrete testament of the excellent financial stewardship provided by the Organization's senior leadership and its staff.

In addition to oversight activities carried out by the OSCE Audit Committee and the OSCE External Auditors – for every purpose, two different levels of independent external audit -, the OSCE Office of Internal Oversight carries out visits, evaluations and investigations throughout the executive structures, reporting annually to the OSCE Permanent Council. In addition, a Panel of Adjudicators for HR related disputes provides yet another layer of independent external oversight, ensuring due diligence and fair process for HR and employment related matters. All in all, I am pleased to report that the OSCE's management activities are subject to a complex, multi-layered system of oversight and transparent checks and balances ensuring credibility and continuous assurance to participating States of well managed financial, material and human resources.

To further clarify potential ambiguities in relation to management issues, I have requested the Director of the Office of Internal Oversight to travel to Copenhagen for an exchange of best practices with the OSCE PA Secretariat which relies on a single independent external auditor, and I am open to consider further improvements to our procedures based on the lessons learned from this exchange.