

New Chairman-in-Office Stresses Solidarity, Co-operation and the Human Element



The New Team: from left to right, Ambassador Adam Kobieracki, Chairman of the Permanent Council, Foreign Minister Bronislaw Geremek, and Ambassador Jerzy Nowak, Head of the OSCE Coordination Unit in Warsaw

Photo: Melissa Flemming

The new Chairman-in-Office, Polish foreign minister Professor Bronislaw Geremek, addressed the Permanent Council for the first time on 15 January.

In his address, Mr. Geremek stressed the continuing need for Europe's international organizations to "ensure peaceful management of change" and for the development of comprehensive security "based on mutual reassurance rather than on mutual deterrence." He noted that for the first time in European history a security regime was being developed which "is not based on diktat or balance of power, but on equality, freedom and democracy."

He emphasized that the OSCE is only as strong as its participating States make it. To ensure its strength, States must "adhere to common values and associate their vital interests with the Organization." Furthermore, the OSCE can only be successful if States "invest both political will and material resources in its activities."

Reflecting on what he anticipates as the biggest challenges for the Polish Chairmanship, Mr. Geremek said that being ready to face unexpected crisis situations would be a priority. "Early warning and preventative mechanisms should be at the heart of our endeav-

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ours." "In the work of the Chairmanship," he added, "we will always ask ourselves whether human beings may benefit from our activities."

Mr. Geremek speaks with conviction on this point as he was personally involved in defending and promoting OSCE principles in the 1970s and 80s. A respected historian and professor, Mr. Geremek was a member of the Polish United Workers Party until 1968 when he resigned in a gesture of protest against the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia. In 1978 he founded the "free university" network which was established in an effort to provide uncensored education.

Mr. Geremek was active in the Strike Committee in Gdansk, both in its formative stages and later when it evolved into the independent trade union "Solidarity". With the imposition of martial law he was detained. On his release he was active in the underground Provisional Committee of Solidarity and was a close aid to Solidarity leader Lech Walesa. Between 1987 and 1990 he was a top advisor to the leadership of the re-legalized Solidarity movement and was actively involved in the round table talks of 1989 which led to the dissolution of the Polish communist state. Mr. Geremek, who was elected to the Sejm (lower chamber of the Polish Parliament) in 1989, has been foreign minister of Poland since November 1997.

Solidarity was a theme of Mr. Geremek's address to the Permanent Council. He said that "solidarity and - where possible - integration should be hallmarks of the new order to be established in Europe". "When I speak of solidarity", he added, "I mean the promotion of a sense of responsibility for common values and objectives, of the fact that the good of individuals and larger communities, including States, is of an integral nature". He said that "solidarity should thus serve as a common denominator for developing in the OSCE a common strategy for implementing all commitments, eliminating injustice and protecting the weak".

The need for such a common approach was also cited in reference to strengthening existing interactions between the OSCE and other international organizations dealing with European security.

Mr. Geremek touched on a number of crises and post-conflict situations which would be addressed by the Polish Chairmanship in 1998. He highlighted the importance of the work of the OSCE

Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina and announced his intention to appoint Ambassador Robert L. Barry of the United States as the new Head of Mission. He encouraged Ambassador Henry Jacolin of France, his Special Representative, to begin to help organize and subsequently conduct negotiations on the Article V regional arms control process mandated by the Dayton Agreement. He also emphasized "the need for full co-operation by the OSCE with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia" and commended SFOR actions in this regard.

With regard to Croatia, he said that "the Polish Chairmanship is fully aware of the challenges" which the Organization will face. Those challenges were made greater only a few hours after Mr. Geremek's address when UNTAES handed back responsibility for Eastern Slavonia to Croatia at an official ceremony in Vukovar. He expressed his satisfaction that the United Nations will continue police monitoring in the field, which, as he underlined, "should facilitate OSCE tasks".

Concerning the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), the new Chairman-in-Office said that "there is a large scope for the Government [of the FRY] to cooperate with the OSCE, in particular on remedies for the democratic shortcomings in this country, which were highlighted in the Gonzalez report of December 1996." He said that "the OSCE is ready to assist, but an open attitude on the part of the Belgrade authorities is expected."

On the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Mr. Geremek pointed out that "an OSCE contribution should not be missing from the active search for the establishment of possible alternatives to the United Nations Preventive

Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) after 31 August 1998, as recommended by the UN Security Council resolution 1142 (1997) of 4 December 1997".

On Moldova, he said that "the OSCE will continue to follow the issue of the withdrawal of Russian military forces, including military equipment and munitions, from Moldova in accordance with the commitments undertaken at the Lisbon Summit." He said that "it is time now to start a more concrete stage in this respect".

The positive response of Armenia and Azerbaijan to the latest proposals of the Co-chairmen of the Minsk Group was described as "a promising basis for the beginning of negotiations in the framework of the Minsk Group". He said that the preparations for the multinational peacekeeping operation should be approached "in an imaginative and responsible manner".

In addition to the current activities of the OSCE Mission to Georgia, the Chairman-in-Office said that the Polish Chairmanship "will be ready to support, in practical terms, the United Nations endeavours towards a lasting comprehensive settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia-Georgia".

He expressed his desire to see a more active role for the OSCE in Central Asia and offered comments on other areas where the OSCE has field activities including Chechnya (Russian Federation), Latvia, Estonia, and Ukraine.

Drawing conclusions from this tour d'horizon of the OSCE's field activities, he stressed the importance of the OSCE in sub-regional security. He said that the Organization should contribute to what he called a new "subregional dimension of international policy

aimed at grass-root level co-operation, integration and solidarity, and based on freedom and democracy."

The human dimension was stressed as a key component of a comprehensive concept of European security. In this respect he underlined the election monitoring and democratization programmes carried out by the ODIHR.

He also spoke of the work programme for developing an OSCE Document-Charter on European Security. On the Security Model in particular and the work of the OSCE in general, Foreign Minister Geremek concluded that "the potential strength of the OSCE is to be found not in efforts to substitute other organizations and institutions in their activities, but rather in complementing

them in order to make European security truly indivisible and comprehensive."

His summed up his main themes of co-operation, solidarity and the human element by using the words of Pope John Paul II from his message for the latest celebration of the World Day of Peace: "The challenge, in short, is to ensure a globalization in solidarity, a globalization without marginalization".

Troika Ministers Meet in Warsaw

The Ministers of the OSCE Troika, the Foreign Ministers of Norway and Poland and the Permanent Secretary of State of Denmark, as well as the OSCE Secretary General, met in Warsaw on 21 January. They, together with other OSCE officials, discussed the follow-up to the OSCE's December 1997 Ministerial Council Meeting in Copenhagen, OSCE field activities in Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, the situation in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Chechnya and other regional issues.

The Ministers welcomed the news that the Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus has begun its work, which in their opinion "is vitally important for the promotion of democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights in that country."

In a statement issued after the meeting, they emphasized that the OSCE will give democratization high priority in Bosnia and Herzegovina. They said that "the Organization will strengthen its programmes of confidence-building initiatives furthering dialogue and reconciliation between ethnic and social groups, the development of civil society through the

media, political parties and development of non-governmental organizations, and the building of democratic institutions."

They expressed strong support for the enhanced role of the OSCE in Croatia, especially after the expiry of the mandate of the United Nations Transitional Administration, and stressed the importance of full implementation of all obligations entered into by the Croatian authorities.

The Ministers said that they "remain concerned" about the situation in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. They said that "the remedies for the democratic shortcomings in that country, clearly set out by Mr. Felipe Gonzalez in his Report, are not being sufficiently pursued by the Government."

The Ministers took positive note of the recent transition of power in Montenegro which had resulted from elections that the OSCE observers deemed acceptable. They also expressed their support for the work of a team from the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights which is providing assistance on the revision of

the election and media laws in preparation for the upcoming parliamentary elections in Montenegro.

Serious concern was expressed over the rising tensions in Kosovo. The Ministers urged the parties to show moderation and seek dialogue.

On Albania, Ministers expressed concern over lack of participation of the Democratic Party (DP) in parliamentary work. They called on the DP to end their boycott and to participate in drafting a new constitution. They drew attention to the visit to Tirana of parliamentarians from the Parliamentary Assemblies of the OSCE and Council of Europe as well as the European Parliament. The purpose of the visit, which took place on 22 January, was to put the drafting process back on track by convincing all parties to participate constructively in the work of the Parliamentary Commission.

In their joint statement the Ministers expressed their concern with the aggravation of the situation in Chechnya and called for maximum restraint and appealed for the release of all hostages.

Handover in Croatia Raises OSCE Profile

With the expiry of the mandate of the United Nations Transitional Administration in Eastern Slavonia (UNTAES) on 15 January the Croatian Government assumed full responsibility for the Danube region. With the withdrawal of UNTAES, the OSCE is now the leading international organization in Croatia. Together with the Croatian authorities at all levels of government, it is playing an important role in reconciliation, the two way return of refugees and the protection of human rights and the rights of persons belonging to national minorities. Its mandate expires on 31 December 1998.

The Mission staff currently numbers 130 internationals and is expected to increase to 190 in the next two to four months (with an ultimate ceiling of 250). The core staff, at the headquarters in Zagreb, includes operations staff, political and economic advisers, human rights and legal advisers, return and reintegration advisers, and public affairs advisers.

All four co-ordination centres and eighteen field offices (see map) are now operational, although some are not yet at full strength.

With operational preparations falling into place, the Mission is increasingly able to concentrate on its mandate in a wide range of activities; from political interventions at the highest level to looking at particular individual cases.

A key element lies in making sure that commitments undertaken by the

Croatian Government are implemented at the local level. The Mission is advising on the full implementation of legislation and monitoring the proper functioning and development of democratic processes and institutions. It monitors, in particular, the work of Government agencies designed to foster the process of reconciliation and reintegration, for example the National Commission for the Establishment of Trust. It encourages community-level



Ambassador Tim Guldemann, Head of the OSCE Mission to Croatia

Photo: Melissa Flemming

projects aimed at integration (involving, for example, the co-operation of the churches and special interest groups) and looks at events on the ground in areas where the two-way return of refugees is taking place.

The latter is particularly important, as property disputes often trigger violence. The incidents often comprise threats against residents and illegal evictions, usually against Serbs living in Croat-owned houses. According to a statement issued by the Mission on 28 January, "the Serb population in most places is frightened and needs reassurance from the authorities and from its own representatives." It stated that "the incidents show that procedures for settling property disputes are not yet working well".

The Mission is working to assist in making the process run more smoothly. Recently the OSCE became a full member of the Joint Working Group on Return. This Group, which was set up on 23 April 1997 to co-ordinate various aspects of the return process, also includes representatives of the Ministry of Development and Reconstruction, the Government Office for Displaced Persons and Refugees and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. One of its tasks is to provide a mechanism for handling applications for return and reconstruction of homes.

In a briefing to the Permanent Council on 15 January, Head of Mission, Ambassador Tim Guldemann stressed the importance of full compliance by the Croatian Government with its international obligations. He also stressed the need for the support of the international community, particularly in connection with economic assistance and the problem of de-mining.

Ambassador Guldemann also underlined the need for practical co-operation on the ground with the Council of Europe, a point which he had raised during his visit to the Council's headquarters in Strasbourg on 13 and 14 January.

Co-operation with the Croatian Government is obviously vital. Ambassador Guldemann has often stressed that "the

success of this mission can play a significant role in Croatia joining the process of European integration."

This point was also raised by the Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Croatia, H.E. Vladimir Drobnjak, in a statement to the Permanent Council on 29 January. He emphasized that "the Mission has

always enjoyed and will continue to enjoy the full co-operation of the Croatian authorities at all levels." He noted that with "the full restoration of Croatia's sovereignty over the whole of its territory...Croatia will now no longer focus on the reintegration of its territory but rather on its full integration in the European family of nations."



Military Leaders Discuss Defence Policies and Military Doctrines

Some 350 representatives from the Armed Forces of 54 OSCE States gathered in the Hofburg Congress Centre in Vienna from 26 to 28 January for the third OSCE seminar on Defence Policies and Military Doctrines. Heads of Delegations included over 30 Chiefs of Staff. Representatives from NATO, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Western European Union were also present. The purpose of the seminar was to exchange views on military issues related to European security and thereby to promote openness and build trust among the military in OSCE countries.

The topics for the seminar included "Evolution of the European Security Environment and its Influence on Defence Policies and Military Doctrines", "Defence Policies, Military Doctrines: International Aspects", and "Reform or Restructuring of the Armed

Forces". The discussion sessions prompted a lively debate on adapting European military thinking to new post-Cold War opportunities and challenges.

Many keynote speakers acknowledged the existence of new risks and challenges to European security. Internal reform of the military and acceptance of responsibility for collective and co operative security were considered important elements in adapting to these risks and challenges. There was general agreement that common security interests needed to be further defined, since regional and intra-state conflicts are increasingly of concern to all the OSCE States.

Participants acknowledged that Europe-wide military co-operation had been successfully developing. One delegation termed it "an era of partnership." The multinational peacekeeping mission in

Bosnia and Herzegovina was cited as an example, as was the establishment of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council in NATO, the Founding Act between NATO and Russia, the Charter between NATO and Ukraine and the Partnership for Peace program. Participants considered it essential to continue to enhance the linkage between security organizations such as the UN, NATO, the OSCE, and the EU/WEU, which play a decisive role in shaping Europe's security.

Participants viewed the seminar as a useful contribution to national efforts to adapt their military establishment and to give impetus to multilateral negotiations within the framework of the OSCE. The idea was put forward that such seminars should be held on a regular basis under OSCE auspices, possibly every three to four years.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR



Welcome to another year of the OSCE Newsletter. In 1997 we added pictures and improved the quality of the paper. The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) discontinued its

Bulletin and put more emphasis on its contributions to the Newsletter. We increased the amount of information on OSCE field activities and in fact had many interesting and stirring events to report on; Albania, Bosnia, Croatia and elections in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, to name but a few.

More changes are in store for 1998. As you can see we have introduced a new layout. Furthermore, beginning this month, the Newsletter will be available in all six official working languages of the OSCE; English, French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish. If you currently receive the

Newsletter in English and would prefer to get it in a different language, please let us know.

The format of the Newsletter on the website (<http://www.osce.org>) will also be significantly improved, with a new layout and the inclusion of colour pictures. Those of you who have access to the Internet and would like to receive the Newsletter by listserver automatically every month should contact the Prague office at webmaster@osceprag.cz.

There are now more than 6,000 people who read the OSCE Newsletter every month. We appreciate your letters and comments and are always open to suggestions as to how we can provide you with even more news about the OSCE.

High Level Tripartite Meeting Discusses Enhanced Co-operation

High level representatives of the OSCE, the Council of Europe and the Geneva-based United Nations organizations met in Geneva on 23 January for an informal Tripartite Meeting.

This meeting, chaired by the OSCE, was the seventh in a series of meetings initiated in July 1993. Tripartite Meetings are designed to share information and improve practical co-operation among the participating organizations. The objective is to draw on each other's expertise, to increase efficiency and to achieve a synergy of efforts.

Participants in the meeting exchanged information on recent high-level political meetings, including the OSCE Ministerial Meeting in Copenhagen, the Council of Europe Summit and the 52nd session of the UN General Assembly.

They were introduced to the recently appointed OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Mr. Freimut

Duve, and considered the prospects for enhanced co-operation in the field. They were also informed of the establishment of another new post within the Secretariat, that of Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, and noted this appointment as an opportunity to further contacts and co-operation in relation to economic and environmental issues.

Co-operation in other areas, such as refugee questions and humanitarian issues, was also highlighted. It was suggested that in these and other issue areas the tripartite format could be used for more extensive consultations when preparing operations. Concern was also expressed about the safety of humanitarian workers in the field.

Special focus was put on regional issues. Activities in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Belarus, the Caucasus and Central Asia were reviewed. The importance of co-opera-

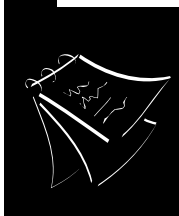
tion at both the headquarters and field level was stressed.

Forthcoming target oriented meetings, including topics, dates, participants and venues, were discussed. It was agreed that the next meeting, to be chaired by the Council of Europe, will focus on Albania. In addition to the usual tripartite participants, the European Commission will be invited to participate.

Developments in electronic information exchange were also reviewed. It was agreed that an operations database would be set up to better co-ordinate activities and exchange information. A pilot project on activities in the Caucasus is to be introduced and tested in order to determine whether the idea of a shared site brings added value to co-ordination of activities among the participants.

The next High Level Tripartite Meeting will be hosted by the Council of Europe at a time to be determined later.

IN BRIEF



OSCE Secretary General Giancarlo Aragona visited **Japan** between 12 and 14 January. During his visit he met with high officials of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the National Defence Agency. He spoke at the Japan Institute of International Affairs and participated in an international

conference on conflict prevention.

On 27 January the Secretary General addressed the **NATO School (SHAPE)** at Oberammergau, Germany on the subject of "the OSCE-NATO relationship in Peace-Support Operations". On the 28th he paid a visit to Oslo for consul-

tations with the Foreign Minister and officials who will be involved in **Norway's Chairmanship of the OSCE** in 1999. He also had a discussion with members of Norway's delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

On 29 January the **budget for OSCE tasks in Bosnia and Herzegovina** for the financial year 1998 in the total amount of ATS 322,774,048 was approved. The unified budget for 1998 is therefore ATS 944,143,024 which is a 44 per cent increase over 1997.

Mr. Thomas Price (USA) has been appointed as **Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities**.

News From the Field

OSCE Presence Works to Break Political Deadlock in Albania

The OSCE Presence in Albania reports that, in January, there was an intensive international effort aimed at ending the confrontational tactics and parliamentary boycott by the opposition that has adversely affected the political climate and greatly impeded the legislative process, particularly the work on a new constitution, which is seen as a basic condition for the rule of law and restored confidence in the country.

One major impetus to the process came on 22 and 23 January when the Presence co-ordinated an unprecedented joint mission of the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assemblies of the Council of Europe and the OSCE. For more information on this visit, see the Parliamentary Assembly section on page 12.

The Presence continues its co-ordinating role. On 12 January it hosted a meeting on international assistance efforts in the judicial and legal fields. It is also preparing for a conference on media development and democracy in Albania, to be held in March.

It is closely monitoring the economic and security situation in the country. Both remain fragile although, according to the World Bank, there are signs of an economic recovery.

It is reported that a general feeling of insecurity persists outside Tirana, where criminal elements are active. The OSCE field office in Shkodra was particularly active in January owing to the deteriorating security situation in that city.

OSCE Prepares to Open Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus

Ambassador Hans Georg Wieck of Germany has been appointed as the Head of the Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus. His team is currently being assembled and premises are being prepared in Minsk for the Group to begin its work in early February.

The four main priorities of the Group will be to provide expert assistance in the preparation of legislation, to monitor and advise on the implementation and functioning of relevant legislation, to assist in organizing human rights education for officials and non-officials and to provide consultative assistance in the establishment and organization of democratic institutions, such as an Ombudsman's Office.

Peacebuilding and Installation of Candidates Continue in Bosnia

Implementation of municipal election results continues to be a high priority for the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina. The process is accelerating, although the installation of elected officials is proving difficult in some municipalities. For example, on 16 January the car carrying Deputy Head of Mission, Ambassador Ellerkmann and three coalition members of the Srebrenica municipal assembly was stoned as it entered the city.

The installation of candidates in difficult areas could be strengthened by the provision in the Bonn Document (9 December) which says that the OSCE and the High Representative now have authority to resolve outstanding cases by binding arbitration.

Closely related to the implementation process is the Governance Program. Under the Program, a series of one-day seminars on local democratic governance and policy issues has been held throughout the country, providing invaluable opportunities for dialogue and discussion for new councillors.

The Mission is also continuing its information campaign on human rights and democratic values. The theme of the campaign, "Tolerance and Non-Discrimination", is being disseminated through a multi-media strategy involving television and radio spots, pamphlets, posters and badges. The Human Rights section is monitoring judicial proceedings and continues to support the work of indigenous human rights institutions. Conciliation and integration are the focus of the Mission's work in projects concerning young people, religious groups and special interest groups.

The Media Development Office continues its press distribution programme which provides copies of newspapers and magazines across Entity boundaries to journalists and opinion leaders throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, to facilitate cross-Entity communication.

Freedom of movement continues to be a matter of concern. The Mission reports an improvement in movement across the Inter-Entity Boundary Line, facilitated in part by the operation of an OSCE bus line from Banja Luka to Sarajevo.

During January, the Mission monitored events leading up to and following the election of Milorad Dodik as Prime Minister of the Republika Srpska (RS) and the imminent move of the RS

government from Pale to Banja Luka. Meanwhile preparations for the September 1998 elections are already underway.

In January, Ambassador Robert Barry of the United States took up his post as the new Head of Mission.

Disagreement in JCC Threatens Peace Process in Moldova

A procedural dispute in the Joint Control Commission (JCC) threatens to disrupt the peace process concerning the status of the eastern part of Moldova. The JCC, made up of representatives of Moldova, the eastern part of Moldova or "Transdnistria", Ukraine and the Russian Federation, was established in 1994 as a forum for discussing the situation in the security zone centred on the Dniestr river as well as for monitoring the tripartite peacekeeping force (consisting of representatives of the Russian Federation, Moldova and the eastern part of Moldova) operating in that area.

During the past few weeks, the normal work of peace-keeping and security forces in the security zone has been obstructed by serious procedural wrangling in the JCC over whether new members of delegations require "confirmation" before they can take their seats. The difficulties, stemming from the participation of representatives from the eastern part of Moldova, come at the same time as public statements from Transdnistrian authorities in Tiraspol calling for recognition of the self proclaimed "Transdnistrian Moldovan Republic".

The Mission is playing an important role in the settlement of this procedural dispute by convening a meeting with the parties to the conflict and the two mediators (Ukraine and the Russian Federation).

Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje Monitors Bilateral and Internal Relations

The OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje continues to monitor developments in and around the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). The visit in mid-January of the Albanian Prime Minister, Fatos Nano, confirmed the positive tone surrounding recent developments in bilateral relations between FYROM and Albania. Concerning relations with another neighbour, Bulgaria, Foreign Minister Blagoj Handziski has publicly aired ideas for resolving the language dispute with Bulgaria, coinciding with reported comments from senior Bulgarian politicians of a willingness to try to find a solution to the issue. Developments in Serbia, particularly in Kosovo, are being watched with close attention.

Inter-ethnic relations within the country are also a focus of the Mission's work. The Mission reports that the Appeal Court has overturned the verdicts and sentences on the Mayor of Tetovo and the president of the Council passed last November, and returned the cases to the municipal court for retrial. Separately, it has been announced that the Appeal Court will begin a public hearing in early February on the appeal of the mayor of Gostivar against his conviction and sentence of 13 years 8 months on charges arising from the disturbances in July 1997.

Mission Monitors Relations between Tajik Government and United Tajik Opposition

The OSCE Mission to Tajikistan has been closely monitoring relations between the Tajik Government and the United Tajik Opposition (UTO), particularly in

connection with the work of the Commission for National Reconciliation (CNR).

On 14 January the Chairman of the CNR, Mr. Said Abdullo Nuri, issued a statement saying that the UTO was dissatisfied with the progress made by the Commission and that it would suspend its work in the CNR until the Government co-operated on a series of issues.

On 20 January the Contact Group of Guarantor States and Organizations met to discuss the deadlock. A statement from the United Nations Secretary General, which was echoed by official statements from the governments of Iran, Pakistan and Russia, urged both sides to "discuss their differences in an open and constructive manner with a view to overcoming the stalemate and moving forward with the peace process."

On 24 January Mr. Nuri called on Contact Group members, including the OSCE, to attend a meeting of the CNR.

The process is therefore back on track, but there are still some contentious issues in the implementation of the General Agreement. To overcome these, Chairman Nuri has asked the Contact Group members to facilitate CNR work in a more active way and to assist in the preparation of a new timetable for implementation of General Agreement provisions.

In addition to contributing to this process of political settlement, the Mission has been active in advising on the demobilization process and refugee repatriation.

REPORT from the High Commissioner on National Minorities

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

High Commissioner Visits UN High Commissioners in Geneva

On 15 January the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Mr. Max van der Stoep, visited Geneva and had meetings with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Ms Sadako Ogata. Both Commissioners expressed their satisfaction with regard to the cooperation between the two offices and discussed ways to further enhance this cooperation. They also agreed to give early consideration to several specific projects in addition to the joint initiative on mobilizing international assistance to the deported peoples of Crimea.

While in Geneva, the High Commissioner also met with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mrs Mary Robinson, and discussed with her matters of mutual interest.

Russia

From 25 to 27 January the High Commissioner paid a visit to Moscow where he had a number of meetings with senior Government officials and specialists on ethnic and minority issues. He met with Vice Prime Minister Valeriy Serov, First Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, and the Secretary of the Security Council Ivan Rybkin. Other meetings

were held with the Minister for Nationalities and Federative Relations Vyacheslav Mikhailov, the Minister for Cooperation with Member States of the CIS, Anatoliy Adamishin, and President Yeltsin's adviser on International Affairs, Sergei Prikhodko.

The visit provided the High Commissioner with an opportunity to familiarize himself further with the views and policies of the Russian Federation regarding countries which have Russian minorities. Among the matters discussed were some current concerns expressed by Russian officials on issues related to the treatment of minorities.

UPDATE from the ODIHR

The OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is located at Krucza 36/Wspólna 6 (3rd floor), 00-522 Warsaw 53, Poland, tel.: (+48-22) 625 70 40, fax: (+48-22) 625 43 57

Technical Assistance Team Gives Advice to Lawmakers in Montenegro

Following a request from the President of the Parliament of Montenegro, the ODIHR provided the services of a Technical Assistance Team to the Montenegrin authorities to assist them in drafting new election legislation. The Technical Assistance Team was present in Podgorica between 12 January and 5 February. Advice was provided to the lawmakers by a group of three election experts as well as a media law expert in order to ensure that the new laws will be

in accordance with OSCE Commitments. The Team held consultations separately with representatives of each party and on 2 February presented its comments and recommendations to the multi-party working groups which are drafting the new laws.

The ODIHR Prepares for Parliamentary Elections in Ukraine . . .

The ODIHR organized a Needs Assessment Mission which visited Ukraine from 19 to 23 January and benefitted from the assistance of the OSCE Mission to Ukraine. The Needs Assessment Mission

was carried out for the purpose of planning the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission in connection with the forthcoming parliamentary elections in Ukraine, which are currently scheduled for 29 March.

In light of the ODIHR Report on the 1994 elections, and notably in view of the fact that Ukraine is adjusting to a new mixed election system (involving both proportional and majority representation), the ODIHR is giving the forthcoming parliamentary elections close attention. It is in the process of establishing

an Election Observation Mission and hopes to have 15 long-term observers in Kyiv by early February.

... and in Moldova

The ODIHR carried out a Needs Assessment Mission in Moldova from 21 to 24 January to assess the need for an OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission in Moldova prior to the parliamentary elections scheduled for 22 March. The Needs Assessment Mission met with the relevant Moldovan authorities as well as representatives of political parties, non governmental organizations and the mass media. The ODIHR was briefed by, and received assistance from, the OSCE Mission to Moldova. Following the Needs Assessment Mission a core staff of five or six people are to establish the Election Observation Mission in early February. These will be followed by 10 long-term observers in due time before the elections, and a sufficient number of short-term observers closer to election day.

The ODIHR Gives Technical Assistance in Armenia

The ODIHR was asked by the Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Armenia to provide an expert review on two draft electoral codes, which had been elaborated by the Standing Committee for Legal Affairs and a group of deputies. With the assistance of its experts (who based their analysis of the texts on the Recommendations contained in the OSCE/ODIHR Final Report of the 1996 Election Observation Mission), the ODIHR presented an analytical review on the codes at the end of January. This expert opinion will be used as a contribution to the forthcoming debate in the Armenian National Assembly which will preparing the adoption of the final version of the Election Code.

Rule of Law Projects in Central Asia

The University of Paris I, Sorbonne, and the Constitutional Council of France hosted the Chairman of the Constitutional Court of Uzbekistan and other judicial officials between 19 and 23 January. This five-day apprenticeship marked the initiation of the Constitutional Court Training Program being implemented by the ODIHR under a Memorandum of Understanding signed last year with the government of Uzbekistan. Also joining the program was the Chairperson of the Constitutional Court of Kyrgyzstan who is currently developing a long-term project with the ODIHR.

This project follows the implementation of two NGO-government exchanges and co-operation meetings in October and December 1997, as well as technical preparations for all other projects.

The ODIHR Offers Technical Assistance to Albania

A joint delegation of international experts and ODIHR Staff, lead by ODIHR Director Ambassador Gerard Stoudmann, travelled to Albania between 12 and 14 January. Senior specialists from the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (Switzerland), HM Prison Service (UK), George Washington University (US) and the International Foundation for Election Systems (US), met with government officials to evaluate the pace of ODIHR programs and finalise project designs.

The ODIHR is currently implementing projects to establish a national human rights institution, to reform the legal education system, to strengthen an NGO Network and to train correctional officers.

Election Assistance Strategy Meeting

Recalling the OSCE documents, including the 1996 Lisbon Document, on the importance of Central Asia States, and having in mind the election cycle in Central Asia within the period between 1998 and 2002, the ODIHR Election Section is planning to hold a Central Asia Election Assistance Strategy Meeting on 10 February in Warsaw.

The main objective of the meeting will be to share information and present the activities of those organizations involved with offering assistance to the various aspects of the election process in Central Asia.

Representatives from various organizations such as UN Electoral Assistance Division, UNDP, the European Commission, International IDEA, Electoral Reform International Services, IFES, IRI, and the American Bar Association are scheduled to attend. Representatives of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the OSCE Liaison Office in Central Asia, the OSCE Mission to Tajikistan as well as some of the ODIHR experts will also be present.

REPORT from the Parliamentary Assembly

The Secretariat of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly is located at Rådhusstræde 1, DK-1455 Copenhagen K, Denmark, tel.: (+45-33) 32 94 00, fax: (+45-33) 32 55 05

Tri-Parliamentary Mission Visits Albania

A delegation of three parliamentary institutions - the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the European Parliament - visited Albania on 22 and 23 January. The purpose of the visit was to help in drafting the country's new constitution. The delegation of seven senior parliamentarians included Mr. Frank Swaelen (Belgium), President Emeritus of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and President of the Belgian Senate, and also Senator Tana de Zulueta (Italy), Rapporteur of the Assembly's Second General Committee.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly had suggested this mission - initiated by the OSCE Presence in Albania and encouraged by the Chairman-in-Office - to the other two parliamentary institutions. This marked the first time the three parliamentary institutions have joined forces in such a mission.

It has been agreed by all political parties in Albania that the country urgently needs a new constitution. It is important as a basis for other urgently needed legislation and also as a means of sustaining international support for Albania.

The Albanian parliament had earlier established a Constitutional Commission to prepare a draft. The Government hopes that it will be possible for the new constitution to come into force in 1998, once it has been approved in a referendum.

However, the process has been stalled because the largest opposition party, the Democratic Party, which is not participating in the work of the present parliament, decided to boycott the work of the Commission. The Democratic Party has suggested other procedures for drafting the constitution, which are unacceptable to an overwhelming majority of the recently elected parliament.

There appears to be a broad consensus on the substance of the new constitution. The parties also agree that the final decision must be taken by the Albanian people in a referendum. Such disagreements as there are appear to be mainly on procedure rather than substance.

The three parliamentary institutions felt that since they had declared the June 1997 parliamentary elections "acceptable", the legitimacy of the current parliament cannot be questioned. After having listened to a wide range of political leaders, including the President, the Prime Minister, the Speaker of Parliament and the Leader of the Democratic Party, the delegation issued a strong appeal to all political parties to participate constructively in the process. They also asked the Democratic Party to join in the work of the Parliament and the Constitutional Commission.

The delegation of the three parliamentary institutions also offered their contribution to the process by suggesting the establishment of an international advisory group, representing European parliamentary institutions. This group would

support the work of the Constitutional Commission together with several other consultative groups. The delegation also suggested that the European parliamentary institutions monitor the proceedings of the Parliament in order to guarantee proper parliamentary procedures.

All Albanian political parties, both in government and in opposition, have welcomed the delegation's recommendations and are giving them serious consideration.

The Standing Committee of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly will discuss the report on the tri parliamentary mission at its meeting on 19 and 20 February in Vienna and will decide on appropriate the follow-up to the delegation's recommendations.



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