

News from Copenhagen



PA President Joao Soares addresses the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

Soares visits Warsaw, addresses ODIHR meeting

OSCE PA President Joao Soares (Portugal) visited Poland for meetings with the Polish OSCE PA Delegation and parliament, and addressed the closing session of the OSCE/ODIHR's Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM).

In Warsaw on 9 and 10 October, the President held meetings with the Speaker of the Senate, Bogdan Borusewicz, Deputy Speaker of the Sejm, Jerzy Szmajdzinski, and with the Head of the OSCE PA Delegation, Pawel Poncylyusz and other Members of the Delegation. In his meetings, the President stressed the need for continued parliamentary dialogue to overcome challenges in the OSCE region. In this regard, he highlighted the successful debate on the Crisis in Georgia that the Assembly organized during the Toronto Fall Meetings. President Soares welcomed the active involvement of parliamentarians from Poland in OSCE PA election observation activities.

In addressing the ODIHR's meeting, President Soares underlined the importance of the OSCE. He noted that it remains one of the most effective international organizations in the world, operating on a relatively small budget. He expressed his strong support for the work of the Organization, highlighting in particular its extensive field presence. He also stressed the democratic aspect that the Parliamentary Assembly brings to OSCE work, and the importance of public debate on current issues. In this regard, he welcomed the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting as an opportunity for OSCE representatives to hear directly from civil society. The ODIHR's primary annual meeting, the two-week HDIM is intended to serve as an opportunity to review implementation of OSCE human dimension commitments.

President Soares applauded the Finnish OSCE Chairmanship for their excellent diplomatic work and expressed his hope for close co-operation with the OSCE/ODIHR and its new Director, Janez Lenarcic. The President also took the opportunity to visit the ODIHR headquarters in Warsaw.

The President was accompanied by Presidential Advisor Andreas Baker from the International Secretariat and by Advisor Nuno Paixao from the Portuguese Parliament.



Pia Christmas-Moeller with Florida Secretary of State, Kurt S. Browning

Christmas-Moeller visits U.S. in preparation for elections

OSCE PA Vice-President Pia Christmas-Moeller (Denmark) this week is conducting a pre-election visit to the United States in preparation for the Assembly's election observation mission for the U.S. elections.

The visit to Washington and several of the battleground states during the week is yet another phase of the Assembly's work to prepare the over one hundred parliamentarians participating in the observation mission.

OSCE PA President Joao Soares (Portugal) will lead the mission and Ms. Christmas-Moeller will serve as Deputy Head. On Tuesday, she visited Florida's capital Tallahassee for talks with election and political officials, including Secretary of State Kurt S. Browning, Leon County Supervisor of Elections Ion Sancho, and Leonard Joseph, Executive Director of the Florida Democratic Party. A series of election issues including preparations for a record turnout on voting day by Florida's 11 million registered voters were discussed. The pre-election trip also includes visits to Columbus, Ohio, Barack Obama's election headquarters in Chicago, and to Denver, Colorado.

The OSCE PA's preparations for its mission to the US elections started in August. In September, almost 50 parliamentarians from 17 countries attended a two-day elections seminar in Washington, where, among others both the Democratic Majority Leader Steny Hoyer and Republican Whip Roy Blunt addressed the attendees. The preparations also include intensive research and fact-gathering, including media monitoring.

The parliamentarians will gather in Washington at the end of October for another full day of briefings before deployment for observation of the election process and voting day in the states of Florida, North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Ohio, New Hampshire, Missouri, Colorado and New Mexico. The OSCE PA's post-election statement will be made public at a press conference with President Soares on 6 November.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly observed the 2004 US Presidential election and it will be the largest contingent of international observers at the US elections this year.

Ms. Christmas-Moeller was supported during the pre-election visit to the U.S. by OSCE PA Director of Communications, Klas Bergman and Presidential Advisor, Andreas Baker.