

# OSCE

## NEWSLETTER

### Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Hopi-Media



*Benita Ferrero-Waldner, OSCE Chairperson-in-Office talks to Jadranko Prlic, Foreign Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina, during her visit last month to Sarajevo.*

#### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- OSCE Troika meets in Vienna ..... 2
- Preparing for BiH municipal elections ... 3
- Inside an election observation mission ... 5
- Latvian seminar helps integration ..... 7
- REACT – beyond the first steps ..... 8
- Yearbook on ‘Freedom and Responsibility’ ..... 9
- News from the field ..... 10
- In Brief ..... 13
- Update from the ODIHR ..... 15
- News from HCNM ..... 18
- Report from the PA ..... 20
- News from the RFOM ..... 22
- Report from the Secretariat ..... 23
- Press profile ..... 24

## Chairperson-in-Office visits two Balkan states

The Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE, Austria’s Foreign Minister, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, paid a one-day visit on 13 March to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (fYROM) and later in the week flew to Bosnia and Herzegovina. During her talks in Skopje with President Boris Trajkovski, Prime Minister Ljubco Georgievski and other high-level officials, as well as with representatives of the political opposition, a number of issues relevant to co-operation between the fYROM and the OSCE were discussed.

Mrs. Ferrero-Waldner expressed appreciation of the way in which the Government had managed last year’s refugee

crisis, and promised that the OSCE would continue to support fYROM in the future.

“We have to support your country, which is struggling for stability in fragile surroundings, at different levels and in different ways,” Ferrero-Waldner said.

One of the foremost issues discussed during the visit was interethnic relations. All sides, both government and opposition interlocutors, emphasized their will to improve relations between the various ethnic groups in the country. In this context, the specific question of higher education in the Albanian language was raised. The Chairperson-in-Office stressed the importance of a solution based on

compromise, stressing that education is not an ethnic issue but a fundamental human right. She found it encouraging that both parties were determined to work out an early solution, based on the proposals of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities.

The CiO was also informed about the economic reform programme of the Government and the current status of its implementation. The hosts also expressed their expectations that the Stability Pact would bring about early projects in the region.

On 17 March, Mrs. Ferrero-Waldner visited Bosnia and Herzegovina, and during her stay in Sarajevo met with the

members of the Joint Presidency (Alija Izetbegovic, Zivko Radisic and Ante Jelavic), Foreign Minister Jadranko Prlic as well as Heads of International Organizations present in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Chairperson-in-Office noted with satisfaction that the preparations for the municipal elections on 8 April were proceeding according to schedule. She commended the staff of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina for the enormous efforts they have been putting into organizing these elections.

At a press conference, Mrs. Ferrero-Waldner appealed to the politicians of the country to focus their debates on local issues of concern to ordinary people, and

she expressed her full support for the slogan "Vote for Change", which has been promoted by the OSCE Mission and the Office of the High Representative.

In discussions with government representatives, the CiO raised the continued concern among OSCE participating States about the fact that the draft election law still has not been approved by the Bosnian parliament. She pointed out that further steps towards the integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina into European and Euro-Atlantic structures could not take place without the passage of this law.

In her talks with the Presidency and the Foreign Minister, Mrs. Ferrero-Waldner stressed that the acceleration of the

return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes in Bosnia and Herzegovina was one of the main priorities of the Austrian Chairmanship. She noted that there had been an increase in minority returns last year; however, the return process was still being hampered by the lack of implementation of vital rules and legal frameworks, e.g. property legislation.

Summing up her Bosnian visit, the Chairperson-in-Office noted positively the commitment among the main political leaders of the country to implement the Dayton Peace Accords and particularly to enhance a better functioning of common state structures, as well as the will to search for common solutions across ethnic boundary lines.

## OSCE Troika Ministers meet in Vienna

On 31 March, the Foreign Ministers of the OSCE Troika – Benita Ferrero-Waldner of Austria, Thorbjörn Jagland of Norway, and Petre Roman of Romania – met at the Hofburg Congress Centre in Vienna. The Ministers focused on current issues of concern to the OSCE, among them the conflict in Chechnya, Russian Federation, preparations for local elections in Kosovo, the expansion of the border observation mission in Georgia and the situation in Belarus.

Also taking part in the meeting were the Secretary General of the OSCE, Jan Kubis, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Max van der Stoep, the Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Gerard Stoudmann, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Freimut Duve, and the Secretary General of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Spencer Oliver.

The Ministers expressed their deep concern about reports of violations of human rights and international humani-

tarian law in Chechnya, pointing out that it is in the interest of the Russian Federation to investigate thoroughly reports about human rights violations and to bring those found guilty to court. The Ministers stressed the urgent need for a return of the OSCE Advisory Group to Chechnya, to the proposed location in Znamenskoje, so that it could fulfil its mandate, starting with assisting in the humanitarian aid efforts and monitoring the human rights situation.

The Ministers also confirmed that OSCE's priority role in Kosovo is to prepare for municipal elections there. They noted that the civil registration process would be launched on 17 April, to be completed in late July. Elections are then planned for October 2000 under OSCE supervision. A major priority will be to ensure the registration of Serbian refugees in Serbia and Montenegro and enabling them to vote. The Ministers urged Belgrade to co-operate fully with the election process.

The tense situation in Montenegro

was a subject of concern for the OSCE Troika. The Ministers agreed that the OSCE would continue to focus closely on relations between Belgrade and Podgorica. They stressed that increased political and financial support for Montenegro by the international community is vitally important to the future stability of the region.

On Belarus, the Ministers expressed their alarm at the reports of an unprovoked and exaggerated show of police force in Minsk on 25 March. The Ministers were concerned that several of those who had been detained still faced criminal charges and called on the Government of Belarus to respect the right to freedom of assembly. The Ministers agreed that under such circumstances, the Troika visit which was planned for 2 to 4 April should be postponed. They called upon the government to commit itself to allowing conditions in which a free and genuine dialogue, involving also the opposition, can take place, and which can lead to free and fair elections in



*The three Foreign Ministers of the OSCE Troika (left to right): Petre Roman of Romania, Benita Ferrero-Waldner of Austria, and Thorbjörn Jagland of Norway.*

autumn. The OSCE, in particular through its Advisory and Monitoring Group in Minsk, should remain fully involved.

The Ministers discussed the current situation at the border between Georgia

and the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation. They expressed their strong support for a timely expansion of the OSCE border observation mission, which would contribute to the stability of the

situation along the border. The prospects for a peace for Nagorno-Karabakh were also discussed; the Ministers encouraged the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan to continue a fruitful dialogue and they welcomed the continued efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group as well as the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office.

On Central Asia, the Ministers expressed concern about indications that extremist forces might attempt to repeat events similar to those in Autumn 1999 in the south of Kyrgyzstan. They acknowledged steps envisaged jointly upon mutual agreements by the States in the region to counter this threat. They noted that constant progress toward economic and social reforms and democratization should be part of their efforts toward this end. On Tajikistan, the Ministers welcomed the formal closure of the transition period and implementation of the General Peace Agreement. This marks an important benchmark in the process of national reconciliation and a move toward implementing reforms.

## Thorough preparations for April municipal elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina

By Alex Nitsche

With the arrival of several hundred thousand out-of-country voting ballots in Sarajevo at the end of March, preparations by the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) for the second municipal elections in the country since the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords reached their final stage. More than 2.5 million registered voters are called to cast their votes on 8 April to elect new representatives for 145 municipal councils and assemblies, as well as for the City Council of Mostar.

In total, 68 political parties, seven coalitions and 18 independent candidates have registered for these elections. Roughly 213,000 out-of-country voters living in 60 countries across the world have registered to vote through the OSCE's by-mail voting programme. The last preparations involve the arrival of 750 international supervisors, who will monitor the voting process in the country's 3,500 polling stations.

For the first time in Bosnia and Herzegovina, voters will be able to vote

for individual candidates on political party or coalition lists. The Provisional Election Commission (PEC) – the regulatory body for the electoral process in BiH – introduced an open-list proportional representation system for these elections. This constitutes a significant change for BiH, since all previous elections were held under close-list system. Open list voting enables citizens to vote not only for political parties or coalitions, but also to express their preferences for particular candidates within each list.

“The open-list system is expected to place considerably more decision-making power in the hands of the voters,” said Robert Barry, Head of the OSCE Mission to BiH and Chairman of the PEC. “It will also help ensure that elected officials in BiH are more accountable to those who elect them.” More than 21,000 candidates registered with the OSCE for this year’s municipal elections.

Other significant changes in the electoral rules comprise a provision on incompatibility of official political positions with posts in executive bodies of state-run companies, and a regulation prohibiting political candidates to stand for office if they violate the country’s property laws. The incompatibility rule was introduced as a tool to fight against corruption and political patronage in BiH, while the new property regulation ensures that political representatives do not block the return process and uphold the rule of law.

“These two provisions will bring significant reform to the political landscape in BiH,” Mr. Barry said.

Another OSCE’s key priority in preparing this year’s municipal elections has been to enhance the position of women in the country’s electoral and political process by requiring one-third of the list to be women candidates. With the introduction of the open-list system however, voters must actively select women candidates in order for them to be elected. But according to OSCE polls conducted in 1999, the BiH public has widespread support for women in politics.

Although women comprise well over 50 percent of the BiH population, they currently hold less than one-quarter of all



*A nationwide poster campaign urged electors to make use of their right to vote.*

elected offices. Since 1998, women’s representation in elected office has increased significantly, which is largely due to a decision by the PEC to require parties to include a one-third women candidates on their candidates lists for the 1998 elections.

Absentee voters also constitute an important sector of the BiH voting population. Close to 400,000 absentee voters – persons that were uprooted by the war in the former Yugoslavia – are registered to cast their ballots on 8 April. The Dayton Peace Accords, signed in December 1995, guarantee that any BiH citizen of legal voting age whose name appears on the 1991 BiH census shall be eligible to vote, regardless of where that person currently resides. The Accords also protect the right of refugees and displaced persons to vote for their pre-war municipalities, either in person or by absentee ballot.

One of the key concepts in the

approach of the international community in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the principle of ownership – to enable BiH citizens to take their destiny into their own hands. Consequently, the OSCE Mission to BiH has taken considerable steps in nationalizing the electoral process. Since April 1999, the entire in-country voter registration process has been gradually handed over to municipal authorities.

The OSCE undertook an extensive training programme for municipal authorities, to ensure that voter registration becomes a normal function of local government offices, just like applying for a driver’s licence or a passport. Another significant step forward in the democratization process of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the implementation of the ownership principle is the expected participation of more than 5,500 observers from domestic citizens’ organizations in these municipal elections – a historical milestone for the country.

The Mission also distributed 60,000 political party newsletters in municipalities all over BiH. The newsletters were developed and financed by the OSCE and contain the programmes and action plans of the parties running for the

upcoming municipal elections in those regions.

The participating parties were asked to address pressing electoral issues as concretely as possible, especially the topics of return, economics, social issues,

corruption and infrastructure. This initiative was designed to help undecided voters make an educated choice on 8 April and to assist voters in holding municipal officials accountable in the post-election period.

## Inside an OSCE election observation mission

By Hannah Fearnley

**T**he Charter for European Security, adopted at the 1999 OSCE Istanbul Summit, reaffirmed the participating States' obligation to hold democratic elections. Within the OSCE framework, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is the principal institution for observing compliance by participating States with the commitments undertaken in the field of elections. The ODIHR deploys election observation missions to monitor and assess the entire electoral process before, during and after election day. Its carefully developed methodology provides a unique, in-depth insight into all elements of an electoral process. In 1999 alone, the ODIHR deployed more than 1,900 observers to monitor elections in 11 OSCE participating States.

Every election presents a unique challenge for all the members of the observation mission. The following is a phase-by-phase account of the Election Observation Mission (EOM) that covered the recent parliamentary elections in Croatia, written from the perspective of a member of the observation mission's core team:

### The needs assessment mission

The ODIHR's involvement in the election process of a country generally begins with a needs assessment mission, which is conducted to assess the pre-election situation in the light of OSCE commitments and previous ODIHR

observation reports. The deployment of a needs assessment mission usually follows a government invitation to the ODIHR to observe the elections. In the case of Croatia, for example, the needs assessment mission took place from 3 to 5 November 1999, although the elections had not been called officially. The mission concluded that a fully-fledged observation mission should be deployed to monitor the parliamentary elections.

### The arrival of the core team

As the next step, the Election Observation Mission had to be set up. As part of the core team, I arrived in Zagreb in mid-November in the peculiar situation of not knowing when the elections would be held. Most of the core team members arrived in Zagreb a week before the acting President called the election for 3 January 2000. When the final date was announced, most of us had to swiftly adjust our Christmas and millennium celebration plans accordingly.

The EOM's core team was headed by Nikolai Vulchanov, ODIHR Election Adviser, and comprised the Deputy Head, Paul O'Grady, as well as a Logistics Officer, a Finance Assistant, a Legal Adviser, a Media Analyst, a Political Officer and myself, Co-ordinator for long-term observers and Parliamentary Liaison Officer. The team was not so unfamiliar to me as I had worked with several of my colleagues from the core staff on previous elections, including

Georgia in 1999. The OSCE Mission to Croatia provided extensive support at the beginning, thanks to their in-depth knowledge of the country and advice on local politics and conditions.

Once the office, located in the Hotel Intercontinental, was up and running, and sufficient local staff were recruited, we began meetings with the national authorities, with the ruling and opposition parties, representatives from the media, domestic and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and bilateral embassies. Such meetings allowed the core team to assess the general legislative and political framework for the elections. Regular morning meetings enabled us to keep the team informed and to discuss ongoing issues and follow-up plans.

### The long-term observers

Within a week of our arrival, the long-term observers (LTOs) arrived and were briefed. LTOs are usually seconded by participating States and then deployed in teams of two persons throughout the country, some six to eight weeks before an election. Though the ODIHR requested the secondment of 20 LTOs, we received only 12. However, owing to the extensive experience of most LTOs, we were able to deploy some of them alone and thus to cover the 10 election constituencies located on the territory of Croatia.

LTOs are the Election Observation Mission's field officers, working at

regional level to acquire first-hand knowledge regarding the effectiveness and impartiality of the pre-election administration, the implementation of the election law and regulations, the nature of the campaign and the political environment prior to voting day. They meet all election commissions within their area of responsibility, as well as regional and local officials, electoral registrars, representatives of political parties, candidates and their local campaign teams, regional TV, radio and print media, representatives of minority groups and international and domestic NGOs.

In addition to their observation of the pre-election period, the LTOs also make logistical arrangements for short-term observers (STOs). They arrange for accommodation, identify interpreters and drivers, and prepare background material for each STO team's area of responsibility. The LTOs liaise on a daily basis with the LTO Co-ordinator and Logistics Officer and return each weekend to the headquarters for a meeting with the core team. At these meetings, the LTOs submit their weekly report, discuss regional issues and compare observations throughout the country. The core team in turn informs them about what is happening at a central level.

### The short-term observers

In the case of Croatia, following the request for 200 STOs from participating States, preparations immediately began for their arrival. A large number of people from the international community in Croatia volunteered to be observers. Ms. Helle Degn, the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, was appointed the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office and was to lead the STOs. The Council of Europe also confirmed that it would send a delegation to observe the elections. Conference rooms were reserved, accreditation arranged,

interpreters and drivers recruited. Across the whole length of the country, from Dubrovnik to Vukovar, accommodation for STO teams was reserved.

Despite fears of Y2K problems and bad weather, the STOs arrived without problems. Three briefings were held over the New Year period: one for the short-term observers, one for the parliamentary observers and one in Sarajevo for those recruited by the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina to observe the out-of-country voting there. In their briefing



*From top to bottom: Core staff analyse long-term observers' comments on election day. Statistics experts process data from the short-term observers' (STO) questionnaires. STOs report their findings at the debriefing. At a press conference, election observation mission heads present a preliminary statement.*

packs, the STOs were given a programme for briefing and deployment, including New Year travel to and familiarization with their deployment area before election day.

### Election day

In teams of two, accompanied by an interpreter, the STOs visited polling stations on election day and assessed the overall voting environment. They talked to the polling station officials, voters and domestic observers, and inspected voter registers and ballot boxes. Each STO team observed the voting process in approximately 15 polling stations and the counting of the ballots in one polling station. Observers filled in detailed questionnaires, which were faxed to the EOM Statistics Unit in Zagreb.

Throughout the day and the night, all the forms were processed and a computerized statistical summary produced. After the debriefing of the STOs, the preliminary statement reflecting the most important findings and concerns was finalized in close co-operation with other partners involved in the election observation. On the day after the election, this statement was presented at a press conference, open to the public, to the authorities as well as the national and international media. The final report, giving a detailed account of the election and including concrete recommendations on how to fully implement election-related OSCE commitments, was prepared within a month of the election.

Although the STOs left Croatia after the debriefing or the press conference, our observation efforts were not yet over. The LTOs and the core team remained to follow up on the aggregation of results, as well as appeals and complaints if any. In this case, it was convenient were to stay on for the Croatian presidential election, called following the death of President Tudjman on 10 December.

The presidential elections were scheduled for 24 January, with a second round on 7 February, and the EOM remained in place to prepare for the observation of these elections as well. After three months in the field, the ODIHR Election Observation Mission to

Croatia eventually closed down in mid-February following the publication of the final election results.

However, the OSCE/ODIHR's involvement in the election process does not necessarily come to an end with the closure of an observation mission: the

ODIHR stands ready to provide technical assistance in implementing the recommendations made in its final election report in order to improve the framework for the next elections. The OSCE Mission in Croatia also will continue to monitor political developments in Croatia.

## Regional Integration Seminar in Latvia succeeds in bringing together local groups

*Several regions of Latvia have been working on regional integration programmes, but the process has often taken place in isolation, with little exchange of ideas and experience between similar initiatives. During countrywide visits, the OSCE Mission to Latvia became aware of these local integration groups and the lack of mutual communication. In response, the Mission organized a seminar with the Latvian Naturalization Board, which was held last month at Ligatne, an hour from the capital Riga. The aim was to create a forum and also to inspire other cities to establish integration groups of their own. In the course of the seminar, participants received personal encouragement from two very prominent visitors.*

On 10 and 11 March, the OSCE Mission to Latvia, in co-operation with the Latvian Naturalization Board and with the financial support of the Danish Government, organized a seminar entitled 'Regional Integration'. Some 75 participants, representing local authorities, NGOs, mass media and others, were invited to discuss integration strategies in their respective regions.

The seminar took place in the wider context of national discussions on social integration. A national survey in 1997/98 showed there were considerable differences in attitudes, values and norms between citizens and non-citizens in

Latvia. Subsequently, the state initiated the drafting of a Social Integration Programme. The Concept Document for this was completed in September 1998 and released for public debate from March to May 1999. Work is currently continuing to elaborate the National Programme.

Parallel to this, several regions had started discussing and drafting regional integration programmes. On its regular road-trips, the Mission learned that these local integration groups knew little of similar initiatives elsewhere in Latvia, hence the seminar which was aimed at supporting the regional groups in their work, and creating a forum for the exchange of ideas and experience. It was also hoped that representatives from cities where such integration groups did not already exist would be able to gain from the experiences of others, and possibly be motivated to establish integration groups of their own.

In the course of the seminar, the participants learned about experiences acquired while preparing the Social Integration Programme, the experiences of solving integration problems in regions, as well as the content of different regional integration programmes and practical problems in the implementation of these.

The Head of the OSCE Mission to Latvia, Ambassador Torsten Orn, and the Head of the Latvian Naturalization Board, Ms. Eizenija Aldermane, co-hosted the

seminar. In a joint opening, they emphasised the value of such grass-roots movements for the promotion and continued attention of integration in the regions.

Two prominent visitors lent emphasis to the importance of the event. On the first day, Latvia's Minister of Justice and the Chairman of the Latvian Integration Ministerial Council, Valdis Birkavš visited the seminar and encouraged the participants to continue their good efforts.

During a two-day working visit to Latvia, the Danish Prime Minister, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, included a visit to Ligatne to address the seminar participants. In his speech, the Danish Prime Minister said Latvia had come a long way in the difficult process of integration. The process, he said, was important not only for Latvia, but also for other European societies, and the country should be praised for its efforts in this field.

Ms. Aldermane said the seminar participants should be considered as official contact persons in the regions for continued co-operation in the field of integration. The spirit of this seminar would serve as the basis for at least two more follow-up seminars on related issues later this year.

The Mission hopes that the publication of a small booklet in the wake of the seminar will assist the participants and others dealing with integration in the regions to continue their work.

# REACT – beyond the first steps

A presentation made last month to representatives of OSCE participating States provided an opportunity to test initial ideas on how to implement the Organization's new Rapid Expert Assistance and Co-operation Teams (REACT) initiative. At the same time, the meeting, held 14 March, allowed the States' own experts to add their input to the process of making REACT operational.

REACT is a concept that emerged from the Istanbul Summit in November 1999, where OSCE leaders called for an initiative that would enable the Organization, "to respond quickly to demands for assistance and for large civilian field operations."

In the Summit Declaration, it was recognised that: "the ability to deploy rapidly civilian and police expertise is essential to effective conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation." Implementing the REACT initiative would allow the Organization "to address problems before they become crises and to deploy quickly the civilian component of a peacekeeping operation when needed."

The Permanent Council and the Secretary General were therefore requested to "establish a task force within the Conflict Prevention Centre [CPC] aimed at developing the REACT programme and a budget that [would] enable REACT to be fully operational by 30 June 2000."

## Task Force established

Work began in early January, with the Task Force, co-ordinated by Victor Tomseth and directed by Marton Krasznai, Director of the CPC, consisting of seconded experts and members of the Secretariat representing major elements relevant to field activities (e.g., mission

staffing, training, operations, information technology). The Task Force core group of seven seconded staff with varying specialities (e.g., police, personnel, training, information systems) operates, in effect, as a group of consultants, drawing on information and experience from OSCE participating States and a variety of other sources to reach conclusions on and make recommendations for REACT's implementation.

The OSCE's existing method of staffing field activities is based on national recruitment systems, operated by the participating States, to identify qualified individuals for secondment. The role of the Secretariat is limited to ensuring that those proposed for secondment are, in fact, professionally qualified for the positions they are nominated to fill, as well as serving as a mechanism for achieving OSCE objectives, such as reasonable national and gender balances among international staff.

In the initial phase, the REACT development process focused on creating a conceptual framework for implementation. One important conclusion was that the core elements of the REACT initiative – early identification of relevant expertise needed to meet a specific requirement and rapid deployment of that expertise to the field – could best be met by "imbedding" the REACT concept within the existing overall system.

In other words, the objectives of REACT could most readily be met, not through the creation of a new system for recruitment of personnel exclusively for REACT purposes, but by applying techniques designed to enhance the responsiveness of the existing system, particularly in circumstances where timeliness of deployment equates to effectiveness in the field.

Another conclusion was that responsiveness required a rapid exchange of information on prospective candidates between participating States' national recruitment systems and the OSCE's Vienna base. Such information needed to be assessed quickly against specific criteria, based on actual requirements in the field. This implied using available communications and information management technologies for electronic storage, transfer and analysis of information captured in standardised formats.

## Presentation of concepts

Accordingly, the Task Force recognised that the process of implementing the REACT initiative would require close co-ordination with the States. Thus, the 14 March meeting with participating State representatives, organized by the Austrian Chair, had a twin purpose: to give the Task Force an early opportunity to test its initial conclusions about how the REACT initiative might be made operational; but also to get the States' input to the process.

A series of presentations followed by open discussion produced some useful results, without answering all outstanding questions. For example, there seemed to be a consensus in favour of creating a variety of tools designed to enhance the precision of the recruitment process and reduce the proposal rate of unqualified candidates.

These tools included a staffing matrix, which could be applied both to the ongoing process of identifying qualified candidates for current OSCE field activities and, in the REACT context, for identifying people with the expertise needed to meet possible future requirements.

There also was an understanding of the advantages of using standardized





*One aim of REACT is to get mission members into the field as quickly as possible.*

documentation to gather information on potential candidates for storage, transfer and analysis purposes. However, more work was needed on linking national recruiting systems electronically with Vienna. Key issues to be resolved include matters such as where data on candidates will be stored pending an actual require-

ment for field staff and when such data will be transferred to Vienna.

#### **Further steps**

Before the June 30 deadline, the REACT Task Force has an ambitious agenda, which includes development of a detailed proposal for implementation

of the REACT concept – including a budget – by the beginning of June.

Simultaneously, the Task Force will complete the development of various materials, including the staffing matrix, a standardized application form, a formatted curriculum vitae form, a glossary of terms to be used, a guide to field work in the OSCE, and standards for generic training, which all candidates for OSCE field assignments should undergo in order to become operationally ready. Some of these elements are just a few weeks away from introduction.

However, other elements of the final REACT mechanism will take longer to put in place. An important component will be the information management system used by the Secretariat to process data on candidates proposed by the participating States for field assignments, whether in existing field activities or in the context of REACT. And funds for the necessary software and hardware, development of a database with capacities required for REACT, and training of personnel in the system's operation and maintenance first have to be approved.

## **Representative on Freedom of the Media presents the 1999/2000 Yearbook**

**O**n 28 March, Freimut Duve, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, presented his *1999/2000 Yearbook: Freedom and Responsibility*. This second Yearbook presents the everyday work of the Office, and highlights the Representative's reports. It also provides a forum to authors from the OSCE region to stress their views on freedom of expression and its track record, often poor, in some OSCE participating States.

Deyan Anastasijevic, a leading Serbian independent journalist, writes, for

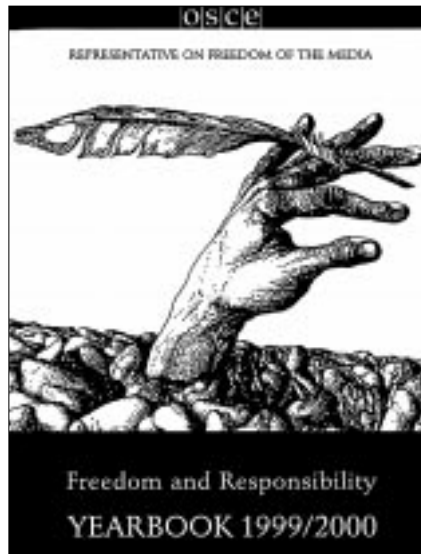
example, about the effect of the recent elections in Croatia on Serbia. Ivana Zivkovic and Lidija Popovic presents in great detail the latest campaign of harassment of independent media in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The Russian writer, Anatoli Pristavkin, describes his perceptions of the war in Chechnya in a strikingly moving piece. Katharina Hadjidimos, who used to work for the OSCE Representative, writes about the role of the media in Greek-Turkish relations. Roy Gutman, a Pulitzer prize-winning reporter from Washington, DC,

reminisces about the 25 years of the Helsinki Final Act and how it affected him personally.

In a preface to the Yearbook, Knut Vollebaek, the former Foreign Minister of Norway and OSCE Chairman-in-Office in 1999, writes: "One of the major objectives for the OSCE during the last decade has been to support and nurture the large number of new democracies that emerged out of former totalitarian regimes. One feature common to them all was the need to develop free and independent media. In this respect, the OSCE

Representative on Freedom of the Media plays an invaluable role.”

As in last year’s Yearbook, the staff of the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media present their own subjective pieces on what they think about their work and about the state of the media in general. Mihaylo Milovanovitch, an intern from Bulgaria, discusses what he calls, “forbidden languages.” He describes people who were killed in Pristina because they spoke the “wrong” language: “A ‘forbidden’ language. Your language. It is the language of your mother and your forefathers,



which all of a sudden threatens to kill you. But you cannot be silent, nobody can,” he writes.

Hanna Vuokko from Finland relates the contrasting linguistic experience of a different ethnic minority, when she describes the situation of Swedish-speaking Finns, who have their own newspapers, magazines and television programmes.

The 1999/2000 Yearbook also provides a list of all non-governmental organizations active in the field of defending freedom of expression. For the first time, the Yearbook will also be available on the Internet.



## News from the field

*The OSCE currently has Missions or other field activities in Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Kosovo (FRY), Latvia, Skopje (FYROM), Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. The following brief reports reflect some of the recent work which these field operations have undertaken.*

### **Working group looks at draft Albanian electoral code**

Under the auspices of the OSCE Presence in Albania, the Electoral Code Working Group, consisting of governing coalition and opposition experts, completed three weeks of almost daily meetings. Despite progress in a number of areas and a generally good atmosphere within the group, disagreements over the competencies, composition and selection procedures for the Central Election Commission (CEC) continued.

The Presence set a deadline of 7 April for the conclusion of the Working Group meetings, after when an amended version of the draft Code is to be re-submitted to the Government, including the group’s changes and proposals by international experts. The group was established to prepare the legislative framework for the local elections scheduled for autumn this year.

### **Seminar on OSCE in Kazakhstan**

On 10 March, the private university, Kainar, hosted a conference on ‘The OSCE and Security in Central Asia’. The conference focused on and examined potential threats to the security and stability throughout Central Asia. It was attended by professors and analysts from Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, by Kazakh political scientists, representatives of the Embassies of the Central Asian States in Kazakhstan, students and members of the diplomatic corps.

### **OSCE delegation focuses on water issues in Central Asia**

From 22 to 31 March, a United Kingdom-led OSCE delegation of experts on water management issues visited the five Central Asian States. The initiative followed up an offer made by Robin Cook, the UK Foreign Secretary, at the Istanbul Summit to host an OSCE conference

on environment and water issues. The delegation included representatives of the OSCE CiO and Secretariat, the United States, the World Bank and the European Commission. Members received positive responses from Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, while Uzbekistan wanted more time to consider the offer. Turkmenistan did not favour the proposal. One of the concerns expressed to the delegation was that only the countries of the region would be responsible for discussions on water management issues. But the mission was reported to be encouraged by the good progress being made by each of the countries in tackling these two issues.

### **Seminars on empowering NGOs in BiH**

The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) organized two seminars in Sarajevo and Mostar last month,

aimed at empowering NGOs throughout the Federation to take part in pre-election activities. The seminars were attended by more than 50 participants from local NGOs. Six experts from successful Croatian and Slovak NGOs shared their experiences in 'getting out the vote' activities, domestic monitoring, and media campaigning on issues of general public interest. The participants also proposed encouraging political parties to address such issues. Two more seminars were due to be held in Banja Luka and Tuzla.

### **Roundtable held on media/police relations in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

The OSCE Mission and the United Nations Missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH) held a roundtable discussion last month, attended by International Police Task Force (IPTF) representatives, local police officials and journalists, aimed at enhancing the professional relationship and partnership between the media and the police. The discussions focused on the production of joint police/journalist guidelines, informing the police about the rights and treatment of journalists and informing journalists about their responsibilities in dealing with the police. Journalists and policemen will be trained on how to apply the guidelines. Any incidents related to journalists and the media that involve police will be tracked, while UNMIBH will ensure, through IPTF, that local police fully investigate media-related crimes. Recent events involving police and journalists showed that there is a real need for discussions towards a functioning relationship between police and media.

### **Projects to involve youth in Croatian society**

The OSCE Mission to Croatia is currently developing projects to encourage the participation of youth in civil society. From 24 to 26 March, the Mission's

co-ordination centre in Sisak, which has already initiated several projects, co-sponsored a seminar with 'Europe House Zagreb'. The two-day seminar drew an attendance of 40 young people from central Croatia, included sessions on human rights, democracy, and greater participation of youth in civil society. As part of the Mission's efforts to encourage capacity building among NGOs, the seminar also included sessions on NGO management and the drafting of project proposals. By the end of the weekend, participants had also learned how to develop ideas into concrete project proposals.

### **Meeting looks at organized crime in South-Eastern Europe**

From 9 to 10 March, the Mission to Croatia lent its expertise to a working-level meeting in The Hague on the Organized Crime Initiative within the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe. The meeting, which was hosted by Europol, also brought together other key organizations such as the South-East European Co-operative Initiative (SECI), the European Commission, the Central European Initiative and the Council of Europe. The purpose of the event was to finalize a comprehensive and collaborative approach to assisting governments and relevant law enforcement authorities in South-Eastern Europe in their fight against transnational organized crime.

### **Croatia Mission seminars boost local NGOs**

The Mission to Croatia has been sponsoring a number of seminars aimed at supporting local NGOs in their work, one from 16 to 17 March in Vukovar, and another one on 23 March in central Croatia. The 'Centre for Entrepreneurship' led the first seminar, which was attended by representatives of 12 NGOs who were taught on how to create an operational business plan, including aspects of

finance, reporting and taxes. The other seminar was led by the Zagreb-based Centre for Education and Counseling of Women (CESI) and was a development seminar for twelve rural women's groups working in Central Croatia. Its aim was to help NGOs carry out a needs assessment and design a customized training programme.

Discussions revolved around the themes of fund-raising, financing, contact with donors, drafting project proposals, co-operation with the government, and networking. By sponsoring other such training seminars, the OSCE Mission seeks to improve the capacity of rural NGOs, which often operate in relative isolation.

### **Kosovo Mission hosts seminar on journalists' rights and obligations**

On 10 March, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo organized a two-day conference in Pristina, on the 'Rights and obligations of journalists', as part of its continued efforts to develop professional and democratic media in the region. The Association of the Media of Kosovo and experts from the Brussels-based International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) attended the meeting to discuss international journalistic standards, the new regulation on "hate speech" and a Code of Conduct. Journalists from across Kosovo were invited to the first day of the conference to talk about these issues. The aim is to improve professional media standards by gaining a greater understanding of the role of democratic media, and especially the obligations set down in a Code of Conduct.

### **Kosovo police school at Vucitrn doubles capacity**

On 27 March, the Kosovo Police Service School took in its fourth class of students, when the 230 students from the third course were joined by 221 addi-

tional cadets from the new course. This means that for the first time two courses are being held simultaneously and that a total of 451 cadets are now attending the OSCE-run school. The fourth course includes 31 women, 11 Serbs and four Turkish candidates.

### **Civil registration begins in Kosovo**

On 13 March, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo and the United Nations Civil Administration launched preparations for civil registration in Kosovo. This is essential not only in providing public services to all residents but also to build an accurate voter registration list. Registration is planned to start on 26 April at 400 locations and will be obligatory for residents of Kosovo. On 27 March, the OSCE Mission organized a press briefing in Pristina on civil and voters' registration and preparation for the municipal elections. It gave people an opportunity to put questions to OSCE/UNMIK experts on issues relating to registration and election matters of interest to the media in Kosovo.

### **Meeting looks at Transdniestrian settlement**

From 20 to 24 March, the OSCE Mission to Moldova and the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs organized a 'Working Table on a Transdniestrian Settlement' in Kyiv. It was attended by the heads of the expert groups from the two sides and the three mediators, as well as experts in international law, constitutional systems and conflict resolution from Austria, Portugal, Switzerland, Finland, the United Kingdom, the United States, the Council

of Europe, Ukraine, Russia, Moldova and Transdnistria. The specialists at the gathering produced recommendations on the structure, state organs, and division of competencies of the common state, and stages and possible guarantees for the implementation of a settlement. Representatives of the sides agreed on a working schedule for the immediate future, including the resumption of the experts' weekly talks, aimed at preparing for a high-level meeting in summer.

### **Human rights cases are closely monitored by Tajikistan Mission**

The OSCE Mission to Tajikistan is closely following some cases of alleged severe human rights violations concern-

ing pre-trial detainees and convicted persons. The alleged violations, which occurred at different levels of the judicial system, give the Mission concern for the status of the rule of law in Tajikistan. Cases of sexual violence against women by military persons were reported to the OSCE Mission and its Field Offices. Reportedly the alleged perpetrators in these cases have not been charged or otherwise subjected to legal proceedings. In addition, the OSCE Mission is concerned with the condition of individuals in places of detention. The Mission has not been given access to detained persons either during or after trials. In order to further strengthen the Mission's human rights activities, an action plan for human rights is under preparation by the Mission.

### **Regional Heads of Mission meeting held in Tajikistan**

From 22 to 23 March, a regional Heads of Mission meeting was held in Dushanbe for the heads of the five OSCE presences in Central Asia. The meeting, which included most of the respective human dimension officers, was chaired by the Conflict Prevention Centre Director, Ambassador Marton Krasznai. A representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, the Mission Liaison Officer and the Training Co-ordinator also took part, together with a representative from the ODIHR. The meeting focused on substantive issues such as regional cooperation and co-ordination, political issues, human rights, reporting, staffing, budgeting and training. The CiO's representative informed the participants



*Attending the regional Heads of Mission Meeting in Dushanbe.*

about the CiO's visit to Central Asia, as well as on the Chairmanship's three initiatives with regard to: water; drugs control, crime prevention and terrorism; and religion. The next meeting is planned to take place in Ashgabad, Turkmenistan in autumn.



On 1 March, the **OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Austrian Foreign Minister, Benita Ferrero-Waldner**, issued a statement in

which she expressed her satisfaction with the Belarus authorities' commitment to "free, fair and internationally recognizable elections". However, she added her regret that no national consensus could yet be found on the framework conditions for free and fair parliamentary elections due in autumn 2000, despite continued OSCE initiatives since 1997. She welcomed the authorities' intention to invite international election observers, but emphasized that these should not be dispatched as long as OSCE standards for free and fair elections have not all been met. On 27 March, however, the CiO issued a further statement in response to the arrest of peaceful bystanders at a demonstration two days earlier in Minsk. Those detained included an accredited member of the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus, observing the events. Mrs. Ferrero-Waldner said this violated international conventions as well as local laws. The CiO reminded the Government of the commitments it has undertaken towards an open dialogue.

On 2 March, the **High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Wolfgang Petritsch**, addressed the OSCE Permanent Council. In a joint presentation with the OSCE Head of Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Robert Barry, he said that, as regards the general situation in the country, overall progress was unsatisfactory. He mentioned the ruling nationalist parties, people's obsession with ethnic identity and a lack of political will as major elements of obstruction on the country's road to progress. Accord-

ing to Mr. Petritsch, Bosnia and Herzegovina would need a phased entry strategy into Europe, implying a gradual and not immediate decrease of the international community's presence in BiH. To achieve real progress there, Mr. Petritsch highlighted three key points: the return of refugees and displaced persons; effective state institutions; and economic reform. He described the strengthening and reforming of the law enforcement and judicial structures as the central priority. He also mentioned the OSCE field office structure as playing a vital role in the region and concluded by pointing out the importance of a continued engagement of OSCE participating States in BiH.

On 2 March, the **OSCE Chairperson-in-Office** welcomed the parliamentary elections in Tajikistan on 27 February, as a further step towards the democratization of the country. The joint United Nations/OSCE Election Observation Mission to Tajikistan raised some concerns regarding the independence of mass media and election commissions and the transparency of the counting and tabulation procedures. The OSCE Chairperson-in-Office called upon the Tajik authorities to take these shortcomings into consideration and to closely co-operate with the international community in order to further strengthen the democratic development of the country.

On 8 March, the **OSCE Chairperson-in-Office** voiced her dismay about recent information on harassment of independent media in Serbia. She pointed out the importance of free, independent and pluralistic media to create a free and open society, with accountable systems of government. She called upon the Serbian authorities to take all necessary steps to guarantee the basic conditions for free and independent media. She reit-

erated that full compliance with OSCE principles and commitments with regard to freedom of expression and free and independent media was among the fundamental requirements for active participation in the work of the OSCE.

On 15 March, the **OSCE Chairperson-in-Office** made a statement on the peaceful and well-organized parliamentary elections in Kyrgyzstan. However, she also expressed her concern about certain negative tendencies, which could be unfavourable to the democratic development of the country. She called on the Kyrgyz authorities to address complaints and to remove any obstacles that could prevent full and equal participation by all political forces, referring especially to the presidential elections at the end of the year. She finally expressed her confidence that the Kyrgyz authorities would seize these elections as an opportunity to achieve further important progress in their country.

On 16 March, the **Foreign Minister of Ukraine, Borys Tarasyuk**, addressed the Permanent Council. He thanked all the OSCE participating States that had expressed their sympathies with regards to the tragic coal mine accident in the Luhansk region at the beginning of March. He highlighted the need for the OSCE to become more flexible and to better interact with other leading organizations, in order to be able to respond quickly to several conflicts. With regard to combating military separatism, he expressed his concern about the prevention of an international assessment mission inspecting armaments in Transdnistria, Moldova, as decided during the Istanbul Summit. He therefore asked for an enforcement of OSCE decisions on such issues as the demilitarization of Transdnistria to facilitate a political settlement in the region. He listed other

“negative phenomena”, such as ethnic hatred, terrorism or weak democracies, that would need to be opposed in order to settle conflicts more efficiently in the future. Finally, the Foreign Minister assured the Council that his country would also attempt to play a stabilizing role in the OSCE area.

On 23 March, the **Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyzstan, M. S. Imanaliev**, addressed the Permanent Council. He welcomed the dynamic development of relations between the OSCE and the Central Asian States and described the opening of an OSCE field office in Osh as a significant contribution to maintaining security in the region. He called the recent parliamentary elections in the country a proof of the existence of political pluralism and of the growing role of Kyrgyz civil society. He mentioned the Government’s decision to create a working group with the co-operation of the OSCE/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and representatives from NGOs to work on amendments to the Election Code,

and the holding of a roundtable aimed at working out recommendations for the forthcoming presidential elections. The Minister concluded by pointing out the need for a more comprehensive approach to the relationship with neighbouring non-participating States of the OSCE. He expressed his conviction that strengthening regional co-operation would contribute to stability and security in Central Asia and it would be the participating States’ responsibility to respond to existing and future challenges.

On 23 March, the **Foreign Minister of Croatia, Tonino Picula**, addressed the Permanent Council. On behalf of his country, he thanked the OSCE, the ODIHR and the election observers for their support in the recent parliamentary and presidential polls, and the OSCE Mission to Croatia for assisting the Croatian Government. He stressed the important role of the OSCE in building European security and said that his Government would fully embrace the OSCE concept of comprehensive security. He mentioned Croatia’s wish to become a more

active partner of the international community and in particular of the OSCE. He also mentioned his country’s endeavours to resolve quickly all outstanding problems with neighbouring countries in an atmosphere of partnership and open political dialogue in order to stabilize the immediate neighbourhood. He singled out the return of refugees and displaced persons as one of Croatia’s highest priorities. Finally, he expressed his hope that the mandate of the OSCE Mission to Croatia would be extended until the end of the year, to help the country in achieving its goals and resolving many open issues to the satisfaction of the Croatian people and the international community.

On 30 March, the **Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Walter Schwimmer**, addressed the Permanent Council. His statement was followed by a joint press conference of the OSCE and the Council of Europe, which focused on the co-operation between the two organizations, especially with respect to Chechnya and Kosovo and other current political issues.



*The Foreign Minister of Ukraine,  
Borys Tarasyuk*



*The Minister of Foreign Affairs  
of Kyrgyzstan, M. S. Imanaliev*



*The Foreign Minister of Croatia,  
Tonino Picula*

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### **OSCE/ODIHR holds meeting on preventing Inhuman Treatment or Punishment**

The first of three OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meetings scheduled for 2000 was devoted to 'Human Rights and Inhuman Treatment or Punishment'. The meeting, which took place on 27 March in Vienna, focused on two main areas: first, identifying issues relating to the protection of persons under detention or imprisonment and developing concrete recommendations for the implementation of provisions in international law and OSCE commitments in this area; and second, fostering an exchange of information on capital punishment in the OSCE region.

The meeting was opened by Christian Strohal from the Austrian Chairmanship and Gérard Stoudmann, the Director of the ODIHR. Sir Nigel Rodley, UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment and Member of the ODIHR Advisory Panel on the Prevention of Torture, gave the keynote speech.

Discussions took place in two working groups, one focusing on pre-trial detention and the other on penitentiary systems and capital punishment. In each working group, the participants – State delegations, international organizations and more than 50 NGOs – discussed key obstacles to the prevention of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment of persons in detention or imprisonment and possible ways for the OSCE to overcome these obstacles through its own programmes or by assisting governments, national institutions and civil society.

The first working group, introduced by Claudine Haenni, Secretary General of the Association for the Prevention of Torture, focused more specifically on issues such as the improvement of the implementation of safeguards against cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment for persons in pre-trial detention, the role of the prosecutor and other officials involved, the use of alternatives to pre-trial detention, and the prevention of arbitrary or incommunicado detention.

Following an introduction by Silvia Casale, President of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and Alan Walker, ODIHR Consultant on Prison Reform, working group two first explored issues relating to the penitentiary system such as existing obstacles to the prevention of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment of prisoners. Suggestions were made for possible ways to implement best practices, and alternatives to imprisonment.

The second working group then moved on to an exchange of information on capital punishment, concentrating on the specific situations in non-abolitionist participating States, on measures aimed at improving the availability of information on the use of the death penalty, and on questions relating to the role of public opinion in the process leading to abolition. Renate Wohlwend, Council of Europe Rapporteur on the Abolition of the Death Penalty, and a representative of the Delegation of Turkmenistan, one of the participating States to have most recently abolished capital punishment, opened this session.

The lively discussions in the working groups resulted in a large number of recommendations directed to participating States, and to the OSCE as a whole as well as to OSCE field operations and the ODIHR. The report of the meeting was distributed to the participants and is available from the ODIHR website ([www.osce.org/odihhr](http://www.osce.org/odihhr)). In order to ensure better follow-up, it was agreed that the next Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw in October 2000 would be used to take stock of the progress on this and other issues to be covered by the Supplementary Meetings.

The regular Supplementary Human Dimension Meetings, organized jointly by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office and the ODIHR, are devoted to key substantial concerns raised at previous Review Conferences or Implementation Meetings. The next Supplementary Human Dimension Meetings will be devoted to 'Trafficking in Human Beings' (19 June) and 'Migration and Internal Displacement' (18 September).

### **ODIHR discusses support for Russian Presidential Representative for Human Rights in Chechnya**

On 24 March, the ODIHR Director, Gérard Stoudmann, met Vladimir Kalamonov, the Russian Presidential Special Representative for Human Rights in Chechnya, to discuss how the ODIHR could support his team in following up human rights complaints in Chechnya. Mr. Kalamonov provided an overview of the operational conditions for his office. Detailed discussions then focused on the possibilities for practical co-operation

between Mr. Kalamenov's staff and the ODIHR. Agreement was reached for immediate follow-up by the ODIHR in the area of technical support.

It was stressed during the discussions that the OSCE fully supports the co-operation between Mr. Kalamenov and the Council of Europe, and is offering its assistance to Mr. Kalamenov in close co-ordination with the Council of Europe. It was also emphasized that the international community attaches great importance to the results of the work to be undertaken by Mr. Kalamenov and his team.

### **ODIHR talks over implementation of projects in Ukraine**

The ODIHR Director, Gérard Stoudmann, visited Ukraine on 2-3 March to discuss ongoing and future OSCE projects and to present the final ODIHR report on the 1999 presidential elections. Accompanied by the OSCE Project Coordinator in Ukraine, Ambassador Peter Burkhard, he met with Foreign Minister Boris Tarasyuk, Minister of Justice Suzanna Stanik and the First Deputy Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada, Victor Medvedchuk, among other political and administrative leaders. Meetings were also held with the Ombudsperson, Nina Karpachova, and with the Chairmen of the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court and the Central Election Commission.

Mr. Stoudmann pointed out that the change of the OSCE mandate in Ukraine from a pure security mandate to assistance with human rights and legislation is evidence of the progress Ukraine had made in its democratization process. He stressed the importance of the ODIHR's largest project in Ukraine in that regard, a comprehensive review of Ukrainian legislation to determine its compliance with international human rights standards.

He also addressed the issue of trafficking in human beings. In this context he expressed the expectation that a

statute on banning trafficking would be included in the current draft of the new criminal code, as there was already active trafficking legislation in the current criminal code. He stressed that ODIHR would continue its work with the National Council on Trafficking, set up as a part of the Ombudsperson's Office.



### **ODIHR Delegation visits Chechnya before Russian presidential election**

The Director of the OSCE ODIHR, Gérard Stoudmann, led an ODIHR delegation on 20 March to assess the preparations in Chechnya for the Russian Federation presidential election. The ODIHR delegation accompanied the Central Election Commission Chairman, Alexander Vesnyakov. During the visit to Gudermes and Khankala near Grozny, the delegation held discussions with civilian and military authorities, as well as with regional and local election commission members. A press statement detailing the findings of the ODIHR delegation was released on 21 March and concluded that standard conditions for elections were not present in Chechnya.

### **OSCE/PACE sees progress in Russian presidential election**

The International Election Observation Mission for the 26 March presidential election in the Russian Federation concluded in a preliminary statement released on 27 March that this election marked further progress towards the consolidation of democratic elections in the Russian Federation. The Central Election Commission administered the election process professionally and independently. The election took place under a new law that is consistent with internationally recognized democratic principles.

However, while in general meeting

the country's commitments as an OSCE participating State and as a member of the Council of Europe, the election revealed some weaknesses. Chief among these are pressure on the media and the decline of credible pluralism.

The International Election Observation Mission was a joint effort of the ODIHR, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (PA) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). Ms. Helle Degn, President of the OSCE PA and Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for the Russian presidential election, led the OSCE Election Observation Mission. Edouard Brunner led the ODIHR long-term observers, while Björn von der Esch headed the PACE delegation. The observation mission deployed more than 380 short-term observers from 32 participating States, including more than 75 parliamentarians.

### **Parliamentary election in Kyrgyzstan faulted on OSCE commitments**

An ODIHR election observation mission, headed by Mark Stevens (UK), monitored the second round of the parliamentary elections in Kyrgyzstan on 12 March. Over 70 short-term observers were deployed on election day. The preliminary statement issued in Bishkek on 13 March expressed concern that certain problems which arose in the course of the first round of the elections and to which the attention of the Kyrgyz authorities was drawn remained unresolved. Election procedures were generally well-conducted in most areas, but very serious concerns emerged in certain constituencies. The process leading up to the second round of the election was marred by interference by state officials, particularly through the selective use of legal sanctions against certain candidates. As a result, the ODIHR mission concluded that the parliamentary elections failed to



comply with OSCE commitments. The ODIHR has also expressed its serious concern to the Government about developments since the elections, including in particular the arrest of a prominent Opposition leader.

### **Belarus Election Law contains serious deficiencies – ODIHR**

The ODIHR released comments on the recently adopted Electoral Code of Belarus, concluding that it falls short of OSCE commitments, in particular those contained in the 1990 Copenhagen Document. The adopted Code fails to provide for pluralistic representation on the Central Election Commission and other election commissions, and it excessively regulates campaign activities, to such a degree that it stifles robust and vigorous campaigning and limits the right of free speech and expression. The Code has deficiencies in the area of transparency and candidate registration, among others.

## **DEMOCRATIZATION**



### **Meeting on freedom of movement in Kazakhstan held in Almaty**

The ODIHR, in cooperation with the OSCE Centre in Almaty and the Kazakh International Bureau for Human Rights, organized an NGO-Government meeting on freedom of movement and choice of place of residence on 13-14 March in Almaty. The meeting, held within the framework of the ODIHR civil society assistance project, focused on the issue of exit visas and internal registration. Kazakhstan is among the few OSCE participating States that continue to require their citizens to obtain exit visas. This practice was challenged by a number of speakers. For example, Rakhat Aliyev, the head of the National Security Committee (KNC) for the Almaty city

and region, stated that exit visas not only contravened international human rights standards but also served no useful security purpose. Dr. Vladimir Shkolnikov, the ODIHR Migration Adviser, provided information on the history of ODIHR involvement in the issue of freedom of movement and the significance of OSCE commitments. The participants agreed in principle that exit visas should be abolished.

The issue of internal registration was also discussed during the meeting. A number of recommendations were developed, aimed at simplifying the legal and administrative procedures for internal registration in Kazakhstan. The ODIHR will continue to follow the issues related to freedom of movement in the country, and, in particular, the implementation of the recommendations made at this meeting.

### **Needs assessment for border guards training project in Kyrgyzstan**

On 17-18 March, Dr. Vladimir Shkolnikov, ODIHR Migration Adviser, and Major Grzegorz Zygner, lecturer in law at the Polish Border Guards Training Centre, visited Kyrgyzstan for a needs assessment mission, the first phase of the ODIHR border guards training project. The visit was facilitated by the OSCE Centre in Bishkek and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) office in Bishkek. The IOM will also contribute financially to the subsequent phases of the project.

The needs assessment mission met with the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, the Office on Passport and Visas of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Deputy Head of the Consular Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Director of the State Agency on Migration and Demography, and the Deputy Head of the Main Directorate of Border Defence (MDBD) of the Ministry of Defence. It also visited the MDBD training centre.

The mission concluded that should the ongoing process of delimitation and demarcation of borders in Central Asia continue, border guards will have an important role to play in dealing with persons travelling throughout the region. Border guards also have an important role in law enforcement in border areas. Finally, Bishkek airport is in the process of being refurbished and expanded, which is expected to result in more travellers to and from Kyrgyzstan. The training project envisages both training of Kyrgyz border officials in Poland and the provision of courses by Polish trainers in Kyrgyzstan.

### **Radio programmes on human rights issues aired in Georgia**

With the broadcasting of a radio programme on the rights of religious minorities on 10 March, the public awareness project under the Memorandum of Understanding between the ODIHR and the Government of Georgia was successfully completed. The programme was the last in a series of six radio productions aimed at promoting human rights in Georgia by informing the public on current legislation in the field of human rights and on relevant international standards.

The programme, focused on the rights of religious minorities, looked at the establishment and functioning of religious organizations, on the relationship between the State and religious groups and on the current legislation in this field. Other productions covered voters' rights and the rights of selected vulnerable groups, such as refugees and internally-displaced persons, military personnel, prisoners, defendants and children.

The series was produced by two local radio stations, in close co-operation with the ODIHR and the OSCE Mission to Georgia, and broadcast nationwide between October 1999 and March 2000, in both Georgian and Russian.

### **ODIHR extends assistance on policy making on Roma issues in Romania**

The ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues continued its ongoing efforts to provide assistance to the Romanian Government on Roma policy-making. In order to further speed up the development of a government strategy, the Contact Point organized a series of roundtable discussions on 6-8 March, with government representatives such as the Minister for National Minorities, members of the Inter-Ministerial Sub-Commission for Roma, officials from the Department for the Protection of National Minorities, and the Working Group of Roma Associations. One of the meetings was co-organized by the Project on Ethnic Relation (PER).

The participants adopted a memorandum outlining the basic principles on which the development of a government strategy should be based. The document reaffirms the need for including Roma NGOs in this process. Subject to government approval, the memorandum will be the basis for negotiations leading to the adoption of a comprehensive Roma policy. The visit of the ODIHR Director,

Gérard Stoudmann, to Romania in late spring provides an opportunity to discuss the progress made in this process.

The Contact Point also supported a Government-NGO meeting on schooling of Roma children, which was organized to review the present practices and regulations. Participants evaluated the experience made with the newly established inspectors for Roma schooling, and agreed to formalize the role of the Roma assistant or mediator. A standing working group on the schooling of Roma children and adults will be established within the Ministry of Education.

In the framework of the Roma policy assistance project, the Contact Point also started to document the legal status of Roma and policy-making in Slovenia.

### **ODIHR launches project on Roma asylum seekers**

In March, the ODIHR Contact Point on Roma and Sinti Issues launched a project aimed at facilitating international consultations on Roma asylum seekers. In co-operation with governmental authorities and Roma NGOs, the Contact Point organized several meetings, docu-

mentation visits and field activities in Finland, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic and Slovenia. The project is aimed at documenting the steady increase in Roma seeking asylum in Western European countries, and identifying possible ways of addressing this phenomenon.

Within the framework of the project, the Contact Point organized a roundtable to discuss migration and asylum-seeking by Slovak Roma on 3-4 March in Bratislava.

The roundtable, co-organized by the Project on Ethnic Relations, brought together officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and of Social Affairs, the Government's Commissioner for Roma, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration, as well as Slovak NGOs and representatives of Roma associations. As a result of the meeting, Roma participants decided to establish a working group of Roma associations and to develop a document defining a common position on migration issues by the end of May. The document will provide a platform for further co-operation with the Government on migration issues.

## **NEWS** from the High Commissioner on National Minorities

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### **HCNM discusses minority higher education issues with Romania**

From 1 to 4 March, Max van der Stoel, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities visited Romania with three international experts on higher education, in the latest in a series of visits to that country to discuss the issue of higher education for minorities. On 1

March, he met with the Foreign Minister, Petre Roman. Among the issues discussed were the state of inter-ethnic relations in Romania, co-operation between the High Commissioner's Office and Romania in the run up to the Romanian Chairmanship of 2001, and the Roma. In a ceremony at the Presidential Palace, Mr. van der Stoel was awarded the Star

of Romania by President Emil Constantinescu for his distinguished efforts in integrating Romania more closely into European structures.

On 2 March, the High Commissioner visited Cluj-Napoca to present his 'Recommendations on expanding the concept of multiculturalism at the Babes-Bolyai University' to the Rector of the Univer-

sity, Professor Andrei Marga. The recommendations, building on the already existing foundation and tradition of multilingualism and multiculturalism at the University, are designed to further develop the possibilities for the Hungarian and German minority to study in their mother tongue. These include proposed changes in decision-making at the University in order to give the minorities more control over issues that directly affect their lines of study. The Rector, Professor Marga is also the Minister of Education. Discussions concerning the implementation of the recommendations were also held with the vice-rectors and Chancellor. The need for amending the University Charter, introducing courses in Hungarian in the faculties of law and economics, and adjusting the decision-making mechanisms were stressed by Mr. van der Stoel.

Visiting Bucharest on 3 March, the High Commissioner met with Bela Marko, President of the Hungarian Democratic Union (UDMR), and other UDMR representatives, where he discussed the recommendations concerning Babes-Bolyai University.

Mr. Van der Stoel followed up his visit by sending a letter to Mr. Marga on 30 March to further explain his position on possible steps to be taken as regards the development of multicultural and multilingual education at Babes-Bolyai University.

#### **Latvian meeting focuses on state language issue**

The High Commissioner visited Latvia on 9 and 10 March, where he held discussions with the State President, Ms. Vike-Freiberga, the Prime Minister, Mr. Skele, the Minister of Justice, Mr. Birkavs, the Minister of Education, Mr. Vitols and the State Secretary in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Riekstins.

These discussions focused on the draft governmental decrees for the imple-

mentation of the state language law, which are to be elaborated following the adoption of the law in December 1999. Agreement was reached with the Latvian Government on a visit by a group of experts from the Office of the High Commissioner and the Council of Europe would assist the commission in charge of drafting the decrees. The experts will visit Latvia later this spring.

Other matters discussed with interlocutors included the Latvian Social Integration Programme and Russian-Latvian relations.

#### **High Commissioner delivers keynote speech at Stability Pact Conference**

On 16 March, Max van der Stoel gave the keynote speech to an International Conference on Inter-ethnic Relations and Minorities in South Eastern Europe which was hosted by the Slovenian Government, in the framework of the Stability Pact Task Force on Human Rights and Minorities. In his speech, Mr. van der Stoel warned that a “failure to deal effectively with inter-ethnic conflict will hold us back on other aspects of our agenda including democracy-building, regional security, and economic development.”

He stressed the need to strengthen the foundations of a democratic, pluralistic civil society, accommodating and integrating diversity and protecting the rights of persons belonging to national minorities: “Surely it is time to realize that the pursuit of the mono-ethnic state is a dead end street,” he said.

The High Commissioner noted that the Hague, Oslo and Lund Recommendations could provide helpful ideas for putting commitments into practice, in terms of protecting and promoting the rights of persons belonging to national minorities. He also called on states to ratify the Council of Europe’s Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities – “and without reservations

that would reduce the impact of the legal obligations contained therein.”

He paid particular attention to the situation of the Roma, which he described as “one of Europe’s most pressing minority-related issues”. He concluded by stressing that, when it came to minority rights protection, “we do not need new commitments or institutions, rather we have to apply existing ones.” He highlighted the tendency to “sometimes fall short when it comes to the political and financial capital to put our good intentions into practice.” The priority of Stability Pact participants, he said, should be to, “pool our resources and get down to the business of putting our projects into practice.”

#### **HCNM to issue report dealing with plight of Roma**

The Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities will issue a long-awaited ‘Report on the situation of the Roma and Sinti in the OSCE area’ in April. The 180-page document gives a comprehensive overview of the plight of Europe’s Roma population and provides recommendations to overcome the main problem areas cited in the report namely, discrimination and racial violence, education, living conditions and political participation.

Recommendations are also made concerning the enhancement of the mandate of the OSCE Contact Point for Roma and Sinti issues. The report contains an explanation of CSCE/OSCE commitments and initiatives relating to Roma and Sinti and a note on the history of the Roma in Europe. More comprehensive coverage of the report will appear in the May Newsletter. Copies of the report will be obtainable from the OSCE Secretariat or the Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. The report will also be available on the OSCE website.

# REPORT

## from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

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### **Parliamentarians monitor Presidential Elections in Russia**

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President, Helle Degn, was appointed Special Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office to lead the OSCE Election Observation Mission to the Presidential Elections in Russia, on 26 March. The Mission included some 400 international short-term observers, including 75 parliamentarians from the OSCE PA and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

The OSCE PA Observer Team consisted of Members of Parliament from Austria, Belarus, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Moldova, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Sweden, Turkey and Ukraine. The parliamentarians were given extensive briefings, which included meetings with the Speaker of the Russian State Duma, Gennady Seleznev, and the Chairman of the Central Election Commission, Alexander Vishnyakov, as well as meetings with the leadership of the major political parties. The parliamentarians also attended a panel discussion on the current political situation in Russia with prominent Russian analysts and representatives of the mass media.

While in Moscow, the OSCE PA President held separate meetings with Acting President Putin, Foreign Minister Ivanov, Chairman of the Council of Federation Stroyev, Speaker of the State Duma Seleznev and Chairman of the Central Election Committee Vishnyakov. She

also met with Radio Liberty correspondent Andrei Babitsky, one of the candidates nominated for the OSCE PA's Annual Prize for Journalism and Democracy in 2000.

On election day, the PA delegation was divided into 30 teams, monitoring the elections in the Moscow area, Ekaterinburg, Vladimir, Kharbarovsk, St. Petersburg, and Yaroslavl-Kostroma. Delegation members visited numerous polling stations and witnessed opening and closing procedures.

At a press conference in Moscow on 27 March, President Degn issued a joint statement on preliminary findings and conclusions in conjunction with Björn von der Esch, Head of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly's Election Observation Delegation and Ambassador Edouard Brunner, Head of the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission in Moscow. Mrs. Degn emphasized that the 26 March election of the President "marks further progress for the consolidation of democratic elections in the Russian Federation". She added that the election, "while in general meeting the country's commitments as an OSCE participating State and as a member of the Council of Europe, revealed some weaknesses. Chief among these are pressure on the media and the decline of credible pluralism."

### **Parliamentary Team visits Moldova**

The recently established OSCE Parliamentary Team on Moldova visited the country for the first time between 29 February and 3 March. The Team included Kimmo Kiljunen (Chair, Finland),

Roberto Battelli (Slovenia) and Tone Tingsgard (Sweden). The other members of the Team are Kazys Bobelis (Lithuania) and Jerahmiel Grafstein (Canada). The main purpose of the visit was to discuss with the Moldovan authorities, both in Chisinau and Tiraspol, the situation in the country and, in particular, the prospects of finding a solution surrounding the status of the Trans-Dniestrian region. The Team will present the Moldova issue to the PA Annual Session, being held in Bucharest in July, as a supplementary item. Prior to the Annual Session, the Team intends to consult further with the various parties involved.

### **Parliamentary Troika visits Belarus**

The OSCE PA, represented by Adrian Severin (Romania), Chair of the ad hoc Working Group on Belarus, took part in a Parliamentary Troika visit to Belarus on 2–3 March. The other members of the Troika are the European Parliament, represented by Jan Marinus Wiersma, and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, represented by Wolfgang Behrendt.

The Troika was briefed by the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group in Minsk before holding meetings with all of the principal political forces in Belarus, including President Alexander Lukashenko, leaders of the democratic opposition and representatives from civil society. At the conclusion of their visit, the Parliamentary Troika stated that despite the disappointing suspension of negotiations, there were grounds for cautious optimism as all sides at least appeared to be interested in finding a

solution to the outstanding political difficulties.

### **Severin testifies on Belarus before US Helsinki Commission**

On 9 March, the Chair of the Assembly's Democracy Team on Belarus, Adrian Severin, testified before the United States Congressional Helsinki Commission hearing on recent developments in Belarus, held in Washington DC. By invitation of the Chairman, PA Secretary General R. Spencer Oliver also testified at the hearing. In his remarks to the Commission, Mr. Severin stressed that significant steps must be taken in order to facilitate free, fair and recognizable elections in Belarus this year, adding that the Democracy Team will continue to support and assist the process as necessary.

The Commission Chairman, Christopher H. Smith, heavily criticized the Lukashenko regime for breaking its commitments and continuing to repress democratic forces in Belarus. However, he also expressed hope that meaningful dialogue would result from the meeting of the Minsk Round Table, which gathered together members of the Government, Opposition and NGOs and was attended by a joint delegation of the OSCE and Council of Europe parliamentary assemblies and the European Parliament.

In a statement, OSCE PA Vice-President Steny Hoyer, a member of the Commission, asserted that the political stagnation in Belarus could only be overcome by conducting genuine dialogue with democratic forces and by holding democratic elections consistent with OSCE standards and norms. Vice-chair of the First Committee, Alcee Hastings also attended the hearing, along with Congressman Sam Gejdensen, Ranking Member of the House International Affairs Committee.

Semyon Sharetsky and other members of the 13th Supreme Soviet, the last democratically elected Parliament in Belarus, also appeared before the Commission hearing along with US Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, Harold Hongju Koh. Representative Richard Arme, Majority Leader of the US House of Representatives, came to the hearing to offer his support and encouragement to the representatives of the Democratic Opposition in Belarus.

### **Presidential visits**

On 5 March, Helle Degn visited Japan in her capacity as President of the

the House of Councillors who attended the OSCE Summit in Istanbul. During her visit, Mrs. Degn gave an account of the activities of the PA, including the launching of the Democracy Teams and the programme for following-up on election monitoring missions.

At the end of April, Mrs. Degn will visit Georgia and Armenia. The purpose of these visits is to gain further insight into the political problems in the area, to promote the parliamentary dimension of the OSCE and at the same time to endorse the work of the OSCE field missions.

In addition, the presidential visit to Georgia will serve as a follow-up to the



*OSCE PA President Helle Degn meets the Russian Federation's Acting President, Vladimir Putin (now President-elect), at a polling station in Moscow, with (centre) Christian Hoppe, the Danish Ambassador to the Russian Federation.*

Assembly, the first visit of the OSCE PA to one of the OSCE's Far Eastern Partners for Co-operation. In Tokyo, Mrs. Degn held meetings with the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Solchiro Ito, the President of the House of Councillors, Juro Saito and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Ichita Yamamoto, as well as with those members of

October 1999 parliamentary elections in Georgia. During the visit, Mrs. Degn will hold meetings with high-level governmental officials, as well as with parliamentary leaders, members of the Delegations to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and with heads and staff members of the OSCE field offices in both countries.

# REPORT

## from the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

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### **Representative criticizes continued harassment of media in Serbia**

Freimut Duve, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, focused throughout March on the continued campaign of harassment of independent media in Serbia. Numerous newspapers, radio and television stations were fined, threatened, and/or had their equipment removed. Some media outlets were even closed down.

On 7 March, Duve raised with the Yugoslav Foreign Minister the cases of Studio B and Radio B292 after their equipment was stolen a day earlier by people dressed in police uniforms. Speaking at the OSCE Permanent Council on 30 March, the OSCE Representative gave a detailed overview of the war against independent media that was waged by the Belgrade regime and urged the OSCE and its participating States to: “immediately take action as an international organization and through our bilateral relations with Belgrade to try to ease the pressure on the independent media... The war against them is on and the gloves are off.”

Alexander Ivanko, Adviser to the OSCE Representative, took part in the Second Szeged Meeting on the Role of the Media and the Local Governments in the Implementation of the Stability Pact. This meeting was attended by dozens of representatives of independent media in Serbia.

### **Support for media in Albania**

On 8 March, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media communicated with Professor Paskal Milo, the

Albanian Foreign Minister, and made a number of suggestions on how to improve the media situation in that country. Praising the current trend towards developing an impartial and free media landscape, the OSCE Representative urged consideration of the following elements: to ensure the transition of State Television into Public Television that would represent all political views; and to regularise private television stations that were currently broadcasting without a licence.

### **Report issued on the media situation in Ukraine**

On 10 March, the OSCE Representative distributed a Report on the Media Situation in Ukraine prepared by his Office. The Report gave an overview of the current trends in the media, the relevant legal provisions and current problems with respect to freedom of expression and free media.

### **RFOM speaks to German MPs**

On 15 March, Freimut Duve spoke in Berlin before the Foreign Affairs Committee of the German Bundestag (Parliament). He presented the activities of the Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media and its priorities for the future.

### **Duve addresses meeting in Montenegro**

On 16-17 March, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media took part in a meeting in Montenegro on Truth, Responsibility and Reconciliation. A unique event for South-Eastern Europe, the meeting brought together writers, journalists and intellectuals,

most of them from Belgrade, to discuss in a public forum this essential theme for peace and stability in the region.

### **Representative concerned at media harassment in Kyrgyzstan**

On 27 March, Freimut Duve wrote to Askar Akaev, the President of Kyrgyzstan, raising his concerns with cases of harassment of independent media in the Republic. In March, a journalist from Res Publika, Aziza Abdrasulova, was arrested and fined after covering a peaceful demonstration in Bishkek. She was charged with “participating in an unsanctioned meeting.” In addition, the newspaper Vash Advokat, published by the National Corporation of Lawyers, had ceased to appear after its accounts were frozen by the tax authorities. Mr. Duve urged the Government to “refrain from harassing and discouraging the opposition media and to restore the confidence of the international community in its commitments to the OSCE principles on free media.”

### **Journalists arrested in Belarus**

More than 30 journalists, both Belarusian and international, were arrested in Minsk during an opposition rally on 25 March. Some of the journalists were illegally searched, film and equipment was damaged. In the end, most of the journalists were released. Mr. Duve raised this issue with the Government in Minsk and voiced his concerns at the OSCE Permanent Council on 30 March. He emphasized that this type of action was totally unacceptable in an OSCE participating State and must be condemned in the strongest terms.



### Children's books given out in Kosovo

On 20 March, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo began the distribution of children's books to schools in Kosovo. This project was initiated by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media during a visit to a refugee camp in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in May 1999, and funded by the NGO, Cap Anamur. Several thousand books were produced for the children of Kosovo; these include a play, short stories and two novels. The books are currently being distributed to schools throughout the province.

## REPORT from the OSCE Secretary General and the Secretariat

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### OSCE Secretary General visits Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan

Continuing his series of visits to OSCE participating States in Central Asia in his capacity as Personal Representative for Central Asia of the Chairperson-in-Office, the OSCE Secretary General, Jan Kubis, travelled to Kazakhstan on 14 March, where he met with President Nursultan Nazarbaev, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister. Views were exchanged on the role of the OSCE in promoting security in Central Asia. President Nazarbaev invited the Personal Representative to the Eurasia Economic Forum which will take place in Almaty from 26 to 28 April.

On 15 March, Mr. Kubis continued his trip to Kyrgyzstan, where he met with President Alia Akaev and senior members of the Government. The visit took place in the wake of the second round of the parliamentary elections, which had incurred substantial criticism by the international community. The Personal Representative used this opportunity to

express his hope that corrections to the electoral framework would be implemented in view of the presidential election due later this year. In this context, Mr. Kubis also met with the two prominent opposition candidates Felix Kulov and Daniyar Usenov. Other issues discussed with the authorities included regional aspects of security and joint initiatives with the OSCE Chairmanship.

### ...and Georgia

Mr. Kubis, travelled to Georgia on 20 to 21 March to obtain first-hand information on the activities of the OSCE Mission to Georgia and conditions for their expansion, including the recently-established border monitoring operation. During his visit, the Secretary General met with the Georgian leadership, as well as representatives of OSCE participating States and international organizations active in the country, especially the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG). He also visited Shatili, the base of the OSCE observer

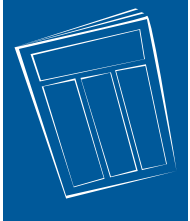
mission tasked with monitoring the border between Georgia and the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation.

During his meetings with President Eduard Shevardnadze, State Minister Vazha Lordkipanidze, Foreign Minister Irakli Menagarishvili, and other senior Georgian officials, the Secretary General discussed the prospects for conflict resolution in the South Ossetian Tskhinvali region and in Abkhazia, Georgia. He also discussed matters of regional security and co-operation.

"My trip confirmed the very good state of co-operation between Georgia and the OSCE. Our Mission plays a very important role and conducts a wide range of activities. This is highly appreciated by the authorities of the country and there are high expectations to see continuation and expansion of this engagement," Mr. Kubis said in his report to the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna. For more information on OSCE activities in Georgia, please visit the OSCE website at:

[www.osce.org/georgia](http://www.osce.org/georgia)

## PRESS PROFILE



*Excerpts from international media coverage of the OSCE and its activities over the preceding weeks.*

### CHECHNYA

**Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 23 March**

‘A representative of the election monitoring commission of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) criticized ... the holding of presidential elections in Chechnya. There was neither an election campaign nor technical possibilities for counting the votes, said the Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Gérard Stoudmann.’

**Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 23 March**

‘At the request (of the Georgian Government), the Permanent Council of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in Vienna on 15 December decided to monitor the Georgian-Russian border with unarmed observers... As the Mission by now has a helicopter of its own and the personnel has increased to 20, it is even able to uphold a permanent observation post in the village of Shatili three kilometres from the border.’

### CENTRAL ASIA

**Reuters, 10 March**

‘The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe is concerned about recent moves by Central Asian states to demand visas for travel between them... Visa barriers would disrupt trade and movement across the five ex-Soviet

states... Outgoing OSCE head Knut Vollebaek warned last December that the region could spawn worse conflicts than the Balkans.’

**Reuters, 14 March**

‘The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe warned on Tuesday that Central Asia could face more unrest similar to an armed incursion and hostage crisis that rocked Kyrgyzstan last year. “We are picking up signals that there could be attempts to repeat the incursion by certain groups which are based mainly in Afghanistan,” said OSCE Secretary General Jan Kubis.’

**Reuters, 14 March**

‘International monitors said on Monday they suspected voting irregularities after Kyrgyzstan’s top opposition figure lost a run-off election despite having led comfortably in the first round. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) questioned the result of Sunday’s ballot for a key seat in the Central Asian republic’s parliament.’

**Reuters, 16 March**

‘The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe said in a report this week that it suspected voting irregularities in... (opposition figure) Kulov’s constituency... The election has been a major embarrassment to (Kyrgyzstan President) Akaev, whose image as a reformist in the increasingly autocratic Central Asian region was badly tarnished by reports of vote-rigging and pressure on the electorate to back pro-government candidates.’

### BELARUS

**Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 21 March**  
**‘The President of Belarus torpedoed mediation by the OSCE’**

‘Lukashenko’s fear of any sort of control is obviously the reason for the failure of the efforts by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to mediate between the political leadership and the opposition and to help organize democratic parliamentary elections next autumn.

Last summer, Lukashenko promised to allow free elections, and at the OSCE Summit in Istanbul he agreed to a dialogue with the opposition; now, his democratic impulses are quickly dissolving into mere illusions... The OSCE has already with concern taken note of the fact that there does not seem to be any consensus in Belarus about the elections.’

**Reuters, 28 March**

‘The OSCE, which promotes civil and minority rights, has accused Belarus authorities of using unnecessary force to break up an opposition rally... “The OSCE Chairmanship learned with alarm about an unprovoked, unjustified and exaggerated show of police force in Minsk, Belarus, on 25 March,” the OSCE said in a statement.’



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