

OSCE PA Leadership Visits the United Nations

An OSCE PA delegation, including Members of the Bureau, conducted a visit to the United Nations headquarters in New York from 6-7 November.

The delegation was headed by President Bruce George (United Kingdom) and included Vice-Presidents Barbara Haering (Switzerland), Alcee Hastings (United States), Giovanni Kessler (Italy), Kimmo Kiljunen (Finland), Tone Tingsgård (Sweden) and Nevzat Yalcintas (Turkey). The delegation was accompanied by Secretary General R. Spencer Oliver, Deputy Secretary-General Pentti Väänänen and Programme Officer Paul LeGendre.

The visit was designed as an opportunity for the leadership of the OSCE PA to exchange views with senior UN officials on the many important issues where the activities of the UN and the OSCE overlap and to explore the potential for greater cooperation. Peacekeeping, election observation, the fight against terrorism, as well as regional developments, such as those in the South Caucasus and Central Asia were among



OSCE Vice-President Hastings (centre) addresses UN Under-Secretary General Kieran Prendergast (right).

the subjects for discussion. The delegation also learned about the plans and hopes for reform within the UN, as well as the obstacles that stand in the way.

During the course of the two-day visit, the delegation met with Ms. Louise Frechette, UN Deputy Secretary-General; Sir Kieran Prendergast, UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs; as well as other senior officials in the United Nations Development Programme, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Division for the Advancement of Women, the Elec-

toral Assistance Division, and the Counter-Terrorism Committee.

The delegation also met with Deputy Permanent Representatives from the missions of the United States, the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation. Finally, the delegation met and exchanged views with representatives from several US-based non-governmental organizations doing advocacy work in the OSCE region.

It is anticipated that this visit will become an annual event.

President George Addresses NATO Assembly

The NATO Assembly, which closely co-operates with the OSCE PA, met from 7-11 November 2003 in Orlando, Florida to discuss transatlantic co-operation and topical issues. The Secretary General of NATO, Lord George Robertson, addressed the meeting along with senior officials from the US Government and the Presidents of the Parliamentary Assemblies of OSCE and the WEU.

OSCE PA President Bruce George stressed the importance of parliamentary involvement in international organizations and the added value elected politicians bring to the work of NATO and the OSCE. Mr. George stressed the leading role that parliamentarians play in sharing democratic values and the development of democratic institutions, in particular in the encouragement and oversight of democratic elections. Lord Robertson also strongly endorsed the work of the Parliamentary Assemblies and pointed out that he, along with most of his colleagues at ministerial level, came from the ranks of national parliaments.

Mr. George pointed out that the present OSCE C-i-O, Dutch Foreign Minister Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, who will take up the post of NATO Secretary General next year, was also a former parliamentarian. Also participating in the meeting as members of their respective delegations were three former Foreign Ministers, Lamberto Dini of Italy, Petra Roman of Romania – who served in the OSCE Ministerial Troika – and former OSCE Chairman-in-Office Jaime Gama of Portugal.

Chair of OSCE PA Working Group Visits Minsk

The Chair of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Ad Hoc Working Group on Belarus, Ms. Uta Zapf (Germany), visited Minsk from 30 October – 1 November 2003. Ms. Zapf was accompanied by Programme Officer Paul LeGendre and the visit was organized with the assistance of the OSCE Office in Minsk.

The visit aimed to explore ways to promote dialogue between Members of the National Assembly, opposition voices within the National Assembly, opposition political parties and civil society representatives. Such dialogue is especially important in light of the parliamentary elections scheduled for the Fall of 2004.

During the course of the visit, the delegation met with Mr. Konoplev, Deputy Chairman of the House of Representatives and Head of the Belarusian Delegation to the OSCE PA, as well as other parliamentarians, including from the *Respublika* group. From the government, the delegation met with Mr. Latypov, the Head of the Presidential Administration; Mr. Martynov, the Foreign Minister; Mr. Rusakevich, the Information Minister; and Mr. Golovanov, the Justice Minister. The delegation also met with representatives of opposition parties and civic organizations, as well as OSCE Ambassadors. Finally, the delegation met with family members of those who have disappeared and those who have been imprisoned in circumstances widely believed to be politically motivated.

A press statement issued at the conclusion of the visit can be found at www.osce.org/pa.