



REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE CHAIRMAN IN OFFICE (30 March – 5 April)

Rupel urges unity and offers OSCE support to Kyrgyzstan

BISHKEK - OSCE Chairman-in-Office Dimitrij Rupel said the new Kyrgyz authorities should maintain dialogue with deposed President Askar Akayev as he visited the Central Asian republic on 31 March. Rupel also called on the new authorities to avoid infighting, as this would further destabilise the country. He reiterated the organisation's commitment to helping the country move towards greater stability, unity and democracy based on economic development as it ends the Akayev era. He held separate talks with interim Prime Minister and President Kurmanbek Bakiyev, Foreign Minister Roza Otunbayeva and former security chief and leader of the Ar-Namys (Dignity) Party Felix Kulov, as well as representatives of NGOs.

OSCE Chair Urges Sides to Step Up Efforts to Resolve Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

YEREVAN & BAKU - OSCE Chairman Dimitrij Rupel called on all concerned parties to step up efforts in a bid to find a solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as he paid visits to Armenia and Azerbaijan on 30 March and 2 April. During the visits, paid as part of a three-day tour of the Caucasus, Rupel said Armenia and Azerbaijan should take advantage of "the existing window of opportunity" to bolster efforts aimed at finding a lasting solution. He said the OSCE was ready to assist in these efforts. The important thing is for the two sides to avoid incidents and to observe the cease-fire agreement, he added. He also stressed his view that the guidance of the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan, Robert Kocharian and Ilham Aliyev, was crucial for the successful development of the peace process. Rupel also discussed democracy-building efforts with officials in both countries.

OSCE Wants to Assist Georgia, Rupel Says

TBLISI - As part of his three-day Caucasus tour, OSCE Chairman Dimitrij Rupel paid a visit to Georgia on 1 April, pledging support to promote efforts for peaceful settlements of the Georgian-Ossetian and Georgian-Abkhaz conflicts. "The peaceful resolution of conflicts is the only way to achieve greater stability in the region," he said after meeting top Georgian officials. Rupel met Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, Speaker of Parliament Nino Burjanadze, Prime Minister Zurab Nogaideli and Foreign Minister Salome Zourabichvili. The situation in Kyrgyzstan was also on the agenda as Rupel met Saakashvili, who had just returned from a visit to Kazakhstan.

OSCE Chairman in Office Rupel Pays Tribute to Pope

LJUBLJANA - OSCE Chairman Dimitrij Rupel said Pope John Paul II's death leaves a void, but also inspiration, hope and motivation for the future, as he paid tribute to the Pope on 3 April. Rupel described the Pope as one of the most important European personalities of the last 25 years. "The Pope was a champion of freedom, solidarity, justice and peace among people and nations," Rupel stressed. He added that the Pope's death filled him with great sadness but also with gratitude for everything that he had done during his pontificate.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

BELGRADE & PODGORICA, 4 & 5 April - OSCE Chairman Dimitrij Rupel is on a two-day visit to Serbia and Montenegro. He is to meet senior federal and state officials for talks on the future of the union of the two republics, the future of Kosovo and the situation in the broader SE European region.

TIRANA, 11 April - OSCE Chairman Dimitrij Rupel is due to visit Albania.