

Hastings visits Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Armenia and Georgia

In early November, OSCE PA President Alcee L. Hastings paid official visits to Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Armenia, and Georgia. The President began his trip in Kazakhstan with an address to students at the Eurasia University in Astana, where he was also awarded an honorary degree. Hastings held high-level meetings with the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, Foreign Minister Kasymzhomart Tokayev, and the Presidents of both houses of the Kazakh parliament. In view of the upcoming election in Kazakhstan, Hastings also met with the Chairman of the Central Elections Commission, Mr. Onalsyn Zhumabekov. In Uzbekistan Congressman Hastings held talks with President Islam Karimov and other senior officials.

While in Armenia, President Hastings met with Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian, the Speaker of the Parliament, Arthur Baghdasaryan, the Head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan, Vladimir Pryakhin, and other political and civil society leaders. Congressman Hastings and Foreign Minister Oskanian particularly discussed relations within the South Caucasus

region, as well as developments in the negotiations over the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In his meetings with officials, Hastings also discussed the upcoming referendum on proposed constitutional reforms in Armenia.

Following his visit to Armenia, President Hastings travelled to Georgia where he met with the Speaker of Parliament and Vice-President of the Assembly Nino Burjanadze and other Members of the Georgian OSCE PA Delegation, as well as the President of Georgia Mikhail Saakashvili and Prime Minister Zurab Nogaideli. During his meetings, Congressman Hastings discussed the situation in Georgia including the unresolved conflicts in Abkhazia and particularly the Prime Minister's peace plan on South Ossetia.

President Hastings also discussed the upcoming OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting in Ljubljana and the reform processes in the OSCE. President Hastings' visit started with a briefing at the OSCE Mission to Georgia where the Members of the Mission provided information about their work projects and the situation in the country.



Belgian Ambassador visits Assembly Headquarters

On November 22 the Belgian Ambassador to Denmark, H.E. Mr. Marc Van Craen, paid a visit to the International Secretariat in Copenhagen, where he met with Secretary General Spencer Oliver, Deputy Secretary General Tina Schøn and Programme Officer Paul LeGendre. Ambassador Van Craen was informed about the Assembly's workings and activities by the President, Assembly Committees, as well as work in the field. In particular, the Ambassador was briefed on the upcoming election observation mission to Kazakhstan, to be headed by OSCE PA President Emeritus Bruce George.

In 2006 Belgium will take over the Chairmanship of the OSCE, and will also host the Parliamentary Assembly's 15th Annual Session in July, and Ambassador Van Craen expressed his interest in maintaining close contact with the Assembly during the coming year.

