



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

OSCE Mission to Croatia

News in brief

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OSCE Secretary General visits Croatia

During his visit to Croatia on 29 March, OSCE Secretary General (SG), Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, met with Croatian officials and participated in the opening session of the South Eastern Europe Heads of Mission meeting held in Zagreb.

The SG was received together with the HoM by President Stjepan Mesić who emphasized the quality of co-operation between the Croatian authorities and the Mission, underscoring the latter's role in facilitating Croatia's bid to join the EU and NATO. As a result of this co-operation, the President said that Croatia had managed to resolve a number of issues, though not all. Many refugees who wished to return were still unable to do so and of those who had returned, a significant number still required basic infrastructure to ensure their sustainable return. SG de Brichambaut said that Croatia had set a good example in Southeast Europe, both in terms of relations with the OSCE and accession to Euro-Atlantic institutions.

Led by Tonino Picula, Croatia's parliamentary delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly held a working meeting with the SG. Recalling the ten year presence of the OSCE in Croatia and the country's movement away from a post-conflict scenario, Mr. Picula enquired about possible changes in the structure of the Mission. While acknowledging the Mission to Croatia as a "success," the SG pointed to the June Mid-Term Review as an important tool in assessing the current situation in the country. Underlining the regional dimension of several issues, including refugee return, organized crime and arms control, Mr. Picula praised the OSCE's contribution to the Sarajevo process on refugee return. Some members of the Delegation stressed the importance of reciprocity in this process, highlighting the difficult situation of displaced Bosnian Croats living in Croatia.

In a subsequent meeting, Milorad Pupovac, MP and vice-president of the Independent Democratic Serb Party (SDSS), informed the SG that Croatia's progress in relation to minority and refugee issues was in part due to the presence of the Mission. He stressed the importance of regional co-operation on war crimes prosecution in relation to reconciliation and emphasized Croatia's positive role in the Sarajevo process. However, he warned of possible financial and administrative obstacles during the implementation of the process and emphasized the need to improve economic conditions in return areas along the border with Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The SG also attended the first day of the Regional HoMs meeting. The latest developments in the region, management issues and economic and environmental matters were discussed.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration Kolinda Grabar Kitarović hosted a dinner for the SG and visiting HoMs.

Government Report contains first comprehensive list of missing persons

On 24 March, Parliament approved the Government's *Report on Detained and Missing Persons*, containing comprehensive information on all persons reported missing from the territory of Croatia during the 1991-1995 conflict.

The comprehensive nature of this information is the outcome of improved and intensified co-operation between Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro. Following a series of high-level meetings, three lists of persons deemed missing from the territory of Croatia have been agreed upon; the first, 1140 persons sought by Croatian authorities, primarily Croats from the first two years of the war; the second, 915 persons sought with the assistance of Serbia and Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the International Committee of the Red Cross, primarily Serbs missing in the aftermath of Operation "Storm"; and third, 440 persons sought with the assistance of the authorities from Serbia and Montenegro, primarily military personnel from Serbian and Montenegrin forces.

The *Report* emphasizes the commitment of both Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro to resolve the fate of all persons who went missing on the territory of Croatia, regardless of origin, nationality or religious belief. While recognizing this as the unique obligation of Croatia, the *Report* takes into account the justified interest of Serbia and Montenegro in the fate of missing Croatian Serbs and its military personnel.

The *Report* also summarized the Government's activities to date in determining the fate of missing persons. According to the *Report*, 142 mass and 1,200 individual graves have been uncovered in Croatia so far, enabling the exhumation of 3,568 victims. The bodies of an additional 499 persons killed during Operation "Storm" were exhumed in co-operation with the ICTY, raising the total number of bodies exhumed to 4,067.

It is anticipated that in mid 2006 the ICRC will issue a comprehensive list of all persons missing from the territory of Croatia based on the lists agreed between the respective states.

Mission to Croatia hosts the South Eastern Europe Heads of Mission meeting

On 29 and 30 March the Mission hosted the South Eastern Europe Heads of Mission meeting. The gathering included representatives from the Chairmanship-in-Office (CiO), the Secretariat, the ODIHR and the HCNM.

On the first day, the latest political developments in the region as well as management issues and economic and environmental matters were discussed in the presence of the SG. The following day, the participants debated the priorities of the CiO and the future evolution of Missions in the region. Regional co-operation, electoral issues and plans for responding to a possible avian flu pandemic were also among the main topics addressed.

Improved minority and gender balance in Police Academy's class of 2006

The Police Academy in Zagreb has informed the Mission that out of 300 applicants enrolled for the position of 'police officer' with the Basic Police School in 2006, 100 were women and 22 were members of national minorities. Out of the 7.33 per cent of national minorities who enrolled in the School, 15 are Serb, three are Bosniak, two are Roma, one is Ruthenian, and one is Hungarian. The fact that a third of entrants are women and that the percentage of minority candidates in the final selection is larger than in the original batch of 1956 applicants – some 5.57 per cent – is an encouraging sign. The Mission has repeatedly advocated that the Police Academy increase the number of women and national minority members serving in the police force.