

PA President appoints Congressman Christopher Smith as Special Representative on Human Trafficking Issues



During the February 2004 Winter Meeting in Vienna, OSCE PA President Bruce George appointed Congressman Christopher Smith, Head of the US Delegation to the OSCE PA, as his Special Representative on Human Trafficking Issues.

The Special Representative will collect information on human trafficking in the OSCE region and promote dialogue in the OSCE, in its Parliamentary Assembly in particular, on how to combat human trafficking. He will also advise the Assembly on the implementation of its agreed policies in these matters as well

as on the development of new policies. Congressman Smith has been particularly active in combating trafficking, introducing to Annual Sessions several Supplementary Items on human trafficking.

In his own country he authored the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Law, which provides US government prosecutors with the resources needed to prosecute offenders, as well as resources to help victims rebuild their lives.

According to the Assembly's Rules of Procedure, the President may appoint Special Representatives on areas of particular interest to assist or act on his or her behalf. Vice-President Tone Tingsgård is the Special Representative on Gender Issues, Michel Voisin (MP France) on Mediterranean Affairs and Göran Lennmarker is the Special Representative on the Nagorno Karabakh Conflict.

Ad Hoc Committees Meet in Vienna

OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committees took the opportunity to hold meetings in Vienna. The Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency and Accountability discussed how to ensure that the OSCE PA Declarations be more focused and coherent, and concluded that a limited number of recommendations should be forwarded to the governmental side each year. The Committee, chaired by Congressman Steny Hoyer, heard a report from Ambassador Nothelle, Permanent OSCE PA Representative in Vienna, and Members emphasized the need to ensure free access of Ambassador Nothelle to all OSCE meetings. During his presentation at the Closing Session of the Winter Meeting, OSCE Secretary General Jan Kubis advocated more transparency in OSCE decision-making and expressed his opinion that Ambassador Nothelle should have access to all OSCE meetings, including the ACMF.

Chaired by Vice-President Kimmo Kiljunen, the OSCE PA Parliamentary Team on Moldova discussed the present situation on the negotiations concerning the status of the Transdniestrian region. Team Member Anne-Marie Lizin (Belgium) informed the Team that the Belgium Parliament would be ready to host a Parliamentary Conference later in 2004 to support the negotiations on a federal constitution for Moldova.

Several Members of the OSCE PA Working Group on Belarus met to discuss the Group's future activities in Belarus. Members also met with the Belarusian Delegation to the OSCE PA as well as with Jan Marinus Wiersma, the Chairman of the European Parliament Sub-Committee on Belarus.

Also during the PA Winter Meeting in Vienna, President Bruce George met with the parliamentary delegations of Albania, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Jordan and Morocco. He discussed with Jan Marinus Wiersma, Vice-President of the European Parliament, parliamentary troika activities in Belarus and Moldova. The President also chaired an informal meeting with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation, also attended by Slovenian Ambassador Jan Lenarčič, current Chair of the OSCE Contact Group with the Mediterranean Partners.

Gender Issues

In conjunction with the OSCE PA Winter Meeting, the Special Representative on the Gender Issue, Vice-President Tone Tingsgård addressed the OSCE informal Group on Gender and Anti-Trafficking. In her speech Mrs. Tingsgård urged the OSCE to implement the principles adopted in the Gender Action Plan from 2000 and welcomed the drafting of a new version of the document. She said, "We have the statistics, we have the declarations, we have the plans. Now it is time for action and implementation."

Mrs. Tingsgaard also put forward her idea to develop an OSCE PA strategy for improving the gender balance within the OSCE and its Parliamentary Assembly. In addition, she stressed her willingness to cooperate with the informal Group on Gender and Anti-Trafficking in order to promote awareness and increase political will on this issue.



VP Tone Tingsgaard presents Gender Questionnaire to Closing Plenary.

Rules of Procedure Amended

In its meeting in Vienna on 19 February, the Standing Committee approved two amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the OSCE PA.

The amendment to Rule 23 clarifies the procedures concerning the postponement of items in the Plenary, Standing Committee and the General Committees. The amendment to Rule 34 brings more flexibility to the General Committees in the election of their Officers.

The Standing Committee also briefly discussed a proposed amendment to Rule 20 concerning the number of supplementary items at Annual Sessions and procedures at the Standing Committee in these questions. On the proposal of the President, the Standing Committee decided to postpone this matter for further consideration.

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