

OSCE

NEWSLETTER

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe



Such confidence-building meetings on the line of contact help to pave the way towards a peaceful settlement over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh

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All quiet along the line of contact?

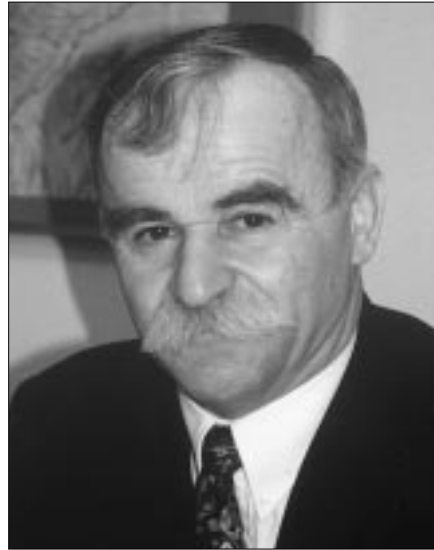
Early in January, two groups of all-terrain vehicles set off for a rendezvous in the snow-flecked mountains of the Southern Caucasus. One convoy headed north from the town of Stepanakert/Khankendi, while the second group made its way west out of the Azerbaijani capital, Baku. Sitting in the first vehicle heading out of Stepanakert/Khankendi was Ambassador Andrzej Kasprzyk, the Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Another passenger was Colonel Bernard Vialatte, the newly-arrived Head of the OSCE High Level Planning Group (HLPG).

In each group were field assistants of the Personal Representative and international military officers. Travelling behind them were the local commanders of forces of the two sides which have opposed each other across a line of contact for the past six years.

The two teams left their cars near the village of Tapkarakoyonlu and approached pre-arranged points along an invisible but well-mapped line. Team one stopped at a precise set of co-ordinates. Team two stopped one minute further to the north and one minute further to the east. Using field radios, the local military commanders called each other up and formal messages were exchanged.

The standard reporting process that followed is designed to reassure both sides that, for the time being, all is quiet along the line of contact and no incidents have occurred. After about half an hour, the two groups returned to their vehicles and headed off back in the directions they had come.

Participation in such monitoring missions as the one described above, which took place on 10 January, is at the invitation of the Personal Representative. Though not frequent, participation nonetheless, forms an important part of the work of the HLPG, an element within the OSCE whose precise role is known to comparatively few people even within



Left, Andrzej Kasprzyk, the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office; right, Colonel Bernard Vialatte, Head of the OSCE High Level Planning Group.

the Organization. In fact, the “planning” part of the Group’s title relates to its mandate to assist the CiO in making preparations for a possible peacekeeping mission, within the framework of a settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

This armed conflict broke out following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, when the two republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan emerged as independent nations, occupying the southern portion of the territory between the Black and Caspian Seas. The disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh was fought over in 1992 and hostilities only ended with the establishment of a cease-fire in May 1994.

Creation of scenarios

The HLPG originated as the Initial Operations Planning Group in 1993, but was then formalized by a mandate of the CSCE/OSCE in 1994 as the High Level Planning Group (see box). The team is made up of differing numbers of international participants, at one time as many as 35. Currently it consists of eight military officers seconded by seven countries (Denmark, France, Greece, Ireland, the Russian Federation, Spain and Turkey) and an office manager from Austria. The

professional skills of the group vary from engineering to logistics, but their main shared ability is the production of plans and the creation of scenarios.

Describing the work of the HLPG, Colonel Vialatte said that such plans were called for by the mandate, which directed the Group to develop and recommend to the CiO a suitable plan, or plans, to establish a force for peacekeeping operations by the OSCE in the Nagorno-Karabakh area. Those plans outlined the structure and operational methods of the force. “The scenarios that were originally created in 1995 have been elaborated upon continually since, as the result of directives from the CiO. We have had to consider new options and variations in the plans to take account of different possible political settlements,” added Colonel Vialatte. “These options are then submitted to the CiO for his perusal and approval.”

The mandate of the HLPG extends into even greater detail, calling on the Group to recommend the size, characteristics, command and control systems, logistical arrangements, allocation of resources, rules of engagement, and standard operating procedures of the force. It is also

required to outline the arrangements to be made with the host countries and those nations that are expected to provide contributions to the peacekeeping force.

The latest change of control of the HLPG took place on 6 January, with the former Head, Brigadier-General Jean Aumonier, leaving after six months to resume his career in the French army.

The new Head of the HLPG already has some experience of peacekeeping operations, having served in the Balkans as officer in charge of the French logistics battalion, which was a component of UNPROFOR. He commanded separate units near Zagreb and Belgrade between April and October 1992, before spending three years as Defence Attaché with the French Embassy in Belgrade. Prior to his new posting to the HLPG, Colonel Vialatte was a member of the French army staff school at Tours.

New momentum

Before his departure, Brig Gen Aumonier, in an interview for this article, said that the Group was presently adapting to the new momentum in the Southern Caucasus region, where direct contacts have been continuing between the Heads of State of Armenia and Azerbaijan, updating all the current options and developing some variations to suit various possible political solutions to the conflict.

The members of the team, however, are not chained to their desks in Vienna, and members regularly accompany the Personal Representative of the CiO in the all-important monitoring missions along the current line of contact, which generally take place on a monthly basis.

Brig. Gen. Aumonier said that participating in those missions allowed the HLPG members to see the area of the potential peacekeeping mission at first hand, so that they could understand the difficulties caused by weather and the terrain. More importantly, it provided an

opportunity to meet the representatives of the parties, both political and military, to the conflict. Group members also attended international seminars and training events on peace support operations.

The importance of advance planning

had been underlined by recent events in which the international community had attempted to become involved. Those had indicated that international organizations wishing to conduct peace support operations or peacekeeping mission

needed to carry out extensive and detailed planning in the months and even years prior to the commencement of the operation. Ensuring that the OSCE was well prepared for such an operation was the main goal of the HPLG, he said.



The High-Level Planning Group (HPLG) was established on 20 December 1994 by the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, superseding the Initial Operations Planning Group formed in May 1993. The Group is made up of military experts seconded by OSCE participating States and is mandated to:

- make recommendations to the Chairman-in-Office on developing a plan for the establishment, structure and operations of a multinational OSCE peacekeeping force for Nagorno-Karabakh;
- make recommendations on, *inter alia*, the size and characteristics of the force, command and control, logistics, allocations of units and resources, rules of engagement and arrangements with contributing States.

After conducting fact-finding visits to the region, the HPLG's detailed work resulted in a document, the *Concept for an OSCE Multinational Peacekeeping Mission for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict*, presented to the CiO on 14 July 1995. It included four options, three of which were a mixture of armed peacekeeping troops and unarmed military observers, their strength varying from 1,500 to 4,500 personnel. The fourth was an unarmed military observer mission.

Putting into place the peacekeeping force depends on the successful implementation of the political settlement process and on consensus among the OSCE participating States. At present, the HPLG is adapting the concept to the revised conditions on the ground.

New Chairperson-in-Office addresses OSCE Permanent Council

First woman in the Organization's history to hold this position

On 10 February, the new Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE, Austria's Foreign Minister, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, gave her first address to the Permanent Council.

In her remarks, the Chairperson-in-Office stressed the continuity of the policies of the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship announced by her predecessor, despite the recent change of Government in Austria: "It goes without saying that I shall take over in full the programme of the Austrian Chairmanship that was presented by my predecessor, Wolfgang Schüssel, in his speech to the Permanent Council on 13 January, and that I shall make all efforts necessary for its effective implementation."

Ms. Ferrero-Waldner reiterated the challenges facing the OSCE during the coming year in South-Eastern Europe, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Caucasus and Central Asia. She also mentioned the importance of rapid implementation of recent decisions on strengthening the operational capacity of the Organization, and the need to cultivate increased contacts with other international organizations in order to improve co-ordination of activities and co-operation wherever possible.

Finally, she appealed to the OSCE

participating States to give the Austrian Chairmanship their full support, "in order that together, and in the interest of the citizens of our countries, we can meet the challenges ahead. Let us, therefore work together for the achievement of a common security space based on the values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law."

Ms. Ferrero-Waldner was sworn in as Foreign Minister of Austria on 4 February, following the formation of a new Government in Vienna, and thereby automatically succeeded Wolfgang Schüssel, the previous Foreign Minister, as OSCE Chairperson-in-Office. She is the first woman in the Organization's history to hold this position.



Austria's Foreign Minister, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, appearing at her first press conference as the new Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE

More information about the activities and programme of the Austrian Chairmanship is available on-line:
www.osze.at

Trafficked women freed in rescue operation

OSCE intervention highlights scope of trafficking in human beings problem

A successful intervention involving the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) has led to the release of seven women, taken by traffickers to the Balkans and compelled to work as prostitutes in a night club. The seven have now been safely returned home. However, there is uncertainty over the fate of three other women also found at the premises in the Montenegrin city of Podgorica, and another woman apparently sold on twice to buyers in Albania and Italy.

Testimony provided by several of the women illustrates the scope of the trafficking problem, as well as the disturbing ease with which organized traffickers in human beings can operate in the region, apparently with the complicity of some local administrations.

The rescue operation began in mid-January, after it appears that one of the women, using a client's mobile phone, had been able to reach her mother in Kyiv. The mother then contacted the Ukrainian branch of La Strada, a non-governmental organization, which passed information on the case to the ODIHR. The Office informed the Montenegrin Ministries of the Interior and Foreign Affairs of the believed whereabouts of the women. Police discovered seven Ukrainian women, together with three other women from Moldova and Romania.

The Office in Podgorica arranged for the women to be accommodated in a women's shelter before they could be taken out of the country. The Ukrainian representation in Belgrade, with whom the Office was in contact, was very co-operative and arranged for the women to be taken back to Ukraine by train. To smooth their passage, La Strada contacted

Ukrainian border authorities to inform them of the situation, and ensured that the women entered Ukraine. On 20 January, the NGO informed the ODIHR that the seven women had arrived safely in Kyiv.

However, the ODIHR has not yet received confirmation of the safe return of the Moldovan and Romanian women, nor information on the whereabouts of the woman sold to Albania and later on to Italy. Concerning the latter case, the ODIHR asked the OSCE Presence in Albania for support.

"Details emerging on the women seem to confirm many of the patterns which are recognisable in numerous similar trafficking cases," said Jill Thompson, ODIHR Adviser on Trafficking Issues. "Apparently, some of the women had been issued legal entry or residence permits, based on an official invitation from an association for artistes in Belgrade. One woman had been promised a sales job in Italy, but was sold directly to the night club by the Ukrainian trafficker who drove her to Montenegro."

Reportedly, the women were forced to service clients in the night club from 9.00 p.m. to 5.00 a.m. every night, and had had to sleep on the floor in the cellar. They received a meal of one hamburger per day. If any woman refused to work she was beaten and sold to traffickers in Albania. At least one woman is suffering serious health problems arising from her trafficking experience. Moreover, it appears from the testimony of several of the women that traffickers take advantage of complicity by officials in local administrations.

The ODIHR appreciates the assistance of La Strada and the authorities of Montenegro and Ukraine in helping to

locate and return the trafficked women. Moreover, it hopes that the decisive action taken by the ODIHR Office in Montenegro will lead to similar interventions by OSCE field operations.

While the ODIHR considers this rescue operation a successful one, the information provided by the women is further evidence that organized trafficking in women takes place with impunity in the region. The ODIHR is currently following up the issue with the authorities. It hopes to initiate future activities to raise awareness of the problem in Montenegro and to press for legal action against the known traffickers.

Since 1999, the ODIHR has been paying increased attention to trafficking issues. In April 1999, an Adviser on Trafficking joined the ODIHR to help the OSCE define its role in international efforts to combat trafficking. An Action Plan of possible OSCE initiatives in 2000 was presented at the OSCE Istanbul Summit in November last year. In June, this year, a conference on trafficking in human beings will be held in Vienna.

In addition to monitoring and programme development, the ODIHR coordinates with other international organizations and NGOs working on trafficking issues, and provides technical support to OSCE mission members in the field. The ODIHR is currently supporting anti-trafficking initiatives in Poland and Ukraine, and hopes to expand these efforts to other regions in 2000.

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OSCE Institutions monitor parliamentary and presidential elections in Croatia

On 7 February, the victory of Stjepan (“Stipe”) Mesic of the Croatian People’s Party in the second round of the Croatian presidential elections completed the recent turnaround in Croatian national politics. The changes were inaugurated by the parliamentary elections on 3 January, at which six opposition parties, united in two coalitions, defeated the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), which had ruled Croatia since independence. In parliamentary elections, the coalition between the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the Croatian Social Liberal Party (HSLS) was the overall winner. The head of the SDP, Ivica Racan, formed the new Government in which the coalition of parties also participates.

Both elections, including the first round of presidential voting on 24 January, passed calmly and peacefully. A large number of international observers from the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and the Council of Europe monitored the parliamentary elections, and international observers – including some 60 members of the OSCE Mission to Croatia – observed both rounds of the presidential elections as well. For the first time (at Croatian parliamentary elections), several thousand domestic monitors observed the voting in polling places in Croatia and abroad, in line with new parliamentary electoral legislation passed in late October 1999. Domestic observers were also present at polling stations during both rounds of the presidential elections.

International observers concluded that the Croatian elections had demon-



Fehim Demir/EPA/CONTRAST

Bosnian Croats cast their votes in the Croatian presidential election at the Croatian Consulate in Sarajevo on 24 January

strated progress towards meeting Croatia’s commitments as a participating State of the OSCE, and as a member of the Council of Europe. Domestic observers were also generally satisfied with the conduct of the parliamentary and presidential elections.

Reform of electoral legislation had been a particular concern for the OSCE Mission to Croatia over the previous year and a half. The legislative framework adopted in 1995 did not meet international standards and was criticized by the OSCE and the Council of Europe after the elections in 1995 and 1997. Despite this international criticism and subsequent recommendations by the Council of Europe and OSCE/ODIHR in 1996 and 1997, no changes to Croatian electoral legislation had been made by mid-1998. Therefore, in anticipation of parliamentary elections, the Mission — in

co-operation with the Council of Europe and ODIHR — made recommendations to the Government for changes to the parliamentary electoral legislation that were necessary in order to enable future elections in Croatia to be conducted in line with international standards.

The new legislation was passed in late October 1999, after almost a year of intense public debate among the political parties in the country. The international community welcomed changes in the Election Law which modified the system of a fixed number of seats for Croatian citizens living permanently abroad and introduced a flexible quota, based on the turnout in Croatia. Previously, the votes of Croatian citizens living abroad, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina, had exercised a disproportionate influence on the results of elections in Croatia.

The international community also welcomed the provision for domestic non-partisan election observation of the electoral process, especially important for the transparency of elections; the appointment of multi-party election commissions; and the establishment of an Election Ethical Commission. These changes contributed to the progress shown in Croatia's fulfillment of its international obligations. Although new presidential election legislation was not

adopted, the authorities made efforts to continue positive measures adopted for the parliamentary elections. For all that, as the international observers also noted in their preliminary statements, certain problems remain. Many individuals with the right to Croatian citizenship, specifically Croatian Serb refugees in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republika Srpska entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina have had great difficulties in securing citizenship and exercising

their right to vote. On the other hand, several hundred thousands Croats from Bosnia and Herzegovina have been granted Croatian citizenship, and thus the right to vote in elections, on the dubious grounds of ethnicity (rather than birth or residence). The reform of state television into a public broadcasting service remains a challenge, although clear improvements in the election coverage of the state broadcaster were noted by international monitors.

Signing of Helsinki Final Act 25 years ago to be marked by the OSCE during 2000

On 30 July, 1975, the Heads of State or Government of 35 nations, covering an area of the northern hemisphere stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok, convened in Helsinki for a three-day Summit Conference. This meeting culminated, on 1 August, in the signing of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe Final Act – more widely known as the Helsinki Final Act.

Signature of this document, a quarter of a century ago, marked the end of a series of diplomatic negotiations, begun in the Finnish capital two years earlier, that continued almost unbroken from 1973 to 1975 in Geneva. Not only did the signing constitute a breakthrough in East-West relations during the Cold War period, but it marked the beginning of “the Helsinki process”, which became the main forum for political consultation and negotiation on a comprehensive set of issues. As well as military talks, these included questions of human rights.

Under the auspices of the Conference

on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), participating States used this process to promote compliance with their CSCE commitments, which contributed profoundly to the collapse of the totalitarian regimes in the East and the end of the division of Europe.

The CSCE retained its name for almost 20 years before becoming the Organization for Security and Co-ope-



ration in Europe (OSCE) from 1 January 1995, to reflect its development from a process into a body with permanent structures, active institutions and mechanisms and a growing number and range of tasks.

Today, the OSCE occupies a unique place among international organizations in general, and in the realm of European security institutions in particular.

Last month, the OSCE, published a special edition of this seminal document, which features on its cover an augmented design of the OSCE logo, symbolizing the Helsinki Final Act's existence over the last quarter of the 20th century and the connection between the Act and the Organization.

In November 1999, the adoption of the Charter for European Security at the Istanbul Summit by 54 participating States of the OSCE reaffirmed the significance of the Helsinki Final Act as the foundation for the OSCE. Republication of the Act this year, as the 25th Anniversary of its signing approaches, is one way in which the OSCE and its participating States will commemorate a quarter of a century of the CSCE/OSCE. The event should serve as a reminder of many great achievements, as well as to reaffirm the Act's validity in the face of the new challenges this Organization meets.

Centre for OSCE Research founded in Hamburg

On 6 January, a new Centre for OSCE Research (CORE) was established with a special ceremony at Hamburg City Hall in the presence of the President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Johannes Rau. The ceremony was preceded by an international symposium on 'OSCE 2000: Civil Peace Policy for Europe', which was attended by Oleg Belous, Head of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Rudolf Schmidt, Head of the Permanent Mission of Germany to the OSCE, Freimut Duve, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Jan Kubis, the OSCE Secretary General, and Envoy Margit Wästfeld, representing the OSCE Chairman-in-Office.

In his address, President Rau said that the new Centre would "make an important contribution to political efforts aiming to establish a durable peace order in Europe."

The new Centre came into being in response to intensified research on the OSCE at the Institute for Peace Research

and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg (IFSH) since 1994. CORE is headed by the IFSH director, Professor Dieter S Lutz. Being the first institution in the world specifically dedicated to research on the OSCE, CORE is intended to work as a politically independent think-tank.

It will combine basic research on central aspects of the evolution of the OSCE with demand-oriented analysis of current problems and practical contributions to relevant issues. Addressing political actors as well as the academic and political public in Germany and abroad, the Centre wants to accompany the development of the OSCE with analysis and critique, thus permitting a deeper insight into the problems and perspectives of the Organization.

Some 20 staff members devote special attention to the activities of the OSCE in the area of conflict prevention and conflict management, democratization, the institutional evolution of the organization and the role of the OSCE in the pan-European security architecture.

At present, along with short-term

analyses, four long-term research projects are being conducted. The OSCE Yearbook, which is published in three languages (German, English, Russian), constitutes another central element of CORE activities. In addition, the establishment of an OSCE Depository Library began in summer 1999, making a comprehensive collection of OSCE-related documents and secondary literature available to external researchers and the public.

The Centre for OSCE Research puts special emphasis on directing its activities towards a practical orientation and international outlook. Several members of the staff have experience of OSCE Institutions and Missions, besides their academic qualifications, as well as a background of field research in the states of Central and Eastern Europe. At present, six foreign scholars are working on joint CORE projects in their home countries. An international OSCE Fellowship programme is planned to start in late 2000 so as to give scholars from OSCE countries the opportunity to do research at CORE over a limited period of time.

Upcoming Events

The following are OSCE-related events scheduled for the coming weeks. For more information on any particular event, please consult the OSCE website or contact the Secretariat directly.

'Friends of Albania' meeting	28 February, Vienna
Annual Implementation Assessment Meeting (Confidence- and Security-Building Measures)	28 February – 1 March, Vienna
Meeting on 'Human Rights and Inhuman Treatment or Punishment' (Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting)	27 March, Vienna
Seminar on 'Humanitarian International Operations and Co-operation between Armed Forces and NGOs'	20-22 March, Mostar
Forum for Security Co-operation seminar on 'Small Arms and Light Weapons'	3-5 April, Vienna
8th Meeting of the Economic Forum on 'Economic Aspects of Post-Conflict Rehabilitation: the Challenges of Transformation'	11-14 April, Prague



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 and Uzbekistan. The following brief reports reflect some of the work which these field operations have undertaken during the previous month.

Office in Yerevan begins work after ratification of MOU

Following the ratification of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Republic of Armenia and the OSCE, the OSCE Office in Yerevan has now begun operations. The Office, headed by Ambassador Roy Reeve of the United Kingdom, is mandated to promote OSCE principles and commitments, facilitate contacts between the Republic of Armenia and the OSCE and establish and maintain contacts with local authorities, universities, research institutions and non-governmental organizations. The Head of the Office is assisted by a team of five experts, seconded by OSCE participating States.

Mission releases reports on the judicial system in Kosovo

On 20 January, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo released the first two of a series of reports on the emergency judicial system in Kosovo. The reports, compiled by the Rule of Law Division, deal with the material needs of the emergency judicial system and the development of the Kosovo judicial system during the past six months. The reports are aimed at raising awareness of the developments in the judicial system in Kosovo and the means needed to support it. Copies of the reports are available online at:

www.osce.org/kosovo

Terms set for a commission on recovery of remains

The OSCE has completed work on draft terms of reference for a proposed United Nations-led commission to man-

age the exhumation and identification of mortal remains. Working together with the UN Civil Administration, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Commission on Missing Persons, the OSCE arranged briefings on 20 and 21 January to discuss the draft with local representatives and to solicit their suggestions for possible incorporation into the final draft. Together with the ICRC, the OSCE briefed various local war crimes commissions, sub-councils for the defence of human rights and freedoms, the Humanitarian Law Centre and the Co-ordination, Protection and Human Rights Committee. All participants supported the draft and several suggested that the involvement of local religious leaders would be useful.

Journalists from Central Asia and Caucasus meet in Vienna

From 12-15 January, the Austrian Chairmanship organized a meeting for media representatives from Central Asia and Southern Caucasus in Vienna. The Mission to Georgia co-sponsored the trip of five Georgian journalists, including representatives from press and television. All the journalists responded favourably to the meeting and described it as a very useful means of getting acquainted with the Austrian Chairmanship's programme for 2000, and gaining a better knowledge of the OSCE. The group had several meetings with the representatives from the Organization's various Institutions including a briefing with the Secretary General. The success of the gathering was reflected in a series of arti-

cles highlighting the role and profile of the OSCE in Central Asia and the Caucasus.

Independent TV in Kyrgyzstan allowed use of VHF channel

Since the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media's visit to Kyrgyzstan last year, the Centre in Bishkek has been actively involved in the support of the independent Osh TV station, which mainly broadcasts in Uzbek, but also in Kyrgyz and Russian. In a response to the Centre's letter received on 18 January, the Deputy Chairman of the Security Council of Kyrgyzstan and the Chairman of the National Communications Agency said that Osh TV would be allowed to use VHF channel 5 until 1 July 2000. After that date, Osh TV will have to switch channels in accordance with the requirements of the International Telecommunications Union's standards. The Chairman of Osh TV and local NGOs welcomed the new decision, but stressed they would need a further two years to obtain the necessary finance for additional equipment.

Preparations advanced to supervise April BiH municipal elections

The preparations for the supervision of the municipal elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) on 8 April, already well underway, advanced further last month with a lottery organized to determine the positions of each political party, coalition and independent candidate on the ballots. Altogether, the OSCE Mission to BiH received 24,418 candidate forms from 68 political parties and seven

coalitions. The forms were scanned and a database created, which allowed a number of computer checks to be made in order to determine the eligibility of each candidate. Some 4,800 candidates have been found ineligible for one or more reasons, among them not being registered in the municipality where they would run for office, being prohibited to run for office because of a previous removal for personal offences, and double occupancy issues. On 18 January, after all candidates had been verified, the lottery was held. As in the Croatian parliamentary election held in BiH, the OSCE is working in close co-ordination with the NATO-led Stabilization Force to make sure that the elections run smoothly.

OSCE organizes roundtable in Albania to discuss elections

On 11 January, the OSCE Presence in Albania chaired a roundtable of Government, political and international representatives to present the internationally sponsored Electoral Assistance Programme for voter registration in the forthcoming local government elections and to hear the opposition concerns regarding the composition of the Central Election Commission (CEC). Opposition participants stressed their determination to participate in the forthcoming

elections, but insisted there must be changes in the CEC and that the draft electoral code must be agreed by consensus. International representatives stressed the importance of a free, fair and uncontested electoral process for Albania's international reputation. They therefore urged the Government and all political parties to co-operate in the preparation of the code on a basis of dialogue and transparency and in full conformity with the Constitution. The successful event attracted considerable media attention.

Kosovo's Radio 21 receives first broadcasting licence

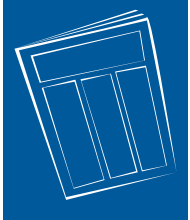
On 25 January, the OSCE issued the first broadcasting licence to Radio 21. Of the 52 applications for television and radio broadcasting licences the OSCE has received up to now, 13 are considered worthy of receiving a licence. However, KFOR, which manages the frequency spectrum, has given a frequency only to Radio 21 so far. A considerable number of broadcasters remain on the air without licences. TV Klan, a private company from Albania, has continued to broadcast from two (non OSCE-approved) transmitters, in violation of the Media Policy Advisory Board's decision not to permit Albanian broadcasters to operate within Kosovo and in ignorance

of a warning letter sent by the Director of Media Affairs. TVS, a broadcaster with studios on the premises of the Yugoslav Government's offices in Pristina, has reportedly opted against commencing broadcasting until they are issued a licence. Since the first licence was issued, intensive discussions have been held on enforcement mechanisms.

Media and human rights seminar held in Shkodra, Albania

On 24 January, the Press and Public Information Officer (PPIO) of the OSCE Presence in Albania, together with the Human Rights Officer, organized a seminar for journalists on Media and Human Rights in the northern city of Shkodra, Albania. By holding this event, the OSCE created neutral ground for discussion where Albanian journalists from various newspapers, television and radio stations could exchange ideas. About 18 journalists attended the discussion forum and considered it a success. The PPIO was asked to organize a follow-up seminar on journalists' rights and ethics. The OSCE Presence in Albania is currently discussing the possibility of holding such seminars all over Albania, as a form of media development programme. Plans are already being made to hold one more seminar in the north of Albania and two or three seminars in the south.

PRESS PROFILE



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

Der Standard, 14 January

'Following the 1 January hand-over of the Chairmanship of the Organization

for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) from Norway to Austria, Foreign Minister Wolfgang Schüssel on Thursday presented representatives of 54 participating States in Vienna with the OSCE programme for the year 2000. As a priority he mentioned the return of 7.5 million refugees on the continent, 2.5 million in ex-Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Kosovo. Schüssel promised "clear progress" in the return process by the end of the year.'

Die Presse, 17 January

'In times like these, with enormous media pressure on everything that carries the name "mission", it becomes necessary once and for all to cast a sober look at the OSCE. It is an organization which is engaged in using manifold instruments for the preservation and/or consolidation of stability and security in Europe, but is deficient in two important respects: it lacks the means to impose sanctions against violators of its princi-

ples or decisions; and it can make decisions only on a consensual basis. This makes the OSCE even more toothless than the United Nations. In practical terms, this means that the OSCE works intensely and efficiently in the background. The support of reform, assistance in the building of civil society... all that is useful for the prevention of conflicts and crises, and is being done

by the OSCE in an exemplary manner, often hardly noticed by the general public. However, everywhere the OSCE has been called to serve as a crisis fire brigade to prevent or even end an armed conflict, it runs into difficulties or fails... But in spite of all this, if one does not raise false expectations, then the cautious efforts of the Organization, within the framework of its possibilities, are

positive for the stability of Europe.'

Die Presse, 22 January

'At a press conference on Friday, (the then) Foreign Minister, Wolfgang Schüssel, Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, stressed that Austria's Chairmanship of the OSCE would "not be touched" by the current unclear internal political situation.'

UPDATE

from the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

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ELECTIONS



Parliamentary election in Croatia marked progress towards OSCE commitments

On 2-3 January, the ODIHR, together with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (PA) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, observed the election of candidates to the House of Representatives of the Republic of Croatia. The ODIHR election observation mission was headed by Nikolai Vulchanov (Bulgaria). Helle Degn, President of the OSCE PA, was named by the Chairman-in-Office as his Special Representative for the election. The Observation Mission deployed more than 350 short-term observers throughout the country, including 25 parliamentarians from the OSCE PA and nine from the Council of Europe PA. The joint preliminary statement issued on 4 January concluded that the election marked progress towards meeting Croatia's commitments as a participating State of the OSCE and as a member of the Council of Europe. However, important issues that fundamentally impeded Croatia's democratic development remained.

First round of presidential election in Croatia

The first round of the presidential election in Croatia took place on 24 January under observation conducted jointly by the ODIHR and the Council of Europe. The joint statement issued after the first round indicates further progress in fulfilling OSCE and Council of Europe commitments by Croatia in regard to, among other things, the impartiality of the State media. The State Election Commission was able to remedy some deficiencies of the legislative framework by implementing relevant regulatory improvements from the parliamentary election and decisions of the Constitutional Court. However, serious concerns remain regarding the exercise by Croat citizens of Serb origin living abroad of their right to vote, the minority vote, the vote in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the ethnic identification appearing on voter lists. The second round of the presidential election was scheduled for 7 February.

ODIHR election observation mission formed in Kyrgyzstan

The ODIHR established an Election Observation Mission in the Kyrgyz

Republic on 11 January, with a view to preparing for the parliamentary elections scheduled for 20 February. The mission, headed by Mark Stevens (UK), deployed ten long-term observers and a core team in Bishkek to follow the pre-election campaign and preparations for these elections, including media monitoring at the national and local levels. The Election Observation Mission held an initial press conference to introduce the work of the mission. Some 100 short-term observers are expected to be deployed for election day.

Joint election observation mission set up in Tajikistan

The ODIHR and the United Nations set up a Joint Election Observation Mission in Tajikistan on 27 January, with Parliamentary elections scheduled for 27 February. The Mission is headed by Ambassador Zenon Kuchciak (Poland) and consists of 22 members. It is expected that six regional offices will be opened across the country. Some 50 short-term observers were expected to be deployed for election day. The Joint Election Observation Mission was set up in accordance with the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan.

Technical election assistance

In Albania and Belarus

The ODIHR provided comments on the draft Electoral Codes of Albania and Belarus and stands ready to continue its technical assistance towards the improvement of the electoral framework of both countries.

DEMOCRATIZATION



ODIHR assists Shkodra Law School in Albania

The ODIHR, in cooperation with the OSCE Presence in Albania, assisted the Law Faculty of the Shkodra Law School in Northern Albania for the second consecutive term in including human rights in the school's curriculum in order to facilitate the development of local capacities for teaching human rights. During the past semester, an international expert taught a class on international human rights at the law school.

The expert also developed course materials to be published in the Albanian language. In addition, the expert participated in a training seminar on human rights for OSCE field officers and in a human rights workshop with local journalists in Shkodra, both organized by the OSCE Presence in Albania.

The ODIHR facilitates partnerships

with other European universities and encourages them to co-operate with the Shkodra Law School. The Shkodra project is supported by voluntary contributions from the United Kingdom and the Canadian International Development Agency.

Radio series on human rights broadcast in Georgia

The ODIHR, together with a local radio station and the OSCE Mission in Georgia, is continuing to produce and broadcast a series of radio programmes on human rights under the Public Awareness Project in Georgia. Three of the radio programmes were broadcast last year targeting voters' rights, rights of refugees and IDPs, and rights of prisoners. The fourth radio programme, aired nationwide on 14 January, was devoted to the rights of people under investigation, including pre-trial detention issues, responsibilities of law enforcement officials and existing legislation in this field.

The ODIHR advises on policy-making on Roma in Romania

As part of its work programme for 2000, the ODIHR Contact Point on Roma and Sinti Issues has begun to provide advice on and assistance to the policy-making process on Roma in participating States with large Roma populations. In late January and early February, the

ODIHR Roma and Sinti Adviser visited Romania, a country with one of the largest Roma populations in the OSCE area, and met with the Working Group of Roma Associations in Bucharest.

While the Romanian Government has been successful in establishing a complex network of bodies for the representation and protection of the country's large and diverse national minorities, it has up to now failed to adopt a decision on Roma policy-making as recommended by the OSCE. The meeting organized by the ODIHR brought about a revitalization of the dialogue between Roma associations with a view to defining common interests and developing a coherent and long-term Roma policy, also in the context of the forthcoming start of negotiations on Romania's accession to the European Union.

The ODIHR Roma and Sinti Adviser reviewed the work of the Working Group and spoke about the on-going OSCE activities on Roma and Sinti. The participants developed a list of concrete future activities, with the aim of achieving a government decision on Roma policy by spring 2000.

During his visit, the Roma and Sinti Adviser also met with other key actors involved in policy-making on Roma issues, including officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the EU Delegation in Bucharest.

Visit the redesigned ODIHR website for the latest news and information about election monitoring, democratization and human right activities including Roma and Sinti issues.

www.osce.org/odihr

NEWS

from the High Commissioner on National Minorities

The Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) is located at Prinsessegracht 22, NL-2514 AP The Hague, The Netherlands, tel.: (+31-70) 312 55 00, fax: (+31-70) 363 59 10, e-mail: hcnm@hcnm.org

Consultations take place with the Council of Europe

On 6 January, the High Commissioner for National Minorities, Max van der Stoep, visited the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. During his visit he met with its Secretary General, Walter Schwimmer, Ambassadors of the Council of Europe, Senior Officials of its Secretariat, Lord Russell-Johnston, the President of the Council's Parliamentary

Assembly, Bruno Haller, the Clerk of the Assembly, and Alvaro Gil Robles, the Council's Human Rights Commissioner.

HCNM pays visit to Japan

From 31 January to 3 February, the High Commissioner for National Minorities visited Tokyo at the invitation of the National Institute for Research Advancement (NIRA). Mr. van der Stoep gave three lectures on the subject of con-

flict prevention to audiences composed of experts in the fields of international law and international relations, and including representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In other meetings with the Foreign Ministry, senior Japanese officials expressed an interest in intensifying the exchange of views with the OSCE on a number of current international problems.

REPORT from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

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Seminar held on strengthening Parliamentary Defence Committees in Bosnian and Herzegovina

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina co-sponsored the Seminar on Strengthening Parliamentary Defence Committees in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The Seminar, which took place in Bled, Slovenia, on 27 and 28 January, was chaired by Bruce George, Vice-President of the OSCE PA and Chair of the Defence Committee of the British House of Commons. Ambassador Robert L. Barry, Head of the OSCE Mission to BiH, also addressed the opening session.

The Seminar was attended by 24 participants from BiH, representing the BiH State Parliament, both entity Parliaments, entity Ministries of Defence and entity armed forces, as well as all three constituent peoples of BiH: Bosniacs, Serbs and Croats.

The Seminar discussed the role of the parliamentary defence committees as well as the relationship between parliaments, governments and armed forces in the light of experiences from other European countries. The representatives of the OSCE expressed the need for the roles of the parliamentary defence committees in BiH to be strengthened and for better communication to be promoted between them and the respective defence forces.

OSCE PA Standing Committee convenes in Vienna

On 13 and 14 January 2000, the Standing Committee of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly held its winter meeting in the Hofburg Congress Centre in Vienna. On the first day of the meeting, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, the OSCE Secretary General and other senior OSCE officials briefed the parlia-

mentarians on the latest developments in the Organization. The parliamentarians heard presentations by the Representative on Freedom of the Media, the Coordinator for Economic and Environmental Activities, the OSCE Gender Adviser and the Director of the ODIHR.

In his opening remarks the then Chairman-in-Office, Austrian Foreign Minister Wolfgang Schüssel, focused on the increasing prominence of the parliamentary dimension in the work of the OSCE. He said that security policy today needed even stronger parliamentary legitimization. Due to their presence in their constituencies, parliamentarians were "able to communicate the concerns of their citizens much better and allow them to influence security policy".

According to the CiO the parliamentary dimension "is a very central component of co-operation between states, which cannot be ignored by a govern-

ment's foreign policy." Mr. Schüssel emphasized the important and innovative contributions made by the parliamentarians to the work of the OSCE.

"Particularly in election monitoring," he said, "parliaments occupy a very active role and we hope for an even closer co-operation in this area. The missions and visits of the Parliamentary Assembly to the new democracies are a useful instrument to support democracy and inter-parliamentary dialogue. In this context the Democracy Teams seem to me to deserve mention. We will maintain an active dialogue with the Parliamentary Assembly, and I will inform about our activities regularly."

On the second day of the meeting OSCE PA, President Helle Degn delivered an account of her activities as President and stressed that the Assembly looked forward to close co-operation with the Austrian Chairmanship in every possible way.

The Standing Committee was addressed by Dr Heinz Fischer, then Speaker of the Austrian Parliament and Dr. Peter Wittmann, then State Secretary in the Chancellor's Office, who delivered the Chancellor's address to the Standing Committee. Dr. Wittman recalled that the Istanbul Declaration emphasized the importance of the ability of members of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly "to build bridges of understanding, which governments are sometimes unable to do in certain situations". He praised the election monitoring activities of the Assembly as well as its inter-parliamentary dialogue and democracy teams as important contributions to the fostering of democratic structures in the OSCE participating States.

The Standing Committee heard reports from the Secretary General and the Treasurer of the OSCE PA. The Secretary General, Spencer Oliver, gave an overview of the activities of the Assem-

bly during the past few months. He drew particular attention to the importance of the paragraph in the Istanbul Summit Document on the positive role of the Parliamentary Assembly in the OSCE. According to the Secretary General the Heads of Delegation played an important role in ensuring that the section on the PA was in the Document.

Bill Graham, the newly elected Treasurer of the Assembly, delivered his first report to the Standing Committee. He reported that according to the accountancy firm KPMG, the books of the Assembly are in an excellent state. For the seventh straight year the expenditure of the International Secretariat was within the approved budget. He praised the efficient manner the Secretariat carried out its duties.



OSCE PA President, Helle Degn, talks to the former Prime Minister of Croatia, Zlatko Matijašević, at a polling station during the recent elections

The Members of the Standing Committee debated the results of the Summit Meeting in Istanbul as well as reports on the OSCE PA election observation missions in Kazakhstan, Georgia, Russia and Croatia. Also reports of the Ad Hoc Committee on Election Monitoring and of the Ad Hoc Working Group (Democracy Team) on Belarus were discussed.

The Standing Committee also considered the results of the Second Conference on Sub-Regional Co-operation,

which took place in Nantes last October, as well as forthcoming meetings of the Expanded Bureau and Seminars, to be held in Antalya, Turkey, in April and in Limassol, Cyprus, in October 2000. The war in Chechnya and the situation in Belarus were also raised and discussed by the members of the Standing Committee.

Finally, the Standing Committee decided that the theme for the Ninth Annual Session in Bucharest from 6 to 10 July 2000, would be 'OSCE Challenges in the 21st Century – Good Governance: Regional Cooperation, Strengthening Democratic Institutions, Promoting Transparency, Enforcing the Rule of law and Combating Corruption'.

Parliamentarians monitor Croatian elections

OSCE PA President Helle Degn was appointed Special Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office to lead the OSCE Election Observation Mission to the parliamentary elections in Croatia, which took place on 3 January. The Mission comprised more than 350 short-term observers, including 34 parliamentarians from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly. The OSCE PA Observer Team consisted of members of parliament from Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Prior to the elections, the parliamentarians were given extensive briefings. President Degn also held separate meetings with Marijan Ramuscak, President of the State Electoral Commission, with Foreign Minister Mate Granic and with Ivan Milas, Head of the Croatian Delegation to the OSCE PA.

At a press conference in Zagreb on 4

January, President Degn issued a preliminary joint statement of findings and conclusions with Daniel Goulet, Head of the Delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and Nikolai Vulchanov, Head of the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission. According to the statement the election marked progress towards meeting Croatia's commitments as a participating state in the OSCE and as a member of the Council of Europe.

They emphasized that they were pleased to have seen an improvement on previous elections, particularly in respect of the high turnout of 76.7 per cent: "This indicates voters' confidence in the electoral process, which is a very important achievement to further

democratic developments in this country."

The joint statement, however, also expressed important concerns related to Croatian legislation, such as the Citizenship Law and the representation of national minorities. Other concerns involved state media bias, the effective participation of political parties in the work of electoral commissions, accuracy and transparency of voter registers, campaign financing provisions, and the need to ensure privacy during voting.

President of the OSCE PA visits Kosovo

Helle Degn, President of the OSCE PA, visited Kosovo on 11 and 12 January. She met the leaderships of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo and the OSCE

Mission in Kosovo. As well as talking to the leaders of different political parties she visited a Serb village. The discussions held dealt with the OSCE's role in Kosovo and the building of a civil society. Her visit to Kosovo was part of an extensive series of visits to observe and support the work of OSCE Offices, to meet new OSCE officials in the field, to meet high-ranking government officials and to draw attention to the role the OSCE plays in the region. Since her election in July 1998 and re-election in July 1999, Mrs Degn has visited 14 OSCE Missions, including those in Slovakia, Georgia, Croatia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Moldova, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania, Estonia, Latvia and Kosovo.

REPORT

from the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

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War coverage in democracies must serve as example

On 3 January 2000, Freimut Duve, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, spoke to the Standing Committee of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. His remarks concentrated on the dramatic situation that journalists are put in when OSCE participating States are involved in military activities. Focusing particularly on the NATO campaign against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the latest military activity in the Russian republic of Chechnya, he emphasized that democracies, even at war, must always accept and follow their basic international commitments. Democracies were and would remain the example that others use, or misuse, when they went to war, stressed Mr. Duve.

Duve criticizes "Presidency-for-life" decision in Turkmenistan

In a public statement issued on January 17, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media strongly condemned the recent decision of the People's Assembly of Turkmenistan to delegate to the President the right to serve without term limits. This development – effectively the creation of a presidency-for-life – virtually ruled out the possibility of the development of any independent media in Turkmenistan, Mr. Duve said, something that was deeply disturbing in its human rights implications.

Harassment of journalists in Russia: Case 1: Alexander Khinstein

On 24 January, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, wrote

to the Russian Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov, regarding the case of Alexander Khinshtein, a journalist working for Moskovsky Komsomolets. Mr. Duve was informed that the apartment of Mr. Khinshtein had been raided recently and police tried to escort Mr. Khinshtein to a psychiatric clinic in Vladimir. The reason this attempt failed was because his lawyer and a film crew arrived at the scene. Mr. Duve urged the Russian Government to ensure that freedom of expression, one of Russia's greatest achievements, was not threatened by government officials. Alexander Khinshtein, he said, should be allowed to do his work without hindrance, and he expected the Interior Ministry to refrain from any further harassment of this journalist.

Harassment of journalists in Russia:

Case 2: Andrei Babitsky

On 27 January, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media wrote again to the Russian Foreign Minister raising his concerns about the fate of Andrei Babitsky, a correspondent for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, who had been reported missing in Chechnya on 15 January. Mr. Duve had intervened before on behalf of Mr. Babitsky, when this journalist was unable to leave Grozny in December. Eventually, he and seven of his colleagues were able to travel out of the area. The OSCE Representative remains actively involved in the Babitsky case.

Writer allegedly comes under attack in Belarus

On 28 January, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media wrote to Ural Latypov, the Belarus Foreign Minister, raising his concern about the

alleged campaign of harassment initiated against the famous Belarus writer, Vasil' Bykov, who had recently returned to Minsk. Mr. Duve asked the Minister to look into this case and, he hoped counter the allegations made by the writer in an interview with Izvestia on 26 January, where Mr. Bykov noted that: "Today in Belarus we have favourable conditions for the return of the ideology that dominated during the Soviet times."

War against the media continues in Serbia

Two recent cases when independent media in Serbia were sued by government officials in accordance with the Serbian Law on Public Information drew comments from the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media last month.

In January, the prominent independent Belgrade daily paper, *Danas*, was fined 270,000 dinars for "damaging the reputation" of the director of the gov-

ernment-controlled Tanjug news agency. Initially the local judge that presided over this case dismissed the charges, but he later imposed the fine on *Danas*. In Mr. Duve's view, the judge had been pressured into making the decision against his own legal convictions. However, a local court in Sombor, Vojvodina, dismissed charges against the Sombor Information Centre, its director and the editor of the daily *Somborske Novine*, filed by the local Radical Party President and Deputy Trade Minister, Stevan Kesejic.

The OSCE Representative believed that these two cases showed that judges, when not pressured, were willing to make decisions that took into account the interests of the media as well as the existing laws. He therefore publicly reiterated the need to repeal the Serbian Law on Public Information, which he has criticized for "strangling media" since its adoption in October 1998.

REPORT from the OSCE Secretary General and the Secretariat

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Working visits

On January 6, the OSCE Secretary General, Jan Kubis, attended an international symposium on 'OSCE 2000: Civil Peace Policy for Europe' in Hamburg, which was part of a special event held in the presence of the President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Johannes Rau, to mark the founding of the Centre for OSCE Research. The new Centre is located at the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg (IFSH), which has been focusing its attention on the OSCE since 1994 and produces several regular

research-oriented publications about the Organization. The Secretary General contributed an address on 'Perspectives for the OSCE in the year 2000' to the symposium and participated in a panel.

On 12 January, the Secretary General received a group of 17 journalists from Central Asia and Southern Caucasus, who were visiting Vienna at the invitation of the Austrian Chairmanship. The OSCE Mission in Georgia co-sponsored the travel of five Georgian journalists, including representatives from press and television. Mr. Kubis gave the journalists a briefing in Russian on the work of

the OSCE and afterwards held a half hour question and answer session. The following day the journalists attended the Permanent Council and the first press conference of the new CiO. A number of informative articles in the local press later resulted from the meeting.

On 19 January, the Secretary General met Carl Bildt, the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Balkans. The former Prime Minister of Sweden visited the Situation Room of the Secretariat and was briefed on the work of the OSCE in South-Eastern Europe.

On 26 January, the Secretary General visited Stockholm to attend the International Forum on the Holocaust, organized by the Swedish Government. The purpose of the event was to give states represented there an opportunity to show their will to combat racism, anti-Semitism, and other causes of conflict. The Secretary General also took the opportunity to hold discussions with Anna Lindh, the Foreign Ministers of Sweden, and other participants at the conference.

Seminar discusses approaches to post-conflict rehabilitation

From 26 to 27 January, more than 160 participants, including representatives of OSCE participating States, international and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), gathered in Tbilisi, Georgia, to discuss different approaches to post-conflict rehabilitation and conflict prevention. Central themes included the link between economic prosperity and conflicts, the role of non-governmental organizations in post-conflict rehabilitation, and the relationship between rule of law and post-conflict rehabilitation efforts. Participants focused on practical issues affecting countries in transition, such as the possibility of using economic tools to resolve and to overcome the effects of conflicts, problems posed by refugees, and the fight against corruption, organized crime and the "shadow economy".

The meeting on 'Experiences with Post-Conflict Rehabilitation Efforts' was organized by the Office of the Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, in co-operation with the Government of Georgia, and was the last in a series of three seminars intended to help OSCE participating States in their preparations for the eighth annual OSCE Economic Forum, to be held in Prague from 11 to 14 April 2000.

The discussion centered on practical problems and issues regarding post-conflict rehabilitation efforts. Representatives of six OSCE Missions presented actual field experiences with regard to conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation. These themes were further expanded upon in working groups, which brought together donors and lenders, recipient governments and civil society representatives – the three constituencies involved in post-conflict rehabilitation efforts in countries undergoing transition.

The working groups outlined three central issues: the need for transparency, good governance and strong institutions to combat organized crime and corruption; economic reforms as a means of promoting national reconciliation; the impact of refugees; and co-operative initiatives and small infrastructure projects as confidence-building measures. The conclusions and recommendations from

the discussions highlighted the possibility of using economic tools to help resolve conflicts, and to overcome the effects of conflicts. The participants recognized the fact that economic prosperity, and/or the lack of it, is linked to conflicts, both within and between States. It was also felt that there was a need for more co-operation, consultation and coordination not only among donors, but also between donors and recipient States.

Particular attention was drawn to the important contribution the OSCE could make to post-conflict rehabilitation efforts. It was stressed that, although the OSCE is not a financial organization, it could act as a facilitator. The Organization's comprehensive approach to security was underlined, as economic and social developments could be instrumental in finding solutions to political conflicts. It was felt that the OSCE could make recommendations to donors and, based on its political influence and its experience in the field, could help identify projects supporting conflict resolution and prevention.

The Seminar was attended by representatives from 30 OSCE participating States, the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation, several OSCE Missions and field activities, the OSCE Secretariat, as well as international organizations and NGOs from throughout the OSCE region.

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On 4 January, Wolfgang Schüssel, at that time Austrian Foreign Minister and OSCE Chairman-in-Office, met with **Soren Jessen-**

Petersen, the United Nations Assistant High Commissioner for Refugees, to discuss co-operation between the OSCE and the United Nations Organization. The meeting in Vienna focused on the refugee and political situation in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo, areas where both organizations have a field presence. Other central topics were the situation in Chechnya (Russian Federation), Abkhazia (Georgia), and the outlook for peace in the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh. "Close co-operation and exchange of information are critical for the OSCE and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in order to successfully meet their common objectives," said Mr. Schüssel.

On 20 January, **Bodo Hombach, the Special Co-ordinator of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe**, addressed the OSCE Permanent Council. He described the ongoing preparations for the Stability Pact funding conference, to be held on 29 and 30 March, the goal of which is to gather funds for projects initiated under the Stability Pact. "The first chapter of our work, the creation of a political consensus in terms of objective and method, has been successfully completed. We must now open chapter two, in which the projects become concrete reality," said Mr. Hombach, "After the conference in March we can set

the projects in motion without delay."

He also expressed his gratitude to the OSCE for the support provided to the Stability Pact. The Organization is currently involved in several of its initiatives, including sponsoring a task force on gender issues and a working group on the prevention of trafficking in human beings, as well as assisting in projects regarding media, good governance, education, human rights and national minorities.

On 21 January, the **OSCE Ministerial Troika**, made up of the current, previous and succeeding Chairmen-in-Office (this year the Foreign Ministers of Austria, Norway and Romania), met in Vienna to discuss issues of concern to the OSCE. These included the conflict in Chechnya, the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, developments in Kosovo, and the overall situation in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The Ministers reiterated the view that a lasting solution to the conflict in Chechnya can only be achieved through political dialogue, and expressed the readiness of the OSCE to assist in this respect. They also welcomed the continuing dialogue on Nagorno-Karabakh between the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan, and repeated the OSCE's readiness to assist in the implementation of an agreement between the countries.

The Ministers also discussed current activities of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, particularly the preparations for local elections in the province. Regarding the situation in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Ministers agreed that the reintegration of Yugoslavia into the OSCE was necessary, but could take place

only on the basis of a thorough democratization process. Other issues discussed by the Ministers included OSCE activities in Central Asia, its regional approach to South-Eastern Europe, and the strengthening of the Organization's ability to react rapidly to crises within the OSCE area.

On 27 January, the then OSCE Chairman-in-Office addressed the **Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe**. Mr. Schüssel outlined the priorities of the Austrian Chairmanship of the OSCE and called for increased co-operation between the Council of Europe and the OSCE. "The three main players on the European stage, the European Union, the Council of Europe and the OSCE, have the potential to join forces and create synergies to support the pursuit of their common goal: a peaceful, free Europe founded on democracy, the rule of law, economic prosperity and social justice," he said.

The **Human Rights Ombudsperson for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Gret Haller**, addressed the OSCE Permanent Council on 27 January. Her Office was established under the Dayton Accords with a mandate to provide human rights protection in the country. Over the past four years, more than 60,000 persons have contacted the Office seeking advice or help. Almost 10,000 cases have been registered by the Office, and more than 800 investigations of allegations have been conducted. In her remarks to the Permanent Council, Mrs. Haller described the Office's current activities and outlined possible future developments.



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