

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (PA)

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly represents the OSCE's parliamentary dimension. Comprising 320 parliamentarians, the Assembly's primary task is to support inter-parliamentary dialogue, an important aspect of the overall effort of meeting the challenges of democracy throughout the OSCE region. The declarations passed by the Assembly each year, which are forwarded to governments and OSCE institutions, represent the collective voice of the parliaments of the participating States.

Originally established by the 1990 Paris Summit to promote greater national parliamentary involvement in the OSCE's forerunner, the CSCE, the Assembly has become an active and prominent member of the OSCE family. The Assembly brings together domestic members of parliaments from the participating States several times each year to discuss OSCE-related affairs and to issue recommendations. Parliamentarians are provided with the opportunity to exchange views, debate best practices and to engage with international experts on OSCE issues. Each of the national parliaments today have members with OSCE expertise who are in a position to support and influence the Organization's policies. Through an active election observation programme, the parliamentarians also use their unique expertise as directly elected officials, and play a leading role in OSCE observation activities.

Each year the Assembly elects a President by majority vote to act as its high representative and to chair its primary meetings. The President regularly participates in the work of the OSCE at the ministerial level, including Troika meetings and the Ministerial Council. In July, the Assembly elected Goran Lenmarker, Chairperson of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Swedish Parliament, as its new President.

The Assembly's International Secretariat is located in Copenhagen, hosted by the Danish Parliament. The Secretariat is headed by Secretary General R. Spencer Oliver. With a permanent staff of 15 people, the Assembly also maintains a small liaison office in Vienna. In addition to the Permanent Staff, the Parliamentary Assembly employs up to seven Research Fellows in both Copenhagen and Vienna. The Research Fellows provide high-quality research and linguistic assistance for the work of the Assembly.

Inter-parliamentary dialogue

15th Annual Session in Brussels, July. The theme of this year's *Annual Session* was *Strengthening Human Security in the OSCE region*. Parliamentarians from 53 countries gathered in



OSCE parliamentarians vote during the Assembly's Annual Session in July.

Brussels at the Assembly's largest annual meeting to discuss current issues in the fields of international security, economics, the environment and human rights, and subsequently passed the *Brussels Declaration* with both political and technical recommendations. The *Declaration* calls for increased support for field operations, with a particular focus on South-eastern Europe, and closer co-operation with other international organizations. The parliamentarians are looking for increased dialogue among States to ensure reliable and secure supplies of energy. The Assembly also stressed the importance of effective parliamentary oversight of security services. The Assembly urged parliamentarians to continue providing political leadership to election observation missions, since this lends these missions visibility and credibility. Members also requested participating States to ensure that their territory is not used to assist rendition flights or to operate secret detention centres. They issued recommendations on settling the Transnistrian conflict in Moldova, dealing with the consequences of natural disasters, combating corruption and fighting anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance.

In accordance with traditional practice, Chairman-in-Office Karel De Gucht and Secretary General Marc Perrin de Brichambaut both addressed the session and answered questions from parliamentarians.

Fall Meetings in Malta, November. Meeting for the first time in Malta, the Assembly's *Fall Conference* focused parliamentary attention on the issue of migration. Experts and Assembly members discussed both positive and negative aspects related to migration. Parliamentarians from across the OSCE region and the Mediterranean participated, including for the first time special guest representatives from Libya.

The meeting in Malta, at the heart of the Mediterranean, was also the occasion of the Assembly's annual *Forum on the Mediterranean*, which included a special debate on the Middle East. The Forum was addressed by high-level officials from OSCE and partner States, including Egypt and Israel. Members discussed the importance of a two-state solution to achieving peace in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. They also raised the themes of free trade and social development, giving a broad perspective to the discussion.

Winter Meeting in Vienna, February. The Assembly met for its fifth annual *Winter Meeting* in Vienna in February. The second-largest event in the Parliamentary Assembly's calendar, it gave members of the Assembly the opportunity to hear briefings by senior OSCE officials on current developments. The parliamentarians were also able to follow up on the ongoing work of the Assembly, prepare for upcoming events and engage with their parliamentary colleagues from other countries on current issues.

During the meeting, the Assembly held a public debate on freedom of expression and respect for religious beliefs, following the world-wide controversy regarding the publication of cartoons depicting the Prophet Mohammed in the media. This extraordinary debate was held to engage in an open political dialogue about this issue – a critical step in the search for common ground to overcome the difficulties. Opening the debate, then Parliamentary Assembly President Alcee L. Hastings called for freedom of the press to be exercised in a dignified and responsible manner. The special debate continued with introductory remarks by the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Miklos Haraszti.

Parliamentarians from many delegations across the OSCE as well as from Mediterranean partner States took the floor to exchange views during the debate. Delegates roundly condemned the violent reactions to the publication of the cartoons, and members called for a responsible exercise of freedom of expression. Other issues, such as the role of the press in democratic societies, the principle of secularism, blasphemy laws, the importance of education in tolerance, inter-religious dialogue and the need to fight extremism were also discussed.

Issues in focus

Guantanamo detention camp. In February and March, Anne-Marie Lizin, President of the Belgian Senate and the Assembly's Special Representative on Guantanamo, became the first political representative of a European body to officially visit the United States of America's detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Upon the invitation of the U.S. Department of Defense, the Special Representative met with senior representatives of the State Department and the Department of Defense and was

subsequently given a tour of the facility. She visited camps and cells housing detainees, met intelligence staff and observed an interrogation.

The Special Representative's visit was part of her work in following up and reporting to the Assembly on the situation of detainees from OSCE participating States in the facility. In July, she presented her report in which she called upon the U.S. Government to implement a calendar for closure of the facility. She also made a number of other recommendations, focused particularly on increasing transparency in the fight against terrorism and in the detention process.

Gender issues. During its winter meeting, and in conjunction with the 50th Session of the UN *Commission on the Status of Women* in New York, the Assembly organized a special panel discussion on 27 February on the theme *Women in Security Politics – Do Women Make a Difference?* Tone Tingsgaard, Assembly Vice-President and Special Representative on Gender Issues, gave an overview of the activities of the Assembly to promote the status of women within the OSCE and expressed her regret about the lack of progress in this respect. She also gave an overview of her experiences as the Vice-Chairperson of the Defence Committee of the Swedish Parliament. Participants noted the dilemma that, while wars of today involve women more than ever, women are under-represented in peace negotiations. It was stressed that security for women involves much more than military aspects. Economic, social and cultural factors such as job security are also very important. The discussion highlighted the particular ability of women to find common ground with women from other factions and groups, and to work together for peace on the basis of this common understanding.

The Special Representative on Gender Issues presented her *Gender Balance* report to the Assembly during the *Annual Session* in Brussels. She pointed out that, while women represent half of the staff of OSCE institutions, they generally do not hold senior positions. Implementation of the 2004 *Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality* has given strong impetus to the process of gender mainstreaming, but she said the issue has not yet been tackled effectively.

“Measures to break the so-called ‘glass ceiling’ hindering women’s access to higher positions have yet to be taken, with the risk that the ‘glass ceiling’ will become a ‘concrete ceiling’.”

–Tone Tingsgaard, Special Representative on Gender Issues

Election observation

The Assembly continued to play a leading role in observing elections in the OSCE area. Parliamentary observers used their unique knowledge of electoral processes to assess the conduct of elections in relation to participating States' OSCE commitments. As



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OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President Alcee L. Hastings led several OSCE election observation missions during his presidency.

politicians who have fought elections themselves, parliamentarians have particular expertise in political campaigns and electoral processes, bringing added credibility to OSCE observation missions. In observing elections, the Assembly works in close co-operation with the ODIHR and the region's other parliamentary assemblies.

The Assembly deployed more than 350 observers to monitor elections in Belarus¹, Ukraine, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Latvia and Tajikistan. In accordance with traditional practice, the Chairman-in-Office appoints senior Assembly members as his Special Co-ordinators to lead short-term observer missions and to provide political leadership. Chairman-in-Office Karel De Gucht appointed the following Special Co-ordinators to present the conclusions of the observation missions at press conferences on the day following the elections:

- President Alcee L. Hastings (United States of America) for the Presidential election in Belarus, and the Parliamentary elections in Ukraine;
- Vice-President Nevzat Yalcintas (Turkey) for the referendum on future state-status in Montenegro, Serbia and Montenegro;
- Vice-President Joao Soares (Portugal) for the Parliamentary elections in Montenegro;
- David Heath (United Kingdom) for the general elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Kimmo Kiljunen (Finland) for the Presidential election in Tajikistan.

Parliamentary field work

The Parliamentary Assembly has established ad hoc committees, working groups and Special Representatives to focus on specific issues, in particular the following:

Abkhazia (Georgia). The ad hoc committee on Abkhazia (Georgia) has been working for several years to establish direct contact with representatives of Abkhazia. From 11 to 13 April, the Committee, headed by Vice-President Tone Tingsgaard, visited

Georgia and held meetings with officials in Tbilisi, and for the first time met with the Abkhaz leadership in Sukhumi. Members of the *ad hoc* committee listened to the views and ideas of members of the *de facto* Abkhaz parliament. During the visit, the members of the committee stressed that their mandate is not to negotiate a solution but to promote parliamentary dialogue in order to facilitate reconciliation and resolution of the conflict. The committee's work supports the ongoing UN-led conflict settlement process, and maintains close contact with the Mission to Georgia. The *ad hoc* committee is moving forward with plans to increase dialogue, including through further visits to the region.

Belarus. The working group on Belarus, headed by Uta Zapf (Germany), continued working throughout the year for an open dialogue with the Belarusian parliament and Government, as well as with opposition representatives and other interested parties. In close co-operation with the OSCE Office in Minsk, the group held several meetings both in Minsk and outside of Belarus with Belarusian parliamentarians and opposition representatives. The Members visited Minsk in late January and February to discuss the political situation in the run-up to the 19 March Presidential election. The Group urged the electoral authorities to take every possible step to ensure a fair campaign environment, including equal access to the media for all candidates and adequate access to the election proceedings for all observers.

On the sidelines of the *Annual Session*, the working group organized a roundtable discussion with the Belarusian delegation to the Assembly, OSCE parliamentarians and opposition representatives from Belarus. In co-operation with the Belarusian delegation to the Assembly, the group is also organizing a series of joint seminars, which will involve representatives of a wide range of Belarusian political forces.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In meetings both in the South Caucasus and abroad, the Parliamentary Assembly's Special Representative on the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict, Goran Lennmarker, encouraged reconciliation and rehabilitation in the area through parliamentary dialogue. The Special Representative co-operates closely with the Co-Chairpersons of the OSCE Minsk Group and the Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office, who are working to facilitate a peaceful end to the conflict.

Lennmarker met with the Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as with parliamentarians from both countries. Both as Special Representative and, since July, as President of the Assembly, he stressed that there is a golden opportunity for solving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The political situation favours a timely solution to the conflict, and Lennmarker called on all parties to seize this opportunity for a mutually beneficial peace.

Moldova. Prior to the July *Annual Session* and in close co-ordination with the Mission to Moldova, the Head of the Parliamentary Team on Moldova, Kimmo Kiljunen visited Moldova to help promote constructive dialogue on a Transnistria settlement through improved parliamentary co-operation. The Assembly subsequently passed a resolution reiterating that any settlement of the conflict must be acceptable to all of the people of

¹ Nineteen OSCE Parliamentary Assembly observers were denied entry to Belarus and were therefore not able to participate in the observation mission.

Moldova, and noted the importance of the democratization of the Transnistrian region to this end. The resolution also encourages dialogue between legislators from both sides of the Nistru/Dniestr River.

South-eastern Europe. Slovenian parliamentarian Roberto Battelli was appointed Special Representative on South-eastern Europe to facilitate parliamentary dialogue in the region and to serve as a focal point for Assembly participation in the Parliamentary Troika of the *Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe*. In 2007, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly will chair the Troika, which also includes the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the European Parliament. The Special Representative represented the Assembly at several *Stability Pact* events, including conferences focused on judicial reform and parliamentary oversight of the security sector.

The Special Representative also played a leading role in the observation of the referendum and the parliamentary elections in Montenegro, as well as of the elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In December, the Assembly President and the Special Representative took a one-week trip to Serbia (including Kosovo), the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania, travelling overland from Belgrade to Mitrovica, Pristina, Gracanica, Skopje, Tetovo, Ohrid and finally Tirana. The visits to these countries included a number of high-level talks as well as in-depth briefings about the work of the OSCE field operations.

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New leadership elected

At the close of the *15th Annual Session* in Brussels, the Assembly elected Goran Lennmarker of Sweden as President. Upon being elected, Lennmarker said that he wanted to reinvigorate dialogue in the OSCE and promote a wider discussion of OSCE issues beyond its own Institutions. Lennmarker, who has been a Member of the Swedish parliament since 1991 and has served in several senior positions within the Parliamentary Assembly, stressed that he would give priority to work on conflict resolution. Lennmarker has maintained a busy schedule since his election as President. In addition to chairing all of the Assembly's meetings, he has paid official visits to a number of participating States and represented the Assembly at meetings of other OSCE institutions. President Lennmarker has also appointed five Special Representatives to work on issues of particular interest.



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Goran Lennmarker addresses the Assembly after his election as President during the *Annual Session* in Brussels in July.

In July, the Assembly also elected four new Vice-Presidents from Austria, Portugal, Sweden and the U.S.

“Parliamentarians have an important role to play in supporting the OSCE’s conflict-resolution efforts. These conflicts are not ‘frozen’: people are suffering and will continue to suffer unless solutions are found. Parliamentary dialogue can complement official negotiations and lay the groundwork for lasting peace on a democratic footing.”

–Goran Lennmarker, President of the Parliamentary Assembly