

News from Copenhagen

Seasons Greetings from the President

As we take a pause for the holiday season, I want to thank all the Members of the Assembly for their support and hard work during the past year. It was an honour to be elected as President of the Assembly at our Annual Session in Edinburgh. Since my election, I have done my best to represent the Assembly and to enhance our important commitments. During this time I have had the opportunity to visit several OSCE participating States including Austria, Bulgaria, Italy, Lithuania, Russia and Turkey. I have addressed the OSCE Ministerial Council in Sofia, the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna, and other meetings including the Anti-Semitism Conference in Brussels, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Venice, the International Vilnius Conference, and the Anti-Defamation League in Rome. I chaired the Assembly's Autumn Conference on Human Trafficking and the Second Parliamentary Forum on the Mediterranean in Rhodes which were a great success.

I have also visited these past days our Mediterranean Partners in the Maghreb: Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. In all my visits I was reassured by the feeling that the OSCE and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly are regarded as important and valuable institutions. The OSCE, as we have recommended on numerous occasions, needs to reform and adapt itself to continue its important mission. In this regard, I congratulate Minister Passy and the Bulgarian Chairmanship for stressing the need for reform during the Bulgarian Chairmanship.

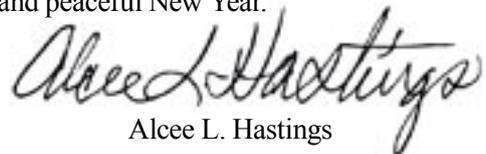
I specially want to thank all the members of the Parliamentary Assembly who have been active during these past months and who have participated in our meetings, ad hoc committees,

and election monitoring projects. Our active involvement in election monitoring, as proven by recent missions in Belarus, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, and the USA, provides political leadership and expertise to the observation process, as well as increases the visibility of the OSCE. I am proud that more than 100 parliamentarians and staff from our Assembly will be monitoring the re-run of the elections in the Ukraine on 26 December. I very much welcome and appreciate this effort. I will also be spending Christmas in Kiev, along with the leader of the observation, President Emeritus Bruce George, who has done an outstanding job during the first two rounds.

Also, I thank the parliaments of Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Greece, and the United Kingdom each of which have generously hosted the Assembly for meetings and other activities during 2004.

The International Secretariat in Copenhagen also deserves our collective gratitude. Secretary General Spencer Oliver and our fine staff have continued to do an excellent job this year in ensuring the smooth and efficient functioning of the Assembly.

Let me conclude by saying that the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly will continue next year to make a positive contribution to the important work of the OSCE. You have my best wishes for a healthy and happy holiday season and may I wish you all a very prosperous and peaceful New Year.



Alcee L. Hastings



With Prime Minister Erdogan in Ankara



With C-i-O Solomon Passy in Sofia



Addressing the OSCE Ministerial Council



With Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov in Moscow