

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL

JULY 2001

On the occasion of the Tenth Annual Session of the OSCE, I am pleased to report to you that we have had another active and successful year as one of the most important Institutions of the OSCE.

Supporting the President

President Severin has been the most active of all of the five parliamentarians who have served as Presidents of the Assembly during the past ten years. He has travelled extensively on behalf of the Assembly, not only on bilateral visits to national delegations, but also to an impressive array of seminars, conferences, Troika meetings, and various other OSCE meetings. He participated in the OSCE Ministerial meeting in Vienna last December where he gave a strong speech reflecting the views of the Parliamentary Assembly, particularly those related to greater transparency, accountability and openness in OSCE structures and Institutions.

The Secretariat has provided support and assistance to the President in all of his activities including scheduling, speeches, press co-ordination, and general administrative support. In addition, Mr. Severin has been the first President to spend considerable time working in our Copenhagen Headquarters. I should also note that he has been given strong support from the Romanian Parliament, which has paid for all of his travel expenses and has provided him with substantial staff support, including an Assistant who travels with him on virtually all occasions.

Election Monitoring

In addition to the wide ranging activities of the President, the Secretariat has organised and supported six election monitoring projects involving large numbers of OSCE parliamentarians. In each instance, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office has appointed one of our parliamentarians as his Personal Representative to lead these election monitoring projects. As in the past, parliamentarians have provided the core political leadership for these election monitoring activities which has given the OSCE both added credibility and greater visibility. The staff of the Secretariat has provided briefing materials and logistical support on the ground on every project. The International Secretariat is already involved in preparations for several elections which are expected to take place during the coming year.

Ad Hoc Working Groups

The ad hoc committees on Belarus, Kosovo and Moldova have been particularly active. These teams from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly have travelled on several occasions to their regions of responsibility. The working group on Abkhazia has just completed its first visit to the area and has already begun to plan further activities. The Stability Pact team has joined with representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the European Parliament, creating a nine member "Troika" team which is expected to participate in the meeting of the three working tables of the Stability Pact. The International Secretariat has provided substantial staff support for the work of these teams. Pentti Väänänen and Paul LeGendre have worked with the Moldovan team, Alexander Staun-Rechnitzer has worked with the Kosovo group, Tina Schon with the working group on Abkhazia, Paul LeGendre continues to work with Belarus team, and Pentti Väänänen has coordinated the activities of the Stability Pact parliamentary troika.

Interparliamentary Co-operation

We have continued to build upon our excellent working relationship with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. We now co-operate very closely on all matters of mutual interest, including election monitoring, ad hoc working groups and democratic development. Our co-operation with the European Parliament is becoming more active. On a number of occasions the three parliamentary institutions — the OSCE and Council of Europe Parliamentary Assemblies and the European Parliament — are working together as a Troika. We have developed active co-operation with the European Parliament. We also continue to enjoy a good working relationship with the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, which participates with us on some of our election monitoring projects. President Severin has addressed Plenary Sessions of both the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the NATO Parliamentary Assembly during the past year, and has also made an appearance before the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament. We have worked very closely with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in the “2+2” and “3+3” formats of governmental co-operation between the OSCE and the Council of Europe. As Secretary General, I continue to work closely with my counterparts in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the European Parliament and the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. We expect to build on these good relations with our sister international parliaments, not only to avoid duplication and redundancy, but more importantly to increase the impact of our joint efforts in our fields of co-operation.

Support for Field Missions

We have continued to encourage members of the Assembly to visit Field Missions, although timing and co-ordination have proved to be a problem. Vice-President Ihor Ostash and Paul LeGendre have worked closely with the OSCE Mission in Kazakhstan and have visited that country on several occasions. President Severin has visited three countries in Central Asia and hopes to visit the other two as soon as

possible. Our ad hoc working groups, of course, also work in close co-operation with OSCE Field Missions. During his recent trip to Central Asia, Mr. Severin launched the idea of a Trans Asian Parliamentary Forum, involving parliamentarians from the three OSCE Asian Partner States – Japan, South Korea and Thailand – as well as parliamentarians from the OSCE Participating States, particularly in Central Asia where Asian and European countries share a mutual interest in economic and democratic development. This idea has received a positive response during his visit to Central Asia, as well as from the Asian parliamentarians, particularly from the Parliament of Thailand which has offered to host a Trans Asian Parliamentary Forum in Bangkok next year. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has also expressed an interest in this project and has agreed to support our efforts and to participate actively in such a conference.

The International Secretariat

The International Secretariat has continued to function very efficiently. The permanent staff now numbers fourteen, including our Counsellor for Press and Public Affairs, who is seconded to us from the Dutch Government. I am pleased to report that his secondment has just been extended for three additional years through 2004. His presence has greatly enhanced the visibility of the Assembly. He is responsible for overseeing the development of brochures and other printed materials which are widely disseminated both in our Organization as well as throughout the OSCE. His extensive experience has resulted in substantial publicity of the President's activities and also for our leadership role in election monitoring projects. During the past year, the International Secretariat has published and distributed twenty-seven editions of our one-page "News from Copenhagen", a synopsis of our current activities. This publication is designed to keep the members of the Assembly well informed on a timely basis about the work in which we are engaged. We have also improved our OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Website, which is linked to the governmental OSCE Website in Vienna. We are trying to put information at the disposal of our members as well as the general public through posting information about the Assembly on this site

on a regular basis. The Danish Folketing, which generously provides office space and a substantial amount of equipment and furniture to the Assembly at no charge, has also in the past year made available another floor of office space for our Secretariat.

New Staff

Thanks to the increased budget which was approved by the Standing Committee last year, we have added two new members to our staff in the International Secretariat. Gustavo Pallares, who had previously been one of our first interns and who went on to become the Presidential Adviser to President Ruperez during his two years as President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, as well as two additional years in the same position when Mr. Ruperez was elected as President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. He joined us from Madrid in February to assume the same role with President Severin in his extensive activities. Alexander Staun-Rechnitzer, also a former Research Assistant, joined us in October of last year. He is responsible for the Kosovo Democracy Team, as well as other general assistance to me and to the Counsellor for Press and Public Affairs, particularly on producing the “News from Copenhagen”. These two additions to our staff have enabled us to keep up with the dynamic developments in the OSCE as well as our own election monitoring projects, ad hoc committees, presidential travel, and the organization of our normal schedule of meetings.

Gender Balance Study

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has been in the forefront of OSCE efforts to redress the gender imbalance in OSCE, as well as throughout the Participating States. Since its Third Annual Session in Vienna, the Parliamentary Assembly has included a special session for women parliamentarians within its agenda. As far as I know, we are the only international parliamentary organisation that gives such a prominent place to women parliamentarians in their official proceedings. The Parliamentary Assembly has spoken out on these issues in its annual declarations and

supplementary items on many occasions. The Assembly has called for the creation of gender focal points and gender advisers in all OSCE Institutions. Such positions now exist, although the gender imbalance has not improved. This is particularly the case with regard to senior positions in the OSCE Institutions. Deputy Secretary General Pentti Väänänen, who has been in charge of organising the meetings of women parliamentarians, is also designated as the person in charge of monitoring gender balance in other OSCE Institutions. We have created in the International Secretariat a gender unit to press these issues. Besides the Deputy Secretary General, Research Co-ordinator Tina Schon and at least one Research Assistant are also involved. We have recently published a thorough report on gender balance in OSCE Institutions which has been distributed at this Annual Session.

The Research Fellowship Programme

The Research Fellowship Programme is functioning extremely well, providing us with in-house capability in the six official languages of the OSCE, as well as high quality research for the whole range of our activities. Our research team monitors the work of the OSCE Field Missions; conducts research for election monitoring projects; provides background materials for the President's speeches, official visits and other activities; translates correspondence and generally assists all members of the staff in carrying out their duties. At the present time we have Research Assistants from Denmark, France, Italy, Russia, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States. Their contribution to the work of the International Secretariat is substantial. Without them we would not be able to do our job of providing service and support to the Assembly.

Working with other OSCE Institutions

The Parliamentary Assembly, as one of the main Institutions of the OSCE, works closely with the other OSCE structures, including the Chairman-in-Office, the Ministerial Troika, the Permanent Council, the International Secretariat in Vienna, the

Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Mr. Freimut Duve, who is a former member of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. As has been stated earlier, we work in the field of election monitoring on the basis of a Co-operation Agreement signed by the Chairman-in Office and the President of the Assembly. We also attend various meetings and seminars organised by OSCE Institutions. Most recently, two members of our staff have served as Rapporteurs at the ODIHR Annual Human Dimension Seminar and two meetings related to the OSCE Economic Forum. As has also been mentioned earlier, we work in a co-operative and productive manner with OSCE Field Missions on a regular basis. Although our working relationships for the most part are quite good, there is some tension between the Permanent Council and the Parliamentary Assembly due to the resistance of the Permanent Council and the International Secretariat in Vienna to the strong advocacy of greater openness, transparency and accountability within the OSCE by the Assembly and its leadership. Some tension also exists between the ODIHR and the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna by our monitoring of the gender balance within those Secretariats, which has resulted in a very critical report distributed at our Annual Session in Paris.

The Budget

The Secretariat has continued to function within the annual budget — we were only slightly over budget last year — but we expect that our present rate of expenditures will require a slight increase in the budget for the coming year. This is mainly due to three factors. The first being that the President has engaged in more official meetings and official travel than any previous President and is expected to continue to do so in the coming year. Secondly, the increase in Permanent Staff and Research Assistants, now occupying three floors and twenty-four work stations has caused basic maintenance and office costs to increase substantially. Thirdly, the Research Assistant Programme, due to the housing situation mentioned above, as well as their greater involvement in field activities such as election monitoring, will cause

this programme to be slightly more costly than last year. Overall the International Secretariat has functioned very well and very efficiently. We now have a very experienced and very hard working professional staff that produces high quality programmes and materials. At the same time, we have the smallest staff and the lowest budget of any international parliamentary assembly with whom we regularly co-operate.

Conclusion

I must also report that many members of the Permanent Council in Vienna, as well as the leadership of the International Secretariat in Vienna, are unwilling to accept a normal parliamentary oversight role within the OSCE. We have received very strong negative reactions from Vienna to the questions the President and our International Secretariat have raised about the extremely critical External Audit of the OSCE that was issued last year and was apparently withheld from the Parliamentary Assembly and even the political level of many governments. Many members of the Permanent Council continue to express their view that the Parliamentary Assembly has no official role within the OSCE and that the Parliamentary Assembly should not have access to information related to the internal workings of the Permanent Council and the International Secretariat, including matters of financial management. As you know, the President strongly disagrees with this view and continues to press for more openness, greater transparency and more accountability within the OSCE. It can be expected that this issue will continue to cause tension between the bureaucratic structures in Vienna and the Parliamentary Assembly and its International Secretariat.

Despite these difficulties, which are not unexpected, the Parliamentary Assembly has greatly expanded its role and influence within the overall OSCE. Our activities have given added value to the OSCE, particularly our support for the work of the Field Missions and the leading role parliamentarians have played in election monitoring. The work of the President has also given the Parliamentary Assembly greater visibility as has the further development of our annual Prize for Journalism and Democracy. Participation in the Assembly has never been greater — we were pleased

to welcome Yugoslavia back into the Assembly this year — and the planning of our future events is well underway. There will be a Standing Committee and Conference on Migration in Portugal in October; a meeting of the Bureau in conjunction with the Ministerial Council in Bucharest in early December, the Winter Session in Vienna in February, the usual Expanded Bureau meeting in Copenhagen in the Spring, and our Annual Session in Berlin next July. Planning is also already underway for the 2003 Annual Session in Rotterdam and the 2004 Annual Session in Edinburgh. We also hope that the proposal for a Trans Asian Parliamentary Forum will result in a meeting in Thailand sometime next year. As we look forward to these future events, I think it is fair to conclude that it has been a very good year for the Parliamentary Assembly and we all look forward to continuing to serve the interests of the Assembly and its members in the coming years.