

OSCE

NEWSLETTER

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

HOPI MEDIA



During her visit last month to Chechnya, the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Mrs. Ferrero-Waldner, talked to displaced persons living in railway carriages.

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OSCE set to return to Chechnya

Chairperson-in-Office “appalled” by scale of suffering and devastation

Agreement on the planned return of the OSCE to the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation, after a 16-month interval, was one of the main results of a visit by the Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE, Austria’s Foreign Minister, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, to Moscow and the northern Caucasus from 13 to 15 April. The purpose of her visit was to conduct a thorough *tour d’horizon* on OSCE issues with the Russian Government, as well as to discuss the return of the OSCE Assistance Group to Chechnya.

In Moscow, she met the then Russian

President-elect, Vladimir Putin, and the Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov. Several OSCE-related issues were raised during the discussions. Both President Putin and Foreign Minister Ivanov emphasized that the OSCE should treat crisis situations in the whole OSCE area in a balanced way. In all her talks, the CiO’s main message was that the conflict in Chechnya could not be solved by military means and that a political solution was necessary.

On Chechnya, the Russian side agreed to co-operate on the planned return of the OSCE Assistance Group, which was temporarily withdrawn to Moscow in

December 1998 because of the security situation in the war-torn Republic.

The CiO confirmed that, in keeping with the OSCE Istanbul Summit Declaration, the OSCE would work within the framework of its 1995 mandate. She stressed that the OSCE Assistance Group stood for credible and balanced human rights activities and would work to this effect with the Special Representative of the Russian President for Human Rights in Chechnya, Vladimir Kalamonov. The OSCE remained ready to facilitate a political solution with the aim of stabilizing the republic.

During a one-day trip to Chechnya on 14 April, the Chairperson-in-Office visited several areas, including the capital, Grozny. Under heavy security protection, her delegation was taken on a brief bus drive through the centre of the city, which presented a picture of complete devastation, with not a single building undamaged by warfare. Sporadic gunfire could also be heard in the distance. "I cannot comprehend how such a big city with so many people can be so completely destroyed," Mrs. Ferrero-Waldner said.

She said she was appalled by the enormous destruction and human suffering she witnessed. At one stop, the del-

egation witnessed the rebuilding of the railway station and talked to displaced persons who were living in railway carriages. To the Russian hosts, she expressed her feeling of dismay that such events could take place at the end of the 20th century. She also visited a camp for internally displaced persons in Znamenskoye, as well as hospitals in Gudermes and Argun. As a token of practical assistance to the population, she delivered humanitarian aid to hospitals and schools.

On returning to Moscow, the Chairperson-in-Office announced that the OSCE intended to re-open its office in Chechnya as soon as possible. After a thor-

ough analysis of all implications, the target date for the return of the OSCE Assistance Group to Chechnya was set for May. The office is to be located in Znamenskoye, in the north of the Republic.

Currently, the OSCE is negotiating an exchange of letters, stipulating the necessary security and other technical conditions for the return and operations of the Group. In addition, the CiO visited the Republics of North Ossetia and Ingushetia, where she had talks with their Presidents about the regional repercussions of the Chechnya crisis. These discussions focused on the need for a political and lasting solution to the conflict.

Civil registration process gets underway in Kosovo

'Remote villages of the province reached by mobile units'

By Claire Trevena

Teuta sat down on a straight-backed school chair. She glanced at the mirror positioned on the desk opposite, checked her hair, and adopted a formal, polite grimace. Behind her, a table had been strapped onto another school chair to provide the backdrop for the photograph for her new identity card. It just took a couple of seconds. She stood up and put her finger onto a fingerprint scanner. The woman working at the laptop computer glanced up and nodded that it was okay, her fingerprint had been recorded.

Similar scenes are playing themselves out across Kosovo as the project to establish a civil registry for the province gathers steam. In village schools, community centres, former police stations and banks, joint OSCE and United Nations registration teams are processing the personal details, the photographs and the fingerprints of thousands of people.

The process marks the start of the cre-

ation what is hoped will be a comprehensive civil register, found all over the world: a record of when people are born, get married or die. Fundamentally it will establish who has a right to call themselves a Kosovar. The register will also be used as the basis for an electoral roll.

The first phase is a mammoth task with a strict timeline. There are just three months in which to try to register everyone who is older than 16. This part of the project must be completed by the summer, to be ready for planned municipal elections in Kosovo in the autumn.

Pressure is inevitably high. Every glitch and problem that causes a delay – whether a computer failure or a lack of furnishing – eats into that limited timeframe. Registration started in the middle of April at just four pilot sites. At an increasing pace, more sites opened over the following weeks and eventually 200 teams will be in operation. The Joint Registration Task Force, which com-

bines staff from the OSCE and United Nations Civil Administration, wanted to work through the teething problems. And there were some: particularly the question of power supply in Kosovo's unpredictable energy regime and the capability of the software being used for the fingerprinting. Both are being resolved. There have also been problems and delays in refurbishing the permanent locations that are being used as registration sites.

"We are still in the ballpark," said Jeff Fischer, head of the Joint Registration Task Force. "But if we do need to make up for lost time we may have to look at extending the opening hours of registration centres or operating them on Sunday."

Registration will take place in 400 locations across Kosovo. Some of these will be fixed sites but there will also be many mobile units, travelling to remote villages.



The OSCE and the United Nations are training over 400 volunteers to carry out the civil registration process in Kosovo, using computer-stored photographs and fingerprints on the new identity cards.

Registration outside Kosovo is being handled by the International Organization for Migration; in Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania people are being asked to register in person while in 32 other countries applicants can mail in their forms.

In parts of Kosovo, there is still some confusion about how and where to register. At one school, the blue and white Registration Centre sign had been strung on a wall at the far end of the dusty playground. A makeshift arrow, pointing both left and right, had been drawn on the sign's base. At one of the two entrances to the building, a man was there to greet people and point them to the correct room.

"People are not informed that there is a registration centre here," said Nizar, working in another location, "but if they

do come, they do have their documents."

Those documents can range from passports to electricity bills; even Boy Scouts of Yugoslavia membership cards, fishing licences, hunting club memberships, drivers licences and primary school records are among the almost 40 forms of identification which can be used to prove identity, civil eligibility and voter eligibility. Indications are that far fewer people than was originally anticipated possess absolutely no documents at all. Much work went into compiling a database from records which were available to confirm a person's identity.

But the process as a whole has evinced deep scepticism, voiced by all the communities. Many Albanians are concerned that registration will mean the return of Serbian police and soldiers. The Serbs

fear that it will allow thousands of Albanians from neighbouring countries to claim that they are Kosovars.

Guidelines have been laid down to ensure that the register does include only Kosovars. These criteria mean that only those who were born in Kosovo, or whose parents were born in Kosovo, can be registered. If a person was not born in the area s/he must have lived in Kosovo continuously for five years. But people who can prove that they were forced to leave Kosovo – and so could not live in the province for that continuous five-year period – may also register.

For the forthcoming elections, there is a strict residency requirement in addition to the other criteria: people must have been living in Kosovo up to 1 January 1998 or be living there now.

There is a great awareness of the possibility of fraud and stringent measures are being used to prevent it. Documents are being examined closely, fingerprint experts are being employed, a team of people is constantly on a circuit of the sites to ensure that nothing slips through.

For those who are denied registration – whether for lack of documents or for alleged fraud – there is an appeals process, which also fits within the pre-election timetable.

And supervisors at each registration centre have their own way of tackling the issue. Yoga Rajakaruna is one of more than 300 United Nations Volunteers working on registration. He trained his Kosovar staff in all aspects of the process but also looked at each staff member's own skills and background.

“I have a person who worked in the passport office checking documents. And the inquiry officer, who assists if an applicant has no papers, is someone who is a little older, so knows the community,” says Rajakaruna, who has done similar work in Haiti and East Timor.

But there is one concern which no amount of paper work or paper chasing can deal with: whether there will be a general boycott by the Serbs of Kosovo. For some Serb factions there can be no registration without the return of those made refugees over the last year, nor without greater guarantees of security.

Others want no part in registration at all, seeing it as further entrenching the rule of the international community and thus making Kosovo's reintegration into the Federal Republic of Yugo-

slavia more distant and more difficult.

In response to this concern, the Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, Ambassador Daan Everts, commented: “Registration is good for Serbs; it is good for everyone who belongs here.”

There is a constant drive to overcome these fears and concerns and to encourage Kosovo Serbs to participate. The message is that it is essential to register to be able to play a part in the community; that only through registration will people have the right to vote. This is being conveyed by all levels of the OSCE and is being repeated at individual meetings, town halls, social events and political party meetings.

Claire Trevena is Senior Press Officer in the OSCE Mission in Kosovo

Citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina vote for greater political pluralism

By Alex Nitzsche

For the second time since the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords in 1995, almost two and a half million eligible voters in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) have had the opportunity to elect their representatives for 145 municipalities in the country, when polls were held on 8 April.

“These election presented an important chance for the BiH citizens to influence political life in their communities,” said Ambassador Robert Barry, Head of the OSCE Mission to BiH.

“The election results” he added, “point to continued erosion of support for the nationalist parties and growing concern about bread-and-butter issues such as education and employment. While the nationalist parties in both Serb- and Croat-dominated areas continue to



A voter in Sarajevo exercising her democratic choice at the ballot box.

attract the support of a significant proportion of the electorate, the growing strength of the Social Democratic Party in particular indicates that the tide is beginning to turn.”

The OSCE Mission noted with satisfaction that the elections unfolded in a largely peaceful environment, and without major efforts at fraud and voter manipulation. The most obvious trend noted is that the BiH citizens clearly voted for more political pluralism in the country.

In total, 68 political parties, seven coalitions and 18 independent candidates had registered for these municipal elections. On Election Day, 750 international supervisors representing the OSCE’s participating States and 300 international observers were deployed to monitor the polls in the country’s 3,500 polling stations. They were joined by more than 5,500 domestic observers, which showed the unprecedented engagement of civil society actors in the electoral process.

The OSCE Mission to BiH engaged in an extensive information campaign on the municipal elections, giving the public every opportunity to follow each step of the electoral process, from the beginning of the voter registration process to the announcement of the final certified results. Only 48 hours after the closure of the polls, the Mission was publicizing the first preliminary election results, municipality by municipality.

While the turnout – with an average of 66 per cent – was lower than in previous years, the choice of the voters made clear that the trend in BiH goes towards more pluralism in the political scene. Most notably, this was displayed by the considerable gains of the Social Democratic Party among Bosniac voters and the very low turnout among Bosnian Croat voters – overall only 45 per cent in the Herzegovina region. In the Republika Srpska, the nationalist Serb Democratic Party performed well in a number

of municipalities, but will have to seek coalition partners at municipal level.

Also in the rest of the country, many of the winning parties will have to adjust to the election results, and OSCE Mission to BiH expects considerable political manoeuvring in both the Federation and the Republika Srpska in the coming months, leaving much room for compromise and moderation.

Another positive trend was displayed by the overwhelmingly good reception given to the open list system, introduced in this year’s elections. The system allowed voters to directly elect candidates on political party lists, rather than voting only for parties or coalitions. The results showed voters not only understood this new system very well, but also made extensive use of it. Nearly 30 per cent of the municipal councillors elected were placed ahead of the party choices by the voters selecting them by name.

This choice included a total of 18 per cent women candidates, meaning that three times more women were elected than in 1997. This latter result was one of the most important litmus tests to show that BiH voters favoured electing more women to official positions. The promotion of women in politics has been one of the OSCE’s key priorities in preparing this year’s municipal elections.

Most political parties and the overall majority of media outlets in the country made considerable efforts to comply with the electoral rules of OSCE’s Provisional Election Commission, the regulatory body for the electoral process in BiH. The Election Appeals Sub-Commission, the judicial body deciding on complaints of violations of the electoral



The OSCE BiH Mission designed a poster campaign to encourage a high voter turn-out.

regulations, received a total of 201 election-related complaints. The body noted that: “While this is still a relatively large number, the number of serious complaints has decreased reflecting a greater understanding of the democratic election process and adherence to its principles.”

The OSCE Mission to BiH also recorded that fewer than 10 per cent of media outlets received complaints for their handling of political campaigns, which clearly indicates a much improved level of professional conduct by the media in BiH, both in the run-up to, and on Election Day.

What now lies ahead is the implementation of the election results, a process which is also administered and monitored by the OSCE Mission to BiH. This process started immediately after the announcement of the final certified results. More than 3,000 elected councillors were required to submit financial disclosure forms to the OSCE, in which they declare their financial assets and certify that they are not in violation of OSCE’s property and conflict of interest rules and regulations. Moreover, all 145 elected municipal assemblies in the country need to hold their inaugural session 30 days after the notification of mandates. The OSCE Mission to BiH will spend the coming months working on the implementation and verification of these requirements.

Alex Nitzsche is Deputy Spokesperson in the OSCE Mission to BiH

Rapid spread of small arms and light weapons threatens security in many countries

Seminar provides basis for OSCE to play constructive role

By Kate Joseph

In recent years, the uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons has come to be regarded as a major security challenge for many nations and regions, including areas within the OSCE. According to a United Nations estimate, there are now around 500 million small arms circulating around the world, but the real figure may be much higher. In response, the OSCE last month held a seminar to provide a basis for strengthening its role in combating the spread of such weapons.

Small arms are loosely defined as weapons designed for personal use, and range from handguns to light machine guns. Light weapons are generally operated by a small crew and can even include shoulder-fired missile launchers. Although the availability of such weapons is not a new phenomenon, there is little doubt that they have become the arms of choice in today's low-intensity conflicts. Easily smuggled and in plentiful supply, small arms can also exacerbate tensions, undermine development and facilitate human rights abuses.

The OSCE formally recognized this grave threat at its Summit in Istanbul last year, when the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC), the Organization's arms control body, decided to launch a broad discussion on the problems associated with small arms. Since then, the FSC's Working Group B has examined issues as diverse as the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons, existing weapons stocks, production and export restraint, and small arms measures in the context of disarmament, demobilization and reinte-

gration. The Group is also looking at ways in which the OSCE and its field operations could begin to tackle the problem.

In line with the Summit decision, the FSC held a Seminar on Small Arms and Light Weapons on 3-5 April 2000. The event, which was chaired by Hungary, brought together experts from OSCE capitals to identify potential initiatives to combat the destabilizing accumulation of these weapons.

Four working sessions were grouped under the headings: norms and principles; combating illicit weapons trafficking; measures to reduce small arms surpluses; and post-conflict stabilization.

Several seminar participants characterized the discussion as encouragingly open and free of political rhetoric. A wide range of suggestions was made during each session. For example, during the first session, participants discussed the application to small arms and light weapons of the Principles Governing Conventional Arms Transfers. The issue of increased transparency in small arms transfers and holdings also generated much discussion. Many concrete proposals were put forward during the session on illicit small arms trafficking, including the strengthening of licensing regulations and co-operation in law enforcement and border monitoring.

During the third session, many states expressed support for destroying surplus weapons. Even more encouraging, some offered technical assistance to make this a reality.

Participants pointed to several regions within the OSCE area where small arms

and light weapons threatened to undermine stability or exacerbate crisis situations. Specific examples included South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and Transdniestria. During the final session, some participating states expressed interest in agreeing concrete measures to help these regions to curb small arms flows and remove weapons from civil society. The participants also considered how best to involve OSCE field operations in these initiatives.

Other international organizations, many of which have experience in dealing with the small arms issue, were also represented at the meeting, including the United Nations, European Union, Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, and International Committee of the Red Cross, as well as the Wassenaar Arrangement (an association of arms-exporting nations). Several non-governmental organizations, mostly members of the International Action Network on Small Arms, were also able to make interventions.

Delegates to the FSC are likely to use many of the ideas from the Seminar as the basis for a stand-alone document on small arms and light weapons. Discussions within the FSC have already recommenced and the negotiation process will soon be underway. As the Chairman of the Seminar, Ambassador Gabor Brodi, noted, this process would soon enable the OSCE "to play a role in the field of small arms and light weapons in line with its international significance and its traditional features."

Kate Joseph is FSC Support Officer/Small Arms Expert.

Picking up the pieces when the fighting is over

Experts focus on economic aspects of post-conflict rehabilitation

Representatives of 51 OSCE participating States met in Prague last month for the Eighth Meeting of the Economic Forum, which took as its general theme: 'Economic Aspects of Post-Conflict Rehabilitation'. The event was held from 11 to 14 April, at the Czernin Palace in the capital of the Czech Republic. Several OSCE States this year included representatives of the private sector and non-governmental organizations in their delegations. And for the first time, OSCE



Opening the Eighth Meeting of the OSCE Economic Forum, held in Prague last month.

missions and other field activities played a major role in the deliberations of the Economic Forum.

Established in 1992 to strengthen the focus of the OSCE on the economic and environmental dimensions of security, the Economic Forum brings together at senior level representatives responsible for shaping the international economic and environmental policy of the OSCE. They meet once year to suggest practical means of strengthening OSCE involvement in these areas.

The keynote addresses, discussions and working tables at this year's meeting covered three subjects, which corresponded to the three preparatory seminars:

- (a) economic rehabilitation and the next steps in the transition: institution-building, rule of law and the role of civil society;
- (b) environmental impact of conflicts and rehabilitation measures; and
- (c) experiences with post-conflict rehabilitation efforts.

On the first day, during which the participating States reviewed the implementation of commitments in the economic dimension, the Forum was addressed by a representative of the host country, Zdenek Matejka, Secretary General of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as by Jan Kubis, Secretary General of the OSCE, and Eva Nowotny, the Chairperson of the Forum. Thomas Price, the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, drew the attention of the Forum to emerging socio-economic problems and future challenges.

The Forum was formally opened on the second day with an address by Emomali Rakhmonov, President of the Republic of Tajikistan, who gave an overview of economic and political reforms underway in his country.

Participants pressed for the continuation of reforms in post-conflict areas, particularly in the areas of law enforcement and institution-building. New jobs and economic growth were cited as major

factors that could generate political spin-offs. Participants were critical of continuing trade practices that prevented fair competition on a level playing field. They also encouraged judicial reforms that supported economic independence, and noted that emerging democracies should make a firm commitment to the objectives of the international agreements in which they participated, particularly in the environmental protection field.

NGO representatives pointed out that a major problem generated by the current state of affairs was corruption, which the international aid community could, unwittingly, be aiding and abetting. Participants noted that NGOs filled an important "checks and balances" role in civil society, and also provide a reservoir of expertise to help develop training and advocacy skills. OSCE missions delivered presentations on how transparency, good governance and strong institutions could help in fighting corruption.

In the environmental area, participants reiterated support for the regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme for South-Eastern Europe. They confirmed that water and energy issues were a source of tension in Central Asia and that better dispute settlement mechanisms could help reconcile competitive interests in these countries. They noted that the OSCE also had an important role to play in building institutional capacity and training Central Asian officials and experts in negotiation, consensus-building and law.

Another working group noted that post-conflict societies were often split along gender lines, and that women tended to be affected in different and sometimes more dramatic ways than men. For some countries, the influx of refugees is a staggering problem with far-reaching consequences for state budgets, the environment, and the social infrastructure. Participants noted an urgent need for streamlining and co-ordinating project financing to reduce redundant and overlapping programmes.

Several speakers stressed the OSCE was an integral part of the complex post-conflict rehabilitation effort. Enhanced co-operation between the OSCE and specialized economic, environmental and

financial institutions, as well as sub-regional organizations and the business community, remained a priority. NGOs, as an indispensable link to civil society, were strategic partners. Other recommendations included regular discussion of the economic dimension in the Permanent Council (PC), joint presentations of United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and Forum reports to the PC, and requests to OSCE missions to produce spot reports on economic and environmental issues with security implications, covered by their respective mandates. Delegations also underlined the important role and meaningful input of OSCE field activities.

Next year's Economic Forum, which

was tentatively set for May, will take as its overall theme: Transparency and Good Governance in Economic Matters. As in previous years, it will be prepared, inter alia, by seminars focused both geographically and thematically. As of 1 May this year, the Chairperson-in-Office has delegated responsibility for the preparation of this event to Petre Roman, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Romania, the country that is due to hold the Chair next year.

More information about the Eighth Annual OSCE Economic Forum can be found on the OSCE website at: <http://www.osce.org/eea>.

Setting up the OSCE Office in Yerevan

A light-hearted guide on how to get started

By Roy Reeve

Well we did it! Within a month of officially starting up the OSCE Office in Yerevan we are reasonably comfortably installed in our central working location. Most of the vehicles and information technology equipment has arrived and we now have enough chairs and desks to go around. A lot remains to be done but we are over the main hurdles.

Sounds straightforward? Well, a lot of effort, sweat and not a few tears went into getting us up and running. Many of the problems arose from too much – not too little – choice. Members of the Office got somewhat fatigued from looking at the diverse range of buildings which were offered to us by real estate “fixers” who appeared from nowhere once news of our arrival in Yerevan spread. Always (naturally) conscious of our budgetary

constraints, we were able to exclude many of the detached palatial residences we were shown – although several of the team were reluctant to forgo the saunas and plunge pools which seem to be a feature of many “new Armenian” homes.

Since we did not have the funds to undertake major restoration work, such as connecting water or electricity supplies or relaying floors, we had from early on to exclude former office buildings from our search.

Instead we focused on residential buildings whose owners were already living or intending to live abroad. As we rejected former casinos and partially converted private hotel buildings, our search took us further and further away from the city centre to suburbs where the rents seemed to increase with distance. Finally, in despair, we took the obvious



The newly-opened premises of the OSCE Office in Yerevan, capital of Armenia

course and asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs if they had any suggestions. We took the first property they showed us! An early, valuable first lesson for us all. We thought we knew best!

There we were with a splendid house, recently renovated, within budget and just across the street from the Parliament. All we had to do now was to furnish it and get delivery of our vehicles, which had been sitting in Tbilisi and our IT equipment – surplus from Kosovo – from storage in Vienna. Driving from Tbilisi to Yerevan and getting the necessary Customs and Taxation exemptions is a

saga worthy of another article. All that was left was to purchase the office furniture, which was available in Yerevan, unfurl the flag and open for business. Simple. But a small difficulty arose.

We had no provision in our 2000 budget for such small luxuries as chairs, desks etc. All the funds for those had been allocated last year, when it was anticipated that the Office would open. Nothing for telephones either. Frantic appeals to Vienna were rewarded when we were told that we could use the 1999 funds – so long as we spent them within the next seven days and obtained four

quotations for everything we purchased! Yerevan has now had practical experience of a major spending spree – although our Finance and Administration team is still in shock.

But 'tis done and our doors are open. We may only have one e-mail link from an office laptop (we like to think of it as our "Internet Café" as we queue to use it) but things could be worse. The OSCE Finance Committee can expect to hear from us at the mid-year review.

Ambassador Roy Reeve is the Head of the Office in Yerevan.

SUMMER ACADEMY ON OSCE

3-15 July 2000

Peace Centre Burg Schlaining

Organized by:

Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution,
Stadtschlaining Netherlands Helsinki Committee, The Hague
Berghof Research Centre for Constructive Conflict Management, Berlin
Constitutional and Legal Policy Institute, Budapest, affiliated with the Central European University
Under the Patronage of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

Applicants for admission must meet the following requirements:

- Master's degree or the equivalent in working experience;
- working knowledge of English;
- submission of the application form and the required accompanying materials as soon as possible.

Applicants for admission will be selected on a competitive basis by an admissions committee.

Applicants will be informed of the decision of the admissions committee.

COST

The cost of participation will be \$1,500 per student. The amount covers tuition, educational materials, and full board accommodation in a single room with bath. For participants coming from non-member states of the OECD, a limited number of scholarships will be awarded. Applicants who would like to apply for such support have to indicate this in the respective section of the application form and give reasons in their application essay. Please note there is no possibility to get financial support for travel expenses from the organizers

APPLICATIONS SHOULD BE SENT TO

ASPR, A-7461 Stadtschlaining, Austria
attn.: Thomas Zitelmann

Tel.: (+43) 3355 2498 ext. 517 ■ Fax: (+43) 3355 2662

E-mail: aspr@aspr.ac.at ■ Website: <http://www.aspr.ac.at>





News from the field

The OSCE currently has Missions or other field activities in Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Kosovo (FRY), Latvia, Skopje (FYROM), Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. The following brief reports reflect some of the recent work which these field operations have undertaken.

OSCE expands number of field offices in Albania

Albania is heading towards a very important electoral season, with local polls due in October 2000. The OSCE Presence, along with other international organizations and NGOs, is organizing an election assistance programme, which will also involve a thorough monitoring of the campaign and voting procedures. In this framework, the Presence is expanding its coverage of the Albanian territory, with the opening of four new field offices, at the same time meeting the request of the President of the Republic and the Albanian Government.

The first OSCE new office to become operational is Elbasan, in the centre of the country, which will cover the four districts of that Prefecture: Elbasan proper, Peqin, Gramsh and Librazhd. The office is to be manned by two international officers and two local staff. Following Elbasan, offices will be opening in the cities of Fier, Berat and Lezha, by the middle of July. These new field offices will enhance the OSCE Presence's capability to fulfil its mandate in Albania, bringing the total number of OSCE local structures to 11.

Stability Pact working meeting held in Zagreb

On 11 and 12 April, the OSCE Mission to Croatia hosted a working meeting with the Special Co-ordinator of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, Bodo Hombach, during his visit to the country. The Special Co-ordinator praised the OSCE's contribution to the Stability Pact, and highlighted in particular the Organization's nine regional projects,

including the Mission's regional Legal Aid Network. He also gave his assessment of the recent Financing Conference of the Stability Pact, underlining the need for a speedy implementation of the Pact's "quick start" projects. The Mission assured Hombach that it would continue to support the Pact's goals through the active implementation of its own projects and by advising the Croatian Government on the implementation of its corresponding Stability Pact projects, in particular its project to support the return of 16,500 citizens.

Croatia plays host to gender task force meeting

On 26 and 27 April, the Mission to Croatia co-hosted the second regional meeting of the Gender Task Force with the Croatian Government. A government reception in Zagreb was attended by among others, Vice-Prime Minister Antunovic, Foreign Minister Picula and other members of the Government, the acting Commissioner of the City of Zagreb, and several women parliamentarians. Ambassador Barry, Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, also made an opening statement.

With regard to the Task Force's priority projects to support the political empowerment of women, some participants emphasized their limited capacity to train prospective women political candidates before the upcoming elections, if funds from the Stability Pact donors were not released soon. Croatia is also waiting for funds to begin training local women politicians before municipal elections in the first few months of 2001.

Two new political resource centres open in BiH

The OSCE has opened two new political resource centres (PRCs) in Zvornik (eastern Republik Srsпка) and in Bosanski Samac (northern BiH). These are being funded by the Norwegian Government. PRCs provide small parties with the necessary means to present their political programme to the voters by offering them free access to basic office equipment or facilitating access to local media. In the past, PRC activities have resulted in significantly increased contacts between inter-entity political parties and co-operation between opposition parties. They also enabled parties to establish and maintain direct contact with their supporters and reach out to new voters. There are 12 PRCs located throughout the country and the OSCE plans to open further PRCs in the near future with the support of the participating States and international donors.

Seminars organized in Kazakhstan

On 25 and 26 April, the OSCE Centre in Almaty organized in the framework of the ODIHR project 'Prison service training', a local seminar in Shymkent on Penitentiary Reform and Human Rights in the context of International Norms and Standards, together with the Ministry of Interior Affairs and the Kazakhstani International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law.

The Centre is co-operating with the Soros Foundation in preparing a series of local seminars on 'Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters' (the Aarhus Con-

vention) as a follow-up to the seminars held in Almaty, Kokshetau and Pavlodar. The aim of the seminars is to broaden discussions on the Aarhus Convention at local level, since its implementation there is more important.

Democracy seminar held in Bishkek

From 27 to 28 April, the Centre in Bishkek co-organized a seminar on Democracy and Religion with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the International In-Service Centre for Journalism. Seminar issues included Islam, democracy and freedom of the press. The Head of Centre made an opening statement on behalf of the OSCE. The seminar was supported by the Austrian and German governments.

CALO hosts gender project events

On 11 April, the OSCE Central Asian Liaison Office (CALO) held two follow-up meetings of the seminar Women NGO Strategy Development Forum, which had been organized by the CALO and the Open Society Institute (OSI)/Soros Foundation in February. The aim of the meetings was to hear from the women how they would like the CALO to support their efforts in the context of its gender projects. The CALO has also supported a local NGO (Woman and Health), which runs an extensive educational programme on women's health issues and the development of women's rights in the regions, in the implementation of one

small-scale publications project. The Swiss Government provided financial support for this project.

Workshop on business concerns

From 24 to 28 April, the CALO held a workshop on promoting community-level co-operation on small- and medium-size businesses and environmental concerns in Uzbekistan, in the Navoiy Region. Participants included representatives of industry, small- and medium-size businesses, NGOs, environmental activists, and local government officials. The participants found the discussions useful and informative for developing local businesses and improving environmental conditions in local settings. The sessions also improved their legal and practical knowledge on improving business and the environment and developing acquaintances and co-operation between the Government, private businesses, NGOs and environmental organs.

Implementation begins on Tajikistan human rights project

On 8 April, the OSCE Mission in Tajikistan started the implementation of a six-month project on Human Rights education to upgrade the knowledge of the young women teaching at the Law Faculty of the Tajik State National University in Dushanbe. A series of lectures and seminars on the OSCE activities in the field of human rights, international conventions on human rights, gender

policy and rights of children, as well as English classes for a group of 30 participants will take place during this year.

SG visits Central Asian Republics

On 28 and 29 April, the OSCE Secretary General, Ambassador Jan Kubis visited the OSCE Centre in Bishkek. On 29 April, he officially inaugurated the OSCE Field Office in Osh jointly with the Kyrgyz Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. Mr. Kubis used the opportunity of his visit to Kyrgyzstan to have several discussions on current political issues and ideas for a continued development of Kyrgyz civil society.

NGO representatives meeting held in Moldova Mission

From 18 to 19 April, the OSCE Mission Office in Tiraspol (Moldova) hosted a meeting of NGO representatives from right-bank Moldova, Transdnistria, and Gagauzia. The meeting was organized in co-operation with the National Assistance and Information Centre for NGOs in Moldova, which has a number of branch offices around Moldova. It has been attempting to increase contacts with independent NGOs in Transdnistria for some time.

The meeting was held without any incident, and the participants – including the officially sponsored Tiraspol 'youth' representatives – were enthusiastic about the contacts and plans resulting from the gathering.

IN BRIEF



Vienna hosts a '2 + 2' meeting

On 12 April, the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Austria's Foreign Minister Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the OSCE Secretary General, Jan Kubis, the Chairman of the Com-

mittee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, Irish Foreign Minister Brian Cowen, and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Walter Schwimmer, met at the Hofburg Congress Centre in Vienna for the annual '2+2 Meeting'. The two Ministers focused on current issues of joint concern to the OSCE and the Council of Europe, including the con-

flict in Chechnya, preparations for elections in Kosovo and the situations in Montenegro and Moldova and Belarus. With regard to the situation in Chechnya, the participants focused on the co-operation between the two organizations and called upon Russia to carry out an independent and thorough investigation of alleged human rights violations. The par-

ticipants expressed their confidence that Russia would create the necessary conditions for the effective presence in Chechnya and the region of international organizations, in particular the OSCE and humanitarian bodies. Both organizations agreed on the importance of their close co-operation on this issue, but also in all their other fields of interest, including democratization, human rights and institution building. The two Secretaries General signed, on the margins of the '2 + 2' meeting, a Common Catalogue of Co-operation Modalities – a snapshot of the current status and modalities of co-operation between the two bodies.

CiO welcomes municipal elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina

On 10 April, the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, issued a statement welcoming the peaceful and orderly conduct of the municipal elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, saying that they would be an important contribution to the implemen-

tation of the Dayton Peace Accords. She expressed her satisfaction with the high participation rate in the elections. She also cited the high number of domestic observers and other civic groups in the election process as an important step towards local "ownership" of the electoral process in Bosnia and Herzegovina. She guaranteed the OSCE's continued work with entity, state and local authorities to further develop the local capacity in carrying out elections. A fundamental step in handing over responsibility for elections from the international community to Bosnia and Herzegovina, would be the passing of an election law. The CiO highlighted the OSCE's assistance in helping to strengthen the country's civil society, the acceleration of economic reforms, the realization of the rule of law and the functioning of common institutions. In this regard, she underlined the importance of measures to accelerate the return of refugees and displaced persons.

Harassment in Kyrgyzstan criticized

On 5 April, the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office expressed her deep concern about reports of harassment of human rights activists and leaders of the political Opposition in Kyrgyzstan. She was particularly alarmed by the detention of the opposition leader, Felix Kulov, whose hunger strike and consequent health condition caused more concern about whether he was receiving satisfactory medical care in confinement. She also expressed her concern about the arrest of Daniyar Usenov and further accusations against representatives of civil society, such as the Kyrgyz Committee for Human Rights and independent media, such as *Res Publica*. While Mrs. Ferrero-Waldner welcomed a statement by the press secretary of President Akaev of 3 April, she called upon the Kyrgyz leadership to enter into a genuine dialogue with the country's political forces in order to promote peace and stability on the basis of human rights, democracy and rule of law.



BOSNIA

Municipal elections were held in Bosnia and Herzegovina on 8 April.

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 8 April

'The most enthusiastic election campaigners in Bosnia and Herzegovina are the OSCE and the OHR. These are not

acronyms for any of the altogether 68 parties contesting the votes this coming Saturday. On the contrary, they represent the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the Office of the High Representative of the international community in Bosnia and Herzegovina. One could well characterize the American OSCE chief, Barry, and the Austrian head of the OHR, Petritsch, as top candidates. Before the municipal elections, Barry was tirelessly criss-crossing the country, opening new OSCE information offices, appearing on TV, appealing to the population to use their voting rights... The role played by the OSCE, the OHR and other international organizations in the conduct of these elections – the second since 1997 – shows the dilemma of the international community

since the end of the war in November 1995... The OSCE, the OHR and the international peace corps SFOR have, together with other organizations that are present in the war-torn country, the task of making themselves redundant. Bosnia and Herzegovina should be helped so that the country again will be able to stand on its own feet, politically and economically... That is why the OSCE openly appeals to the electorate to vote for change, for those parties that see themselves as representing citizens and not only one ethnic group. The OHR has evolved into the Protector of the country, and the OSCE into an institution that not only organizes elections, but tries to influence the results in a desired direction.'

Le Monde, 8 April

‘The OSCE, which is organizing the elections with the support of the UN and NATO, has conducted a quite unambiguous campaign for “change”, which has been criticized by the nationalistic parties.’

Reuters, 10 April

‘On Monday the OSCE welcomed early results from Bosnia’s weekend local elections which showed growing support for moderate parties at the expense of hardline nationalists. Austrian Foreign Minister Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Chairwoman-in-Office of the pan-European security watchdog, said the peaceful and orderly conduct of the elections represented an important contribution to the implementation of the Dayton peace treaty, which ended the bloody 1992-1995 conflict.’

CHECHNYA

The Chairperson-in-Office visited Moscow and Chechnya, 13-15 April.

Der Standard, 14 April

‘The OSCE is pushing for the possibility of resuming its work in the Chechen war zone, which it had to leave in 1998, as soon as possible. This was the message delivered by (Austrian) Foreign Minister Benita Ferrero-Waldner in her capacity as OSCE Chairperson when she met her Russian colleague Igor Ivanov in Moscow. After the war, the OSCE could “very concretely” work on rebuilding democratic structures in Chechnya, restoring confidence and establishing a civil society there.’

Kurier, 14 April

‘The Chairperson of the OSCE,

Benita Ferrero-Waldner, seems to have been successful in her ambitions to open the doors to Chechnya for the Organization. The leaders in Moscow... are now accepting the idea that the OSCE will return to the tiny Caucasus republic. An Assistance Group of five people will open an office in Znamenskoye in north-western Chechnya... In the pompous (Russian State) guest house, no one, however, tried to clarify what five persons actually can do to help those 300,000 people that still are eking out an existence in Chechnya.’

Reuters, 15 April

‘The head of Europe’s main security and rights organization urged Moscow on Saturday to open a dialogue with rebels in Chechnya on ending a six-month-old conflict in the breakaway region... “(The OSCE) would support any dialogue, with or without national or international participation, including that of the OSCE,” Mrs. Ferrero-Waldner told a news conference... She also said an OSCE team might return to be permanently based in northern Chechnya in May, after quitting the region in 1998.’

Der Standard, 15 April

‘In other words, Russia is “absolutely ready” to allow the return of a five-person (sic!) Assistance Group of the OSCE to Chechnya – but of course, only when the security situation is satisfactory. This is more or less the result of the Putin visit by the Chairperson of the OSCE, Benita Ferrero-Waldner... However, the OSCE – and this goes for the previous Norwegian chairmanship as well – does not even itself believe in the role that it would be so happy to play, which would call on the OSCE Chairperson to take energetic action because of the hair-raising violations of OSCE principles

committed by Russia... The fact is that the only thing the OSCE will be able to do in Chechnya will be clearing the rubble.’

Die Presse, 17 April

‘Breadcrumbs for an OSCE Chairperson with moderate demands: an OSCE Assistance Group will be allowed to do humanitarian work in Chechnya, hurrah!’

Le Monde, 18 April

‘Forced to restrict itself to a humanitarian role in order to obtain access to Chechen territory without “arousing the distrust” of the Russians, the OSCE risks being reduced to becoming a fig leaf for the crimes that continue to be committed there.’

BELARUS

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 28 April

‘The Belarus President, who has prolonged his mandate through an unconstitutional referendum, has for months been torpedoing the efforts by an Advisory Group of the OSCE to establish a dialogue between the Government and the Opposition, which would lead to free and fair parliamentary elections. After the OSCE had managed to unite the Opposition behind the proposal for negotiations, Lukashenka rejected those confidence-building measures which had already been agreed upon, with the result that the OSCE-mediated process did not get off the ground. Lukashenka thereby violated the commitment he made at the OSCE Summit in Istanbul to co-operate with all political forces in the country in preparing the parliamentary elections.’

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Swiss Foreign Minister visits the ODIHR

On 17 April, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, Federal Councilor Joseph Deiss, visited the ODIHR. He was briefed by the ODIHR Director, Ambassador Stoudmann, on ODIHR activities, and a discussion followed which focused mainly on Chechnya and the OSCE role in this context. Switzerland is one of the main contributors to the ODIHR, in terms of both financial and human resources.



ODIHR observes Presidential election in Georgia

The ODIHR observed the presidential elections in Georgia on 9 April and issued a preliminary statement in Tbilisi on 10 April. This concluded that considerable progress was necessary for Georgia to fully meet its relevant commitments as a participating State of the OSCE. Fundamental freedoms were generally respected during the election campaign and candidates were able to express their views.

However, improvements are necessary in the legal framework, the performance of the State media and the implementation of counting and tabulation procedures. Voting did not take place in Abkhazia and in part of the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia.

The election observation mission was headed by Nikolai Vulchanov (Bulgaria). Some 150 short-term observers from 24 OSCE participating States were deployed on election day.

ODIHR issues final election observation reports

In April, the ODIHR released the following election observation reports:

- Parliamentary elections in the Kyrgyz Republic, February-March 2000
- Parliamentary elections in Croatia, January 2000
- Parliamentary elections in Uzbekistan, December 1999

Since January 2000 five other reports have been made public:

- Parliamentary elections in Kazakhstan, October 1999
- Presidential election in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, October-November 1999
- Parliamentary elections in Georgia, October-November 1999
- Presidential election in Ukraine, October-November 1999
- Parliamentary election in the Russian Federation, December 1999

All ODIHR election observation reports published since January 1996 are available at <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elecprep.htm>

DEMOCRATIZATION



ODIHR experts hold seminar and assess centres in Kazakhstan

ODIHR prison expert, Alan Walker, and Rule of Law Adviser, Donald Bisson, travelled to Kazakhstan from 21 to 29 April to conduct a seminar on Reform and Human Rights for officials of the Kazakh penitentiary system. The expert

also visited several prisons and pre-trial detention centres in Kazakhstan in order to assess the current situation and begin implementation of the 2000 ODIHR Prison Project.

The seminar was highly successful in establishing an open dialogue between the Ministry of Interior and penitentiary officials. Two more regional seminars are scheduled for June 2000.

Based upon recommendations made by Mr. Walker, Kazakh officials agreed to make several changes at a new pre-trial detention centre to be opened in Kyzylorda by the end of the year. Mr. Walker will also be working with the Director General of the prison system on the curriculum to be used in the new Central Training Centre scheduled to be open by August of this year.

Training for Uzbekistan NGOs in human rights monitoring/reporting

The ODIHR, jointly with OSCE Central Asia Liaison Office in Tashkent, has started implementing the Human Rights Monitoring and Reporting Training Programme for NGOs in Uzbekistan. The programme has been designed to improve monitoring and reporting capacities of local human rights NGOs, to increase the number of existing national human rights monitors, to develop co-operation and co-ordination between human rights activists and to improve information sharing and networking.

The first training session on 17-20 April was attended by NGOs from throughout Uzbekistan, a representative of the National Human Rights Centre and Ombudsperson of Uzbekistan and four

representatives of NGOs from Tajikistan. The training was conducted by trainers from the Polish Helsinki Foundation and the International League for Human Rights.

Lectures, working group discussions, case studies and role playing focused on what had been identified by the participants as major human rights problems in Uzbekistan, including lack of transparency in the penitentiary system, torture during pre-trial detention, restricted freedom of expression, arbitrary arrests by law enforcement agencies, lack of transparency by law enforcement agencies, and restricted freedom of movement. A second session is scheduled for June 2000.

ODIHR designs project on women's human rights in Kazakhstan

ODIHR Gender Unit consultants visited Almaty and Astana to design a programme of continuous training on gender and women's rights in co-operation with the OSCE Office in Almaty and NGO representatives. The project will be conducted in several regions of Kazakhstan using teams of trainers, and will be implemented by an advisory board of NGO and academic representatives.

First meeting of working group on registration issues in Armenia

In April, the inter-agency working group on registration issues, established following the July 1999 ODIHR workshop on the registration of permanent residents, met for the first time in Yerevan. The meeting was attended by the ODIHR Freedom of Movement/Migration Adviser, Dr. Vladimir Shkolnikov, the ODIHR civil registration expert, Dan Christensen, and a number of officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior and other government agencies.

The participants agreed that the pre-

sent registration system providing for three different types of registration was inefficient and confusing. It was suggested to introduce national ID numbers as a basis for a new registration system. The national census scheduled for 2001 would provide a good opportunity to proceed with this project. In the shorter term, it was agreed to better co-ordinate ongoing efforts by different branches of the administration developing separate registration lists for their respective purposes, and to complement the working group by representatives from other agencies dealing with registration issues.

ODIHR initiates women's political project in Azerbaijan

The ODIHR Gender Unit held a training workshop for women politicians, NGOs and government representatives in Baku on 26-28 April. Experts from Bosnia-Herzegovina conducted a training on leadership, lobbying and coalition building for women in view of the parliamentary elections scheduled for November 2000. The workshop highlighted for women leaders the extent of discrimination against women in politics and means available to address this issue through co-operation between different political parties and with civil society.

Prison expert continues programme in South-Eastern Europe

The ODIHR assists countries in South-Eastern Europe in the reform of prisons, with an emphasis on management and training of prison staff. An important element is to build links between prison services of countries of the region in order to allow the exchange of best practices and experiences in transition. In this framework the ODIHR prison expert, Alan Walker, undertook an exploratory mission to Montenegro from 29 to 31 March, where he visited a number of prisons and met with prison

management officials. It is planned to organize a study visit of representatives of the prison management to Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Mr. Walker also visited Zagreb and discussed with the Croatian prison service this year's programme, which is expected to concentrate on treatment questions (drug addiction, issues for prisoners serving life sentences) and the training of prison governors.

The prison reform programme is financed through the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe and is part of a joint proposal with the Council of Europe.

Human rights institutions meeting held in Montenegro

On 13-14 April, the ODIHR organized a conference in Podgorica on national human rights institutions. The purpose of the meeting was to familiarize Montenegrin officials and NGOs with the characteristics, purpose and role of such institutions in a state of transition. The conference was attended by government representatives, NGOs and young lawyers. The Ombudsman of Slovenia and representatives of the Ombudsman offices in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece and Sweden explained the role of their institutions. It was stressed that national human rights or Ombudsman institutions should always be established in the constitution, in order to guarantee their independence.

The meeting was organized in response to current discussions in Montenegro on whether a human rights institution would be a useful addition to the existing institutions.

Round table on trafficking in women takes place in Podgorica

A round table on trafficking in women was organized by the ODIHR Office in Podgorica in co-operation with

the Montenegrin NGO “Women’s Lobby” on 18 April. The purpose of the meeting was to draw public attention to trafficking issues, to exchange information, and to discuss future activities and networking. Participants in the round table included NGO representatives from Ukraine, Romania, Serbia and Albania as well as officials from the Montenegrin Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior.

Participants stressed the importance of NGO training, regional and international networking, awareness-raising programmes, better co-operation between authorities in the countries involved, and training of police and border officials. Other issues discussed at the meeting included the need for an adequate legal framework, victim protection programmes, and efforts to “decriminalize” the women involved.

The event was successful in laying the groundwork for the development of further activities in Montenegro. It illustrated the need for continued support in terms of substance of the work, regional and international networking, and financial aid.

Regional workshop in Ukraine on prevention of trafficking

On 30 March, the ODIHR, together with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), organized a regional workshop in Kharkiv, Ukraine, on the prevention of trafficking in women. The workshop was part of the ODIHR-IOM joint project to support the activities of the National Council for Prevention of Trafficking in Ukraine. Participants included officials from the oblast-level offices of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of the Interior, the State Committee of Family and Youth Affairs, representatives of local NGOs, La Strada, the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine, and an international expert from Belgium.

The purpose of the workshop was to increase the level of awareness and understanding of the participants with respect to the problem of trafficking in women and children and to engage the participants in future efforts to increase awareness among their colleagues and constituents. Topics of discussion included prevention strategies, the need for greater assistance to victims, and obstacles to prosecution of trafficking cases.

Assistance to newly elected Albanian Ombudsman

The ODIHR, together with the OSCE Presence in Albania, organized a visit by the newly elected Ombudsman of Albania to the Office of the Ombudsman of Slovenia from 3 to 6 April. The purpose of the visit, which took place only one week after the Ombudsman had been elected by the parliament, was to provide first-hand insight into the functioning and the main working principles of an Ombudsman office. The meetings also laid the foundation for future co-operation with the Ombudsman Office of Slovenia. The ODIHR will support this co-operation within the context of its assistance to establishing a functioning Ombudsman institution in Albania.

Democratization programme begins in Belarus

A team of ODIHR officers led by Deputy Director Peter Eicher visited Minsk on 4-5 April to discuss the implementation of a number of human rights projects in Belarus. The projects, which are part of the ODIHR-European Commission Joint Programme for Advancing Human Rights and Democratization in Belarus, will be implemented by the OSCE Assistance and Monitoring Group in co-operation with the ODIHR and local partners. The first project will focus on providing training for political parties. Other projects will include support

to the independent legal sector, a programme on dispute resolution, a prison project, a lecture series, and support for the independent European Humanistic University.

ODIHR supports legal aid NGO for ethnic Albanians in Serbia

The ODIHR has started to support a programme of the Humanitarian Law Centre in Belgrade which is aimed at assisting ethnic Albanians in courts and prisons in Serbia. Many ethnic Albanians were arrested during and after the war in Kosovo on dubious charges and are on trial or awaiting trials in Serbia. The Humanitarian Law Centre formed a team of lawyers visiting prisoners and representing the accused in courts.

ODIHR supports International Roma Day

The ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues supported a number of awareness-raising activities organized on the occasion of International Roma Day on 8 April 2000. The main focus of this year’s events was Kosovo, where the ODIHR, as part of its Action Plan and in co-operation with the OSCE Mission in Kosovo and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway, organized a number of public activities, including a series of cultural events with the participation of a group of famous Roma artists from Norway. The activities took place in Roma communities throughout the province and constituted the first high profile public manifestation of Roma in Kosovo since the armed conflict in 1999.

The ODIHR Contact Point also coordinated activities commemorating International Roma Day in a number of other countries, including Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

NEWS from the High Commissioner on National Minorities

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

HCNM visits Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan

From 2 to 8 April the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Max van der Stoel, travelled to the Central Asian republics of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Besides the capital of Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, he visited Osh, in the south of the country. He familiarized himself with the latest work of the Assembly of Peoples of Kyrgyzstan as well as the new structure of the monitoring service, set up under his auspices, that gathers information on early warning of problems in inter-ethnic relations in the south of the country. He discussed with interlocutors, including President Akaev, the current political and economic situation in the country, the spread of fundamentalism, national security, regional co-operation as well as internal security and its effects on human rights.

In Kazakhstan, Mr. van der Stoel attended a seminar organized jointly by the High Commissioner's office and the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan on the subject of the Lund Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life.

Roma and Sinti report officially launched

On 7 April, the *Report on the Situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE Area* was officially launched. The 180-page document, prepared during 1999, addresses one of Europe's most pressing minority-related issues: the plight of its Roma and Sinti communities.

In his introduction, the High Commissioner notes that: 'Ten years after the

Iron Curtain fell, Europe is at risk of being divided by new walls. Front and centre among those persons being left outside Europe's new security and prosperity are the Roma.' He concludes that, 'discrimination and exclusion are fundamental features of the Roma experience.'

The report addresses the main problems faced by Europe's Roma population and provides recommendations on how these can be overcome. The issues addressed include discrimination and racial violence, education, living conditions, and political participation. The report also provides an overview of OSCE commitments and initiatives relating to the Roma and Sinti and recommendations on the enhancement of the mandate of the OSCE Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues. The report takes a thematic approach, but also cites concrete situations and policies in those OSCE participating States with sizeable Roma communities.

Copies of the report are available from the OSCE Secretariat or the office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. The report is also available on-line on the HCNM section of the OSCE website at www.osce.org.

Seminar addressed in Turkey

On 12 and 13 April, the High Commissioner travelled to Turkey to take part in a seminar of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly on the theme: 'New risks and challenges: minorities in the 21st Century'. He gave a keynote speech in which he talked about the importance of protecting the rights of persons belonging to national minorities. He noted that pre-

venting and resolving inter-ethnic issues deserved closer attention.

"It is often a matter of foresight and some courage that political leaders take steps to enter into a certain dialogue and commit themselves to find solutions for existing problems. For those who are prepared to take such steps, it is also essential that they remain realistic and, respecting each other's rights and common interests, seek to find solutions within the framework of the State," he said.

He spoke of the need to reach an accommodation between minorities and majorities and emphasized that both sides had rights and obligations: "The minority has to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the State. The State, and the majority within the State, must show its willingness to accept and implement the basic principles regarding the treatment of persons belonging (to the State) as laid down in the OSCE Copenhagen Document of 1990, such as their full equality before the law and their right freely to express, preserve and develop their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity and to maintain and develop their culture.

"I am aware of the fear that support for such a degree of diversity within the State will lead to its disintegration. I am convinced that those who argue along these lines are wrong. A minority that has the opportunity to fully develop its identity is more likely to remain loyal to the State than a minority which is denied its identity."

In interviews with members of the Turkish media, Mr. van der Stoel noted that he would welcome an opportunity to

further discuss the application of international standards concerning the protection of persons belonging to national minorities in Turkey.

HCNM visits Skopje

From 17 to 20 April, the High Commissioner visited Skopje, capital of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The main aim of his visit was to present his proposal for the solution of the

problem of Albanian-language higher education. Mr. van der Stoel presented detailed recommendations to Prime Minister Ljubco Georgievski in an effort to make progress on what has been a long-running dispute over Albanian-language tertiary education in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Among the recommendations, he proposed the creation of a private Institution of Higher Education consisting of two sections,

one for teacher training and the other for business management and public administration. Teaching would be in the Albanian language, but not exclusively. There would also be Macedonian teachers, and the teaching of the Macedonian language, history and culture would be part of the curriculum. The proposal also provides for a co-operation agreement between the new Institution and the Skopje State University.

REPORT from the OSCE **Parliamentary Assembly**

The Secretariat of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly is located at Rådhusstræde 1, DK-1466 Copenhagen K, Denmark, tel.: (+45-33) 37 80 40, fax: (+45-33) 37 80 30, e-mail: osce@oscepa.dk

Russian reporter wins OSCE PA Prize for Journalism and Democracy

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has awarded this year's OSCE PA Prize for Journalism and Democracy to the Russian reporter, Andrei Babitsky. The prize, worth \$20,000, is awarded annually by the Assembly to journalists who, through their work, have promoted OSCE principles on human rights, democracy and unimpeded flow of information.

In recent years, Mr. Babitsky, a reporter for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), has reported on the conflict in Chechnya with complete disregard for his personal safety, and has been one of the very few voices commenting directly on the situation and recent developments in the region. He was nominated for the Prize by the German and United States Delegations.

The Prize will be presented to him during the opening of this year's Annual Session of the OSCE PA on 6 July in Bucharest.

During the first Chechen war (1994-96), Mr. Babitsky was the RFE/RL special correspondent reporting directly from the area, and from 1996-99 worked

in Moscow and the North Caucasus. Mr. Babitsky became the special correspondent reporting from Grozny in November 1999, and was the only non-Chechen reporter who stayed in the devastated Chechen capital of Grozny. Mr. Babitsky's reporting on the conflict in Chechnya has been widely recognized for its objectivity and fairness.

In January, Mr. Babitsky was reported missing and his fate remained uncertain for a considerable time. During that period the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Freimut Duve, made a number of interventions with the Russian Government on his behalf.

The OSCE PA established the Prize for Journalism and Democracy in 1996. The purpose of the Prize is to promote the principles of free journalism, as laid down in the OSCE Budapest Declaration in 1994. Previous recipients are Adam Michnik in 1996, *Reporters sans frontières* in 1997, Timothy Garton Ash in 1998 and Ms. Christiane Amanpour in 1999.

The award is generously supported by: Bertelsmann AG, Germany; Bonnier Group, Sweden; Den Berlingske Fond, Denmark; the George and Thelma Para-

skevides Foundation, Cyprus; Southam Inc., Canada and Shipsted ASA, Norway.

Joint Seminar on National Minorities held in Turkey

On 12 and 13 April 2000, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the Grand National Assembly of Turkey jointly organized a Seminar on National Minorities in Antalya, entitled 'New risks and challenges: minorities in the 21st Century'. The seminar, attended by more than 80 parliamentarians from 32 countries, consisted of five sessions. On the first day, participants held a general discussion of minority issues represented in the OSCE Region and 'New risks and challenges for minority populations'.

The second day covered 'Minority groups and strengthening economic relationships', 'Minorities and freedom of press/speech issues' and 'Building confidence through free elections and the rule of law'.

The seminar was addressed by the Speaker of the Turkish parliament, Yilderim Akbulut and the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Max van der Stoel. The High Commis-



The platform at the joint Seminar on National Minorities, held in Turkey last month.

sioner said that the subject of minorities raised complex and delicate issues: “(This) touches upon our sense of ourselves as individuals and as members of social and political communities. It holds the key to matters of identity, and for stability and security in the OSCE region. In addressing that matter, there can be no doubt that parliamentarians have a special role and responsibility.”

Mr. van der Stoel called upon the Seminar participants to take up the task of legislation, represent the interests and rights of their citizens and assure the responsible behaviour on the part of government and administration.

Other seminar panellists were OSCE PA Vice-President, Bruce George (UK), Second Committee Vice-Chair Jeremiah Grafstein (Canada), Third Committee Rapporteur Ms. Nino Burjanadze (Georgia) and the Chair of the ad hoc Working Group on Belarus, Adrian Severin (Romania).

The seminar highlighted the role parliaments could play in seeking to develop co-operative strategies, building security and solving current and future ethno-political problems. Parliamentarians

debated the development of a free press and the exchange of information between groups within society, as well as legislative methods of guaranteeing equal opportunities for ideas and the free flow of communication.

Other points raised and discussed by the participants were the parliamentary dimension of developing economic relationships vis-à-vis minority groups and regional economic opportunities for enhancing economic co-operation and empowerment of minority populations.

PA Expanded Bureau Meeting meets in Antalya

The Expanded Bureau of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, consisting of the President of the Assembly, the Vice-Presidents, the Treasurer, the President Emeritus and the Chairs, Vice-Chairs and Rapporteurs of the three General Committees, held a meeting in Antalya on 10 and 11 April, in conjunction with the Seminar on Minorities. The Expanded Bureau considered the draft reports and resolutions that will be presented to the Assembly Members at the Annual Session in Bucharest, to be held from 6 to

10 July. The Bureau also heard reports from the Treasurer and the Secretary General as well as from the Democracy Teams on Belarus and Moldova. The Assembly’s ad hoc Committee on Election Monitoring met in Antalya to discuss recent elections in the OSCE region and to exchange experiences and ideas on the follow-up of monitoring reports. It was decided that the next Seminar in the series would be held in Limassol, Cyprus, from 2-6 October 2000, on the theme: ‘Organized crime and corruption’.

PA President makes visits to Georgia and Armenia

From 23 to 29 April, OSCE PA President, Mrs. Helle Degn, paid official visits to Georgia and Armenia, in order to support OSCE field activities, to promote the parliamentary dimension of the OSCE and to gain further insight into the political problems in the area. The presidential visit to Georgia also served as a follow-up to the October 1999 parliamentary elections. During her meetings in Tbilisi, she welcomed the revision of the electoral code of conduct, which is planned to take place later this year, and she acknowledged Georgian initiatives to incorporate OSCE recommendations made after the parliamentary elections in October 1999.

Mrs. Degn held meetings with a number of high-level Georgian officials, including the President, the Speaker of Parliament, the Chairman of the Supreme Court, the Chairman of the Central Election Commission and the deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs as well as with the Georgian OSCE PA Delegation. She also met members of the OSCE Mission to Georgia and had the opportunity to visit the OSCE Border Observation Mission in Shatili and to talk with some of the monitors.

In her visit to Armenia, Mrs. Degn

met with several high-level officials, including the President, the Chairman of the Parliament, the President of the Constitutional Court, the Catholicus of the worldwide Armenian Church. She also saw the Deputy Chairman of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, and with the Armenian Delegation to the OSCE PA.

During these meetings, Mrs. Degn

discussed the forthcoming constitutional reforms and stressed the importance of the separation of powers and the establishment of an Ombudsman institution.

In Yerevan, she met members of the newly opened OSCE Mission, and had the opportunity to learn about the activities of the mission as well as receive a briefing on the current situation in the country.

In both countries, the PA President highlighted the need to solve internal as well as regional conflicts in the Caucasus, in order to secure further development. In this regard, she welcomed initiatives to create regional co-operation in the form of a Stability Pact for the Caucasus, and the organization of a forum for discussions between parliamentarians in the region.

REPORT from the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

The Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media is located at Kärtner Ring 5-7, A-1010 Vienna, Austria, tel.: (+43-1) 512 21 45-0, fax: (+43-1) 512 21 45-9, e-mail: pm-fom@osce.org

OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media addresses US Congress

On 4 April, Freimut Duve, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, addressed the Commission on Security and Co-operation in Europe of the United States Congress in Washington. In his remarks, the OSCE Representative gave a general overview of his activities and briefed the Commission on a number of cases that his had Office dealt with in the previous months. In his statement he said that his Office was, "the first international governmental organization to raise the case of Andrei Babitsky, the Radio Liberty reporter held for a time in Chechnya, with the Russian Government, and to pursue it both publicly and through interventions with the authorities until this courageous Russian reporter was finally allowed to go back to his family."

The OSCE Representative also drew the attention of the Commission to the current media situation in a number of OSCE participating States, among them Russia, Ukraine and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. On Ukraine, Mr. Duve told the congressmen: "Although officially censorship is abolished and the current legal framework for media devel-

opment is adequate, we have found numerous cases of harassment of media critical of the current President."

The Representative also presented the Commission with his Office's Yearbook and the Report on International Assistance to Media in South-Eastern Europe prepared by a leading scholar on this subject, Mark Thompson.

Representative warns of grave danger to free media in Serbia

On 12 April, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, responded to a letter sent to him by the Yugoslav Ambassador to Austria, Rados Smiljkovic, who accused Mr. Duve of being "one-sided, partial and unobjective" in his criticism of the harassment by the Belgrade regime of the Serbian independent media. In his response, Mr. Duve gave new examples of the pressure that was being applied on the media in Serbia. Among them the harassment of reporters from such prominent independent media outlets as Danas, Glas Javnosti, Beta, Fonet and Studio B. The later, for example, was fined 300,000 dinars on 10 April and its Director, Dragan Kojadinovic, personally fined

150,000 dinars after charges were brought against the TV station by police general Branko Djuric for a report on the car accident in which the opposition leader, Vuk Draskovic, was injured.

Lack of public awareness of free media in Ukraine remains a concern

On 18 April, the OSCE Representative addressed Ukrainian Foreign Minister, Boris Tarasyuk, reminding the Government of the recommendations issued by his Office in conjunction with the Council of Europe following a round table on libel held in December 1999 in Kyiv (co-organized by his Office, the Council of Europe and Irex/ProMedia). Mr. Duve suggested that some of the recommendations could be developed into projects for the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine.

One of the issues raised by the OSCE Representative was the lack of public awareness of European standards in the field of free media and press freedom. "To spread information about this topic, our suggestion is a television programme where media experts would discuss free media and the problems related to it," Mr. Duve stressed in his letter to the Minister.

RFOM Adviser discusses media development

On 13-15 April, Alexander Ivanko, Adviser to the OSCE Representative on

Freedom of the Media, attended the Taormina Conference 2000 in Italy where he took part in a discussion on 'Chaos and after: long-term reconstruction and

peace-building' and spoke on the role of the OSCE in media development in post-conflict societies, focusing on Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo.

REPORT from the OSCE Secretary General and the Secretariat

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OSCE Secretary General addresses Permanent Council on Central Asia

On 6 April, OSCE Secretary General, Jan Kubis, addressed the Permanent Council in his capacity as Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office for Central Asia. He outlined to the Delegations his general approach to carrying out his mandate as Personal Representative for Central Asia and informed them about his activities since his appointment in mid-January, including his visits to all five Central Asian OSCE participating States.

Personal Representatives are appointed by the Chairperson-in-Office (CiO) with a clear and precise mandate to assist the CiO in carrying out his or her tasks. This year, the Chairperson-in-Office has appointed four personal representatives: Ambassador Albert Rohan for South-Eastern Europe, Ambassador Andrzej Kasprzyk for Nagorno-Karabakh, Ambassador Heidi Tagliavini for other missions in the Caucasus and Ambassador Jan Kubis, the OSCE Secretary General, for Central Asia.

Specific issues broached by Mr. Kubis included the perspectives and limits for regional co-operation in Central Asia, the security situation, and the progress on democratization and elec-

tions. In his address, Mr. Kubis also focused on the initiatives promoted by the Chairperson-in-Office, as well as other activities for Central Asia envisaged by the various OSCE bodies. Intensive co-ordination between all OSCE Institutions and international organizations will be actively promoted by Mr. Kubis.

Working visits

From 13 to 14 April, the OSCE Secretary General attended a policy conference entitled, 'From reaction to prevention: opportunities for the UN system in the new millennium'. The conference was organized in New York by the International Peace Academy in collaboration with the Strategic Planning Unit of the Executive Office of the United Nations Secretary-General and the Government of Sweden.

Aimed at identifying ways of developing instruments for conflict prevention in the United Nations system, it was co-chaired by the Swedish State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Jan Eliasson, and the Under-Secretary-General of the UN Department of Political Affairs, Sir Kieran Prendergast.

Mr. Kubis presented an overview of the OSCE's conflict prevention instru-

ments and mechanisms, and efforts aimed at strengthening these mechanisms.

From 26 to 28 April, at the invitation of the President Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan, the Secretary General attended the first Eurasian Economic Summit, jointly sponsored by the World Economic Forum and the Government of Kazakhstan. Mr. Kubis moderated a workshop on 'Actions to Implement Regional Stability and Integration'. He was received by President Nazarbayev, and held talks with the Prime Minister, Mr. Tokayev, and the Foreign Minister, Mr. Idrissov.

During his stay, Mr. Kubis also met with the Deputy Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, Mr. Sugisaki, the Vice President of the World Bank, Mr. Linn, and the President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Mr. Frank. The Secretary General informed them about OSCE activities in Central Asia, and discussed ways of improving co-operation and sharing of information.

On 28 April, Mr. Kubis travelled to Kyrgyzstan, where together with Prime Minister Muraliev and Foreign Minister Imanaliev, he inaugurated the OSCE Field Office in Osh on 29 April (*see News from the Field*).

LIST OF PUBLIC INFORMATION MATERIALS

available upon request at the Vienna or Prague Offices of the OSCE Secretariat*
and via the OSCE website (www.osce.org/publications)

* Rytirska 31, CZ-110 00 Prague 1, Czech Republic

Publications	Publisher/ Editor	Language(s)
OSCE Newsletter (monthly) Volume VII (2000), Volume VI (1999), Volume V (1998), Volume IV (1997), Volume III (1996), Volume II (1995), Volume I (1994)	OSCE Secretariat	Since January 1998 in all six OSCE official languages (English, French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish) 1994-97 in English and Russian
Fact Sheet (revised October 1999) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What is the OSCE? ¹ ■ The OSCE Secretary General and the Secretariat ■ Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights² ■ Representative on Freedom of the Media ■ High Commissioner on National Minorities ■ OSCE Parliamentary Assembly² ■ Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina³ ■ Mission to Croatia³ ■ Mission in Kosovo³ ■ Presence in Albania³ 	OSCE Secretariat	¹ 'What is OSCE?' is available in all six OSCE official languages. ² Also available in Russian. ³ Also available in local languages.
OSCE Handbook general information on OSCE, Third Edition (March 1999)	OSCE Secretariat	English Also available on-line at: www.osce.org/publications
Survey of OSCE Long-Term Missions and other OSCE Field Activities (January 2000)	OSCE Secretariat/ Conflict Prevention Centre	English
The Secretary General's Annual Report on OSCE Activities (1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998 and 1999)	OSCE Secretariat	In all six OSCE official languages
OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights Semi-annual Reports	ODIHR	English and Russian

Publications	Publisher/ Editor	Language(s)
<p>CD-ROM Compilation of documents 1973-1997 Includes documents from Summit Meetings, Follow-up and Review Conferences, Ministerial Councils, Senior and Permanent Council, Forum for Security Co-operation, Expert Meetings, OSCE Newsletters, Secretary General Annual Reports, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and ODIHR publications, Seminars, public releases and speeches from the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, etc. <i>First Edition</i></p>	OSCE Secretariat, Prague Office	Each CD-Rom contains the documents in all six OSCE official languages
<p>Other publications on democratization and human rights are available at the ODIHR website: (www.osce.org/odihr/publications.htm)</p>	ODIHR	English
<p>From CSCE to OSCE Statements and Speeches by Dr. Wilhelm Höynck, Secretary General of the OSCE, 1993-96</p>	OSCE Secretariat	English
<p>Bibliography on the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities: Documents, Speeches, Related Publications. <i>Third Edition</i></p>	The Foundation on Inter-Ethnic Relations, The Hague, March 1997	English
<p>The Role of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities in OSCE Conflict Prevention – An Introduction</p>	ibid. June 1997	English Russian
<p>The Oslo Recommendations Regarding the Linguistic Rights of National Minorities and Explanatory Note</p>	ibid. February 1998	English
<p>Chronological Review from 1973 to 1998 of CSCE/OSCE official publications <i>List of bound versions of documents issued at the conclusion of a review, follow-up and other major CSCE/OSCE events including the Negotiations on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures</i></p>	Prague Office	English
<p>Reference Manual – Decisions Compilation 1993-94, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998 and 1999</p>	Prague Office	English



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