

# *Parliamentary Assembly*



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The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly represents the Organization's parliamentary dimension. Comprising 317 parliamentarians, the Assembly's primary task is to support inter-parliamentary dialogue, an important aspect of the overall effort of meeting the challenges of democracy throughout the OSCE region. The declarations passed by the Assembly each year, which are forwarded to governments and OSCE Institutions, represent the collective voice of the parliaments of the OSCE's participating States.

Originally established by the 1990 Paris Summit to promote greater involvement in the OSCE by national parliaments, the Assembly has become an active and prominent member of the OSCE family. The Assembly brings together domestic members of parliaments from the participating States several times a year to discuss OSCE-related affairs and to produce recommendations. Also, through regular issue-specific conferences, parliamentarians are provided with the opportunity to exchange views, debate best practices and to engage with international experts on OSCE issues. Through an active election observation programme, the parliamentarians use their unique expertise as directly elected officials, and play a lead role in OSCE observation activities.

Each year the Assembly elects a President by majority vote to act as its high representative and to chair its primary meetings. The President regularly participates in the work of the OSCE at the ministerial level, including Troika meetings and the Ministerial Council.

The Assembly's International Secretariat is located in Copenhagen, hosted by the Danish Parliament. The Secretariat is headed by Secretary General R. Spencer Oliver, who was reappointed to another five-year term in July. With a permanent staff of 14 people, the Assembly also maintains a small liaison office in Vienna.

## Inter-parliamentary dialogue

**14<sup>th</sup> Annual Session in Washington, D.C., July.** The largest meeting of the Assembly takes place in July each year, at the invitation of the Parliament of a participating State. In 2005, parliamentarians from 51 OSCE States, plus members from Partner countries, gathered in Washington, D.C., to discuss current international security, economic, environmental and human rights issues, and subsequently passed the *Washington Declaration* with recommendations in these fields. In honour of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, the session focused on the theme *Thirty Years since Helsinki: Challenges Ahead*.

The *Washington Declaration* raised issues of concern to people throughout the region. Amongst other things, the Declaration included recommendations regarding outreach programmes by the OSCE to neighbouring countries, called for assistance in the development of small entrepreneurship and urged full respect by all participating States for the Geneva Conventions for all prisoners of war. The Assembly also adopted a number of issue-specific resolutions proposed by the parliamentarians. These resolutions

focused on issues such as improving gender equality, reform of the OSCE, combating anti-Semitism, and combating trafficking in human beings, as well as on regional issues such as Abkhazia (Georgia), Moldova and the Mediterranean.

In accordance with traditional practice, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel, and the OSCE Secretary General, Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, both addressed the Session and answered questions from the parliamentarians on a wide range of OSCE issues.

The Assembly also unanimously re-elected U.S. Congressman Alcee L. Hastings as President, to serve until July 2006. Three new Vice-Presidents were elected to join the Assembly Bureau which now consists of President Alcee L. Hastings, Vice-Presidents Nino Burjanadze (Georgia), Tone Tingsgaard (Sweden), Nevzat Yalcintas (Turkey), Panayiotis Kammenos (Greece), Giovanni Kessler (Italy), Nebahat Albayrak (Netherlands), Pia Christmas-Moeller (Denmark), Barbara Haering (Switzerland), Oleh Bilorus (Ukraine), Treasurer Jerry Grafstein (Canada) and President Emeritus Bruce George (United Kingdom).



Parliamentary Assembly summer meeting

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



**U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Parliamentary Assembly President Alcee Hastings at the summer conference.**

## Parliamentary impetus for reform

**The Assembly considers 'The Future of the OSCE'.** At its Annual Session in Washington in July, the Parliamentary Assembly adopted a resolution calling for effective implementation of recommendations on reforming the OSCE.

### Ministers address OSCE reform at the Assembly's Annual Session

*"Your input can stimulate participating States to think 'outside the box' and to raise issues that consensus-based bodies may shy away from."*

**OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Dimitrij Rupel**

*"As the Chairman-in-Office and the Parliamentary Assembly take a fresh look at the OSCE agenda and consider these and other items, preserving the integrity of Helsinki principles and ensuring that the OSCE continues to be an agent of peaceful, democratic transformation should be paramount objectives. Any new procedures must not come at the expense of principle, and any institutional reforms should be geared to strengthening the OSCE's ability to produce results on the ground, particularly through its field missions."*

**U.S. Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice**

Prior to the Annual Session, the Assembly undertook a project to support the work of the OSCE Eminent Persons Group, which Chairman-in-Office Dimitrij Rupel appointed to give new impetus to political dialogue and to provide strategic vision for the Organization in the years to come. At the invitation of the President of the OSCE Assembly and the Head of the Swiss Foundation for World Affairs, 17 experts on OSCE affairs, including Ministers, Ambassadors and members of the OSCE Assembly, submitted written contributions which were subsequently discussed at a June colloquium on *The Future of the OSCE*. The report on this colloquium was conveyed by Assembly President Hastings to the OSCE Chairman-in-Office and the Permanent Council.

Participants and contributors to the colloquium unanimously agreed that the OSCE is still a valuable and relevant interna-

tional organization that should continue to play a critical role in promoting stability and security in Europe. The political commitments made in the Helsinki Final Act, the Charter of Paris and other CSCE/OSCE documents are of great value and should be preserved and upheld. It was also agreed that the problems facing the OSCE are first and foremost political – structural reform in and of itself will not solve the political challenges that only participating States can address. The governments of the 55 OSCE states were urged to reconfirm their commitment to a useful, credible and professional OSCE that serves the interests of all. Participants stressed that they should also commit themselves at the highest political levels to full implementation of all of their OSCE commitments and to future improvements in the structures and procedures of the Organization.

The Assembly has long aimed for reform of certain mechanisms of the OSCE to ensure a well-functioning and effective Organization. In particular, the Assembly has criticized the strict use of consensus in the OSCE decision-making process. To this end, it established an *ad hoc* Committee on Transparency and Accountability in the OSCE in 2001 to spearhead Assembly efforts. Headed by U.S. Congressman Steny Hoyer, the *ad hoc* Committee has improved interaction between the leadership of the OSCE and the Assembly, and continues to push for other key goals.

## Election observation

Throughout the year, the Assembly continued its active election observation programme, sending 186 parliamentarians to observe elections in Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Albania, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. As directly elected officials, parliamentarians use their unique knowledge of electoral processes to assess the conduct of elections in relation to participating States' OSCE commitments. After briefings from senior OSCE and ODIHR election experts and local leaders, parliamentarians deploy to polling stations to observe the sealing of ballot boxes in the morning, voting during the day, and the counting of ballots in the evening.

Whenever the Assembly plays a lead role in observing elections, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office appoints a senior member of the Assembly to act as his Special Co-ordinator to lead the short-term observers and to present the conclusions of the observation mission in conjunction with other appropriate officials.

**Tenth OSCE Prize for Journalism**

On 1 July, Ukrainian Television Channel Five was awarded the OSCE Prize for Journalism and Democracy for its crucial role in the events of October-December 2004 in which Ukraine peacefully transitioned to a more democratically oriented and legitimately elected system of government.

In a special ceremony held in conjunction with the Assembly's Annual Session, President Hastings presented the Prize to Roman Skrypin, editor-in-chief of Channel Five.

The OSCE Assembly decided to award the 10<sup>th</sup> annual Prize to Ukraine Channel Five to honour the great courage they displayed by reporting independently at a time when the Government was placing strict controls on media coverage, ignoring widespread popular discontent, and working to manipulate electoral processes.

Presenting the Prize to Mr. Skrypin, President Hastings said: "These historic events captured the attention of the entire world. Had it not been for the work of Channel 5, many Ukrainians would not have initially been aware that a peaceful revolution was taking place on the central square of their capital."

The OSCE Prize for Journalism and Democracy was established by the Assembly in 1996 and became an important instrument for raising awareness on media freedom issues worldwide. The US\$ 20,000 Prize, roughly €17,000, has been awarded annually to journalists and organizations whose work promotes OSCE principles of human rights and democracy.



**Roman Skrypin (standing centre left) receives the prize from Parliamentary Assembly President Hastings (standing centre right).**

In 2005, Chairman-in-Office Dimitrij Rupel appointed the following OSCE Assembly members as his Special Co-ordinators:

- Kimmo Kiljunen (Finland) for the parliamentary elections in Kyrgyzstan in February and the presidential election in July, as well as the parliamentary elections in Moldova in March;
- President Hastings (USA) for the parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan in November; and

- Bruce George, former President of the Assembly (UK), for the presidential election in Kazakhstan in December.

In observing elections, the OSCE Assembly works in close co-operation with the ODIHR and other parliamentary assemblies in the OSCE area. Since the inception of the Assembly's election observation programme, more than 2,000 OSCE parliamentarians have observed elections in the OSCE and beyond.



**Assembly President Hastings delivers the preliminary conclusions on the elections in Azerbaijan, in Baku, on 7 November.**

*Issues in focus*

The Assembly has established small *ad hoc* Committees and Working Groups to deal with certain issues of particular concern in a more focused manner. The President of the Assembly may also appoint Special Representatives on areas of interest to act on his or her behalf. In 2005, these members have been active in pursuing the following issues:

**ad hoc Committee on Abkhazia (Georgia).** The *ad hoc* Committee has continued its work aimed at promoting the creation of a political framework that could facilitate reconciliation and resolution of the conflict in Abkhazia (Georgia), including through direct contact between the *ad hoc* Committee and Abkhaz representatives. The Committee renewed its efforts and activities following the adoption by the Assembly of a resolution on *The Situation in Abkhazia, Georgia* at the Annual Session in Washington, including through a visit to Georgia by the head of the Committee, Vice-President Tone Tingsgaard (Sweden).

**ad hoc Working Group on Belarus.** Throughout 2005, the Working Group headed by Uta Zapf (Germany) continued working for an open dialogue with the Belarusian Parliament and Government, as well as with opposition representatives and other interested parties. The Group also moved forward with efforts to organize a series of seminars in co-operation with the Belarusian Delegation to the OSCE Assembly and to include a wide range of political forces in Belarus.

**Special Representative on Gender Issues.** At the Annual Session in July, the Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution on *Improving Gender Equality in the OSCE*, presented by Vice-President Tone Tingsgaard, Special Representative on Gender Issues. In conjunction with this resolution, the Special Representative presented the Assembly's annual Gender Report, which reached the discouraging conclusion that a "glass ceiling" still prevents women from advancing into the leadership level of the OSCE. The Special Representative continued to promote dialogue on the issue of equality between men and women and established an informal network of parliamentarians in the OSCE who take an interest in the promotion of this issue.

**Special Representative on Guantanamo.** In February, Anne-Marie Lizin, President of the Belgian Senate, was appointed as Special Representative to follow up and report to the Assembly on the situation of detainees from OSCE participating States in the U.S. facility in Guantanamo, Cuba. The Special Representative's main recommendations, outlined in her report presented in July, included calls for the U.S. Government to implement a calendar for closure of the facility, as well as to institute more extensive exchanges of intelligence with other countries to ensure maximum usage of anti-terrorist information. Finally, she recommended continued pressure by the international community on the U.S. Government to close the detention centre.

**ad hoc Parliamentary Team on Moldova.** Following meetings by the Parliamentary Team on Moldova with officials in Moscow and Chisinau, the Assembly adopted a resolution on Moldova in Washington in July. The resolution underlined that any settlement of the conflict in Transdniestria must be acceptable to the entire people of Moldova, and further stressed the importance of improved democratization to this end. The Team, headed by Kimmo Kiljunen (Finland), recommended consideration of mandating the OSCE to conduct elections in Transdniestria. Since 2000, the Parliamentary Team on Moldova has continued efforts aimed at resolving the status of Transdniestria, through the promotion of dialogue between parties and organizations representing different sections of the Moldovan population.

**Special Representative on the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict** Presenting his report *A Golden Opportunity* at the Assembly's Annual Session in July, Special Representative Goran Lennmarker (Sweden) stressed that the potential existed for a win-win solution from which both Armenia and Azerbaijan would benefit. The Special Representative suggested basing a solution on experiences from Europe, where democracy and integration are fundamental components in securing a lasting peace. After visiting Armenia and Azerbaijan and the region of Nagorno-Karabakh, Mr. Lennmarker organized a joint visit to Brussels for representatives of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Delegations of Azerbaijan and Armenia to discuss the future of the two countries within the framework of European and Transatlantic institutions. Since his appointment in July 2002, he has worked to encourage reconciliation and rehabilitation in the area through parliamentary dialogue.

## Thematic conferences

**The High North – Environment, Security and Co-operation, Tromsø, Norway.** For the Assembly's first-ever conference focusing specifically on Northern issues, parliamentarians from across the OSCE gathered in Tromsø, Norway on 12 and 13 May. This conference on *The High North – Environment, Security and Co-operation* was organized to highlight the links between environmental concerns and security challenges in the Arctic region. Presentations and discussions throughout the conference examined the potential dangers to local and international stability of environmental stress, as well as the improved relations that can develop from co-operation on environmental affairs.

**Democracy and Good Governance in Multi-Ethnic Societies as a basis for Stability and Security, Sveti Stefan, Serbia and Montenegro.** Gathering in Montenegro in October, more than three hundred participants considered and debated questions of good governance in multi-ethnic societies in the annual OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Autumn Conference. In four focused sessions, the participants heard interventions by experts in the fields, including several Heads of OSCE field operations, and senior political leaders from Serbia and Montenegro. The parliamentarians took advantage of this opportunity to exchange experiences and debate practices in governing multi-ethnic societies.

## Presidential activities

As the highest representative of the Assembly, President Hastings, a Congressman from Florida, has maintained a very busy schedule on behalf of the Assembly. In addition to chairing all of the Assembly's major meetings, in 2005 he led the OSCE election observation mission to Azerbaijan, paid official visits to numerous participating States, and represented the Assembly at the meetings of other organizations and OSCE Institutions.

During his presidency, Congressman Hastings has placed particular emphasis on parliamentary dialogue, working to ensure the Assembly is a reliable partner contributing to the ongoing success of the OSCE. To this end, the President promoted discussion on reform of the OSCE within the Assembly, and pursued election observation as a key activity in the Assembly's efforts at strengthening democracy within the OSCE region.

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