

Preparation under way for 2012 economic conference in Batumi, Georgia

On the invitation of the Georgian Parliament, the OSCE Parliament Assembly Economic Conference will take place in Batumi from 12 to 14 May 2012. In preparation for the meeting, Secretary General Spencer Oliver and Senior Counsellor Semyon Dzakhaev visited Georgia from 14 to 16 November.

Hosted by the Vice-Chairman of the Georgian Parliament, George Tsereteli, Spencer Oliver and Semyon Dzakhaev met in Tbilisi with the Secretary General of the Georgian Parliament David Janiashvili, the Georgian Delegation to the OSCE PA, and other officials.

The meetings focused on a range of details related to the Economic Conference including logistics, where it was agreed that the Georgian air company Georgian Airways will arrange direct charter flights from Vienna to Batumi on Friday, 11 May and back to Vienna on Monday, 14 May.

In Batumi, assisted by Mr. Tsereteli and Karlo Tskitishvili, the Head of the International Relations Department of the Georgian Parliament, Mr. Oliver visited prospective conference venues and hotel accommodations for participants. They also met with Batumi Mayor Robert Chkhaidze and city officials.



Overlooking the Black Sea, Secretary General Spencer Oliver and George Tsereteli in Batumi, Georgia.

Mr. Oliver and Mr. Dzakhaev expressed their satisfaction and conviction that the conference will be well organized and that Batumi's location – on the shores of the Black Sea just a few kilometres from the Georgia-Turkey border – will be a perfect setting for discussions on economic development. Rapid modernization and renovation of the historic sea port has made Batumi an attractive destination for tourists as well as a regional hub for commerce and transportation.

Mecacci addresses Human Dimension Committee ahead of Ministerial Council

In a continuation of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's efforts to increase co-operation with the OSCE's governmental side in Vienna, Matteo Mecacci, chair of the OSCE PA's Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions, met with his counterpart committee Monday and outlined several ways the upcoming Ministerial Council could benefit from parliamentary input.

Addressing the OSCE's Human Dimension Committee meeting, Mr. Mecacci (Italy) drew attention to the work of the OSCE PA on democracy and human rights, including its long history leading election observation missions. He urged diplomats in Vienna to draft Ministerial decisions that show the political priorities of our organization are "in direct connection with the problems faced by our people."

Draft decisions related to the protection of journalists, ensuring freedom of expression, national human rights institutions and combating discrimination all include language from previous Parliamentary Assembly declarations. He offered the Assembly as a resource to ambassadors working on drafting language for the Ministerial Council in Vilnius, highlighting the "wealth of substance, legitimacy, and intellectual capacity [that] exists in the Parliamentary Assembly."



Matteo Mecacci (Italy) speaks to the Human Dimension Committee in Vienna.

He encouraged the ambassadors "to think of us as an integral part of the discourse in the run-up to Vilnius."

"Through our annual resolutions, we aim to foster debate among legislators from 55 participating States to advance the capacity of our institutions to learn from each other," he said. "Democracy is a work in progress."

Mr. Mecacci was supported in his work in Vienna by Deputy Director for Field Operations Roberto Montella and Research Fellow Dante Mazzari.

His full speech is available online at www.oscepa.org.