

OSCE

NEWSLETTER

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe



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The OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Mircea Geoana, gives a press conference in Armenia, with Roy Reeve (left), Head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan

Chairman-in-Office tours the OSCE participating States in southern Caucasus

Visit highlights current hopes for thawing out of “frozen” conflicts

The Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Romanian Foreign Minister Mircea Geoana, has paid a four-day visit to the three OSCE participating States in the southern Caucasus, during which he was able to see and discuss at first hand the situation in a region where several conflicts have remained unresolved for a period of years, leaving refugees and displaced persons stranded in several locations.

His trip was the longest so far in a period of office that started on 1 January. He visited the Armenian capital, Yerevan, on 27 February, spending 28 February and 1 March in Tbilisi, Georgia, before concluding his trip in Baku, Azerbaijan on 2 March.

In Armenia, the Chairman-in-Office (CiO) held talks with the President, Robert Kocharian, the Chairman of the National Assembly, Armen Khatchatryan and Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanyan, as well as representatives of

non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and local media. He also had a working lunch with participating States’ Ambassadors and Heads of OSCE partner international organizations.

Assessing the process of democratization in the country, Mr. Geoana congratulated Armenia on its recent admission to the Council of Europe. “This step reflects progress and is a message of hope. Armenia is taking its rightful place among the family of European nations,” said Mr. Geoana.

He expressed his gratitude for the support that the Armenian Government and authorities have given the OSCE Office in Yerevan, which was established one year ago. This support, he said, proved the importance that Armenia attached to the implementation of OSCE commitments.

A number of issues were discussed in the meetings, among them economic and environmental issues, legal and electoral reform and media development.

Also touched upon in the discussions was the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. The CiO expressed his hopes for a peaceful resolution to the conflict, as well as pledging the OSCE's full support for the peace process.

"We believe the moment has come to be cautiously optimistic regarding a resolution of this conflict, which has remained frozen for too long", he said.

He emphasized the need for all parties concerned to reach a compromise. He also raised the issue of the return of refugees and displaced persons, offering the assistance and expertise of the OSCE in finding durable solutions to this multifaceted problem.

Continuing on to Georgia, the Foreign Minister Geoana had talks with President Eduard Shevardnadze, State Minister Giorgi Arsenishvili and Foreign Minister Irakli Mengarishvili, as well as with other representatives of the political leadership. He also met representatives of civil society and media.

Expressing his satisfaction with the positive developments in the efforts to resolve the conflict in South Ossetia, the OSCE CiO announced an agreement that the next round of talks between the par-

ties would take place in Bucharest, at a date to be specified later.

Another of the major topics discussed during Mr. Geoana's visit was the OSCE monitoring operation along the border between Georgia and the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation. Agreed by the Permanent Council in December 1999, this activity is seen as having significantly contributed last year to a lessening of tensions and prevented a spillover in the region. An



The CiO visits a hostel in Baku, Azerbaijan, for persons displaced by the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh

extension beyond April 2001 of this aspect of the mandate of the Mission to Georgia, was due to be discussed by the OSCE Permanent Council during March.

Human rights situation

Among other issues touched upon during the visit were the conflict in Abkhazia, the return of refugees and displaced persons, property restitution and economic rehabilitation. The Chairman-in-Office also drew attention to recent reports on the human rights situation in Georgia. In this context he highlighted the need for reform of the electoral legislation. He also called for a greater awareness of the need for religious tolerance.

In Baku, where the CiO concluded his

southern Caucasus trip, he again stressed his strong support for the dialogue between Azerbaijan and Armenia on a settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. This dialogue was due to resume in Paris on 4 March, with a meeting between the two countries' Presidents. "The current direct dialogue is of critical importance. The OSCE is ready to give all its support to this process", said Mr. Geoana. "A lasting agreement depends on the readiness of all parties to show flexibility. If there is progress, the international community will act quickly to assist in the post conflict rehabilitation process."

He emphasized that the involvement and support of the OSCE Minsk Group was complementary to the direct dialogue between the countries. He emphasized however that this did not mean that the Minsk Group would become passive; on the contrary, the OSCE Minsk Group would remain a part-

ner in the efforts to reach a settlement of the conflict.

During his visit to Baku, Mr. Geoana held a *tete-à-tete* meeting with the President of Azerbaijan, Heydar Aliyev. He also met the Speaker of Parliament Mur-tuz Aleskerov, Prime Minister Artur Rasizadeh and Foreign Minister Vilayat Guliyev, as well as representatives of civil society, political parties and the international community.

In Baku, the CiO also visited a hostel for persons displaced by the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. He expressed his deep sympathy for the plight of those on both sides of the conflict forced to flee their homes and stressed that the right of refugees and displaced persons to return must be a central part of any lasting solution.

Media freedom continues to make progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina

A number of successful initiatives by the OSCE Mission is helping gradually to enhance the working conditions for media representatives in BiH

By Jennifer Stone

Beyond any doubt, the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) – as well as in neighbouring Croatia and Yugoslavia – played a significant role in fuelling the propaganda campaign that inflamed public opinion during the disastrous conflict of 1992 to 1995. And even in the past five years, the working conditions of the media

OSCE/MISSION TO BIH



(From left to right) High Representative Wolfgang Petritsch, Christian Ahlund, Chairman of the Advisory Group, and OSCE Head of Mission Robert Barry, present the draft law

in BiH have been marked by consistent pressure on journalists and media outlets, a trend brought into sharp relief during the periods of the elections which the OSCE's BiH Mission has overseen in the past five years.

The implementation of election results and efforts to expose corruption have resulted in renewed pressure on the media. This has sometimes taken the form of direct threats against individual journalists, the abuse of defamation laws and visitations by the tax police. Such tactics have had a chilling effect on investigative reporting of all kinds and prevented exposure of all but the most flagrant crimes and offences of government officials and political parties.

But the media environment has

improved since 1996 – in the recent November 2000 elections, local journalists reported fewer incidents of threats or intimidation than in any previous election. And BiH has witnessed a continuing improvement in both the professionalism of the media and in the climate for freedom of the media. However, vestiges of abuse and intimidation continue.

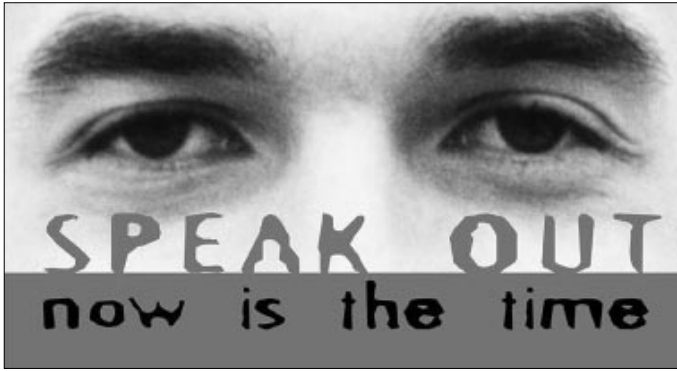
Through the evolution of the peace process, the OSCE Mission has recognized the media as a factor in democracy-building in its own right, as it plays a significant social, economic and political force in the transition of BiH to a stable European state. This concept supports the OSCE's role in media as a larger systemic issue, based on the belief that access to information and freedom to impart

made is both tentative and fragile, and could easily be lost to a new wave of focused nationalistic pressure. The abuse of media for political ends has pointed to the need for an effort to protect journalists. Two areas of the OSCE's work are therefore of particular importance: the protection of journalists' rights and the development of media legislation.

Bomb attack

Protection of journalists came to the forefront of the international community's efforts following the October 1999 car-bomb attack on the editor of *Nezavisne Novine*, a daily produced in Banja Luka, capital of Republika Srpska, one of the country's two so-called "entities".

In response to this and other threats,



The OSCE's FreeMedia Helpline employs a striking logo

in February 2000 the OSCE initiated the FreeMedia Helpline, offering a confidential contact point for journalists subjected to threats, intimidation or interference in the course of their work. This was launched with a public campaign, to increase awareness of journalists' rights and the importance of not remaining silent when such acts occur.

This unique facility was established for two purposes: first, to document actual instances of threats to freedom of the media and second, to provide direct assistance to journalists and media outlets which have experienced threats or interference.

Since the end of 1999, the Helpline has received nearly 155 reports of threats, intimidation or interference, which only partially reflects the actual magnitude of the problem.

Police guidelines

Information collected by the Help Line, and feedback from the media and local police, raised a further concern: that of a lack of mutual awareness about the responsibilities and rights of journalists and police, which was potentially hampering the relations between these two groups. Together with the United Nations Mission to BiH, the OSCE therefore developed guidelines that have been distributed to both police officers and media representatives, to clarify and promote the best possible working relation-

ship between these two groups.

Officially launched in May 2000, these guidelines inform the police about the rights and proper treatment of journalists, while informing journalists

about their responsibilities in dealing with the police. The principles contained in the guidelines are consistent with local laws and international standards of human rights principles.

In 2001, the guidelines are being integrated into United Nations training programmes for its international police task forces and the local police forces throughout BiH.

In a complementary initiative, during 2000 the OSCE drafted a bill on freedom of access to information, in co-operation with the Office of the High Representative (OHR). This was passed into law by the BiH State Parliament last November. A second piece of legislation on defamation was released for public consultation in February this year, and is currently being considered by the governments of the two BiH entities. Together, these laws aim to promote transparency of public offices and ensure freedom of expression for both media and citizens.

"Freedom of expression is a pillar in a democracy. It must be guaranteed and protected," said the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, "Freedom of expression can only be restricted when there is a legitimate interest and then no more than absolutely necessary. One of the acceptable limitations to freedom of expression is protection of reputation, as provided by defamation law. I believe the draft legislation strikes the appropriate balance between freedom of ex-

pression and protection of reputation."

To prepare the laws, the OSCE and OHR established an advisory group of national and international legal experts, which guided the review and development of these pieces of legislation. Work on the adoption of the Freedom of Access to Information Act at the levels of the entities – the BiH Federation and Republika Sprska – is currently underway.

It is hoped that this act will promote much greater openness and accountability of government actions as it will limit the grounds on which information can be withheld and make it possible to challenge the boundaries of unjustified secrecy. At the same time, the draft defamation legislation will bring BiH's defamation laws into accord with the highest international standards.

Increasing accountability

Giving the public the right to access information held by public authorities enables everyone to participate in the political process through a more informed and open debate on policy, while guaranteeing the media the freedom to responsibly investigate and report on corrupt activities with protection and support of the rule of law. This can only increase the level of accountability of public officials to the citizens they are elected or appointed to serve.

According to Robert Barry, Head of the Mission to BiH, "This legislation, when adopted, will be an important step forward for BiH and all of its citizens. In particular, I think that BiH journalists should see this day as an important step forward for them, as this legislation will guarantee that they can pursue their stories without fear of criminal sanctions or politically motivated defamation suits."

Jennifer Stone is a Media Affairs Officer for the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina

Croatia Mission hosts conference on free media in south-eastern Europe

Participants met in Zagreb last month to discuss free media in the region, the protection of journalists and their role in promoting peace and reconciliation

By Alessandro Fracassetti

The four-day event, held at the request of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, in co-operation with the Media Directorate in the Council of Europe (CoE), was aimed at assessing the current state of the media in south-eastern Europe and, at the same time, encouraging the development of regional strategies to promote freedom of the media. It drew some 120 participants and guests from 17 countries, including international and local media professionals, media watchdog groups, NGOs and international organizations concerned with media affairs.

The participants adopted a set of recommendations for the improvement of freedom of the media in the region, which will be part of a report on the conference distributed to the States belonging to the OSCE and the CoE.

The event, which the OSCE Mission to Croatia hosted from 28 February to 2 March, was officially opened by Stjepan Mesic, President of the Republic of Croatia. He delivered a clear message, calling on media in south-eastern Europe to be free of politics. Journalists, he said, were “faced with the need to rehabilitate this partly compromised profession.”

President Mesic said that “only those journalists who have experienced in full the lack of free media and the transfor-

mation of an honourable profession into an obedient servant of war masters, chauvinism and intolerance, are qualified to speak about free media, the promotion of peace and prevention of conflict”.

Despite differences among individual countries in south-eastern Europe, he said, “all of them tried to place the journalist profession in the function of politics, poison the media space with the lan-

in the region would no longer tolerate being subjected to the hardships which it went through in the past”. He noted that several participants were journalists who had personally suffered because of their devotion to finding and reporting the truth.

The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Freimut Duve, said the conference was especially important because democracy was now emerging in Croatia and Serbia. He noted that most media in the region were no longer fomenting conflict.

“But media can do more to foster a public debate and to promote reconciliation. This will not be an easy debate. Many people, including those in power, may feel attacked, even libeled. Journalists, as public servants, have to understand that our level of tolerance must be much higher than

that of any ordinary citizen,” added Mr. Duve.

Christophe Poirel from the CoE concentrated on the legal aspects of freedom of expression, stressing that the Council was determined to continue its efforts in order to remove any obstacles to the exercise of freedom of expression and freedom of the media

Alessandro Fracassetti is Press Spokesperson for the OSCE Mission to Croatia



OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Freimut Duve, addresses participants at the Zagreb media conference

guage of hatred and consciously degraded the basic preconditions of journalism...television especially was turned into an instrument of spreading nationalist intolerance and hatred”, President Mesic said.

Clear message

The Head of the OSCE Mission to Croatia, Bernard Poncet, also stressed that the conference was “an opportunity to send out a clear message that media

OSCE's Conflict Prevention Centre marks its tenth anniversary

Almost exactly ten years ago, on 18 March 1991, the Conflict Prevention Centre, the first body of the OSCE to be permanently located in Vienna, opened its doors. The following article looks at its origins and its extensive development over the subsequent decade

Shortly after the momentous events that had unfolded in central and eastern Europe, the second Summit of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, meeting in November 1990, adopted the 'Charter of Paris'. This document provided for the first permanent institutions in what was then the CSCE, namely a Secretariat in Prague, an Office for Free Elections in Warsaw, and a Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC) in Vienna.

The Charter of Paris went on to specify that during its initial stage of operations the Centre's role would consist of giving support to the implementation of Confidence- and Security-Building Measures (CSBMs), all of which were enshrined in the (then) Vienna Document of 1990. These measures included:

- Providing a mechanism for consultation and co-operation as regards unusual military activities
- An annual exchange of military information
- A communications network
- Annual implementation assessment meetings
- Co-operation as regards hazardous incidents of a military nature

The Charter also stated that the CPC 'might assume other functions, and the above tasks are without prejudice to any additional tasks concerning a procedure for the conciliation of disputes as well as broader tasks concerning a procedure

relating to dispute settlement, which may be assigned to it in the future by the Council of Foreign Ministers'.

Closely linked to the workings of the CPC, the Charter also established a Consultative Committee. Composed of representatives from all participating States, it was set up initially to supervise the working of the CPC, particularly in its pursuance of support to CSBMs.

Foundations

It was at the second Meeting of the Ministerial Council, held in Prague in January 1992, where the 'Prague Document on further development of CSCE Institutions and Structures' really laid the foundations for what the CPC has become today. Among much else, this document set down that in addition to the tasks already given to the CPC, 'the Consultative Committee has the authority to initiate and, with the assistance of the CPC Secretariat, execute fact-finding and monitor missions in connection with paragraph 17 of the Vienna Document 1990 (Mechanism for consultation and co-operation as regards unusual military activities)'.

Other tasks allotted included institutionalizing the CSCE's relationships with other international organizations, including NATO, the United Nations and the Western European Union, by inviting them to make appropriate contributions to future seminars organized by the CPC. The Consultative Committee was also called upon to 'develop general guidelines for the implementation of its operational tasks including, in due time,

those that may be assigned to it by the Helsinki Follow Up Meeting and in the future'.

Building on these initiatives, the Third Meeting of the Ministerial Council, held in Stockholm in December 1992, tasked the CPC with taking rapid steps to strengthen its ability to provide operational support for CSCE preventative diplomacy missions and peacekeeping activities. The Director of the CPC was tasked with presenting for approval a proposal setting out the staffing and budget implications of this decision.

The first field operation to be launched was the Mission of Long Duration to Sandjak, Vojvodina and Kosovo (in the then Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia). Many others have followed, including those to Bosnia and Herzegovina and to Croatia, though of most note were the CPC's biggest challenges, the Kosovo Verification Mission and the OSCE Mission in Kosovo that succeeded it.

The final significant step in the formation of the CPC as we know it today was made at the Fourth Meeting of the Ministerial Council, held in Rome at the end of 1993. Here it was decided to dissolve the Consultative Committee of the Conflict Prevention Centre, set up at the Paris Summit, and transfer its competence to the Permanent Committee by establishing a CSCE Secretariat in Vienna, with an office in Prague.

This Secretariat was to include departments for Conference Services, Administration and Budget, Chairperson-in-Office (CiO) support, and the Conflict Prevention Centre, all under a

Secretary General, whose post had been established at the third Ministerial Meeting held the previous year.

Although this move established the basis of today's CPC, there have been many changes on the way to the present situation, reflecting both the growth of the OSCE as an organization, and the changing circumstances it finds itself in.

In 1993, all aspects of mounting and supporting missions, including personnel, logistics, and training were all under the 'roof' of the CPC.

But in January 1999, the OSCE CPC relinquished its logistic 'operations' support function, this passing to a second directorate which embraced all aspects of finance as well. The CPC did, though, maintain its responsibility for the staffing and training of missions by seconded personnel from participating States until June last year (this induction training for all mission

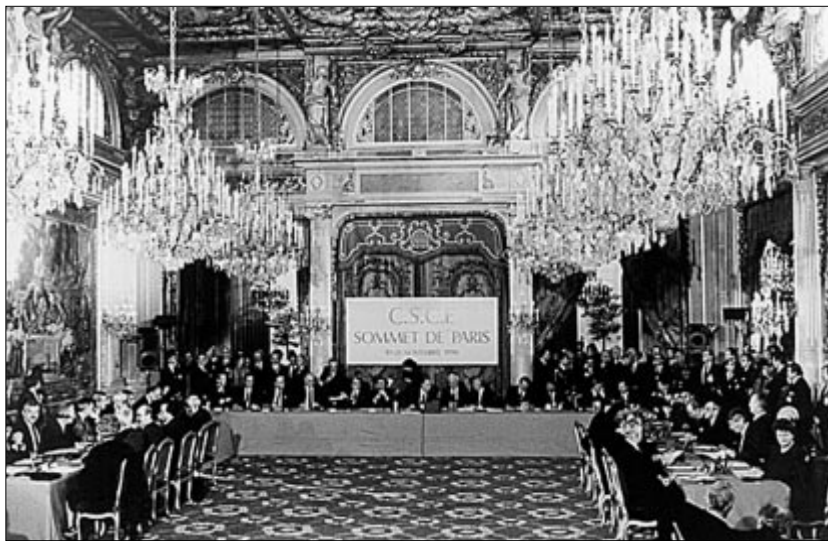
members had been launched by the CPC in the summer of 1998, along with the Integrated Staffing System).

However, in a second reorganization that followed in 2000, and as a consequence of the recommendations of the REACT implementation committee, these two functions passed to a new (and the third) directorate in the Secretariat, that of Human Resources.

This most recent reorganization came about following the Istanbul Summit Meeting of November 1999, which recognized the need for enhancements to the Secretariat, in order to address quickly and efficiently the new challenges in the OSCE area. In the Charter for European Security, adopted at the

Meeting, a number of new instruments were established.

For the CPC this meant the formation of the Operation Centre, which for the first time properly 'operationalized' the Directorate. The Operation Centre now provides the means by which forward planning for all aspects of future missions can take place, including civilian police aspects, as well as a dedicated liaison function at the expert level with international partner organizations.



The original decision to set up a Conflict Prevention Centre was taken in 1990 at the Paris Summit of what was then still the CSCE

This means that, ten years on, the CPC, as the longest established of the directorates within the Secretariat, has a unique position and one that is often described as the 'information hub' or the focal point for all the field activities of the Organization. It continues to have the overall responsibility for overseeing the support to existing missions, as well as having the responsibility to lead on the establishment of future missions when required. As a source of corporate knowledge, the CPC is required to give advice and support to the CiO as and when required, in particular in the case of new developments.

The formation of the Situation Room gives the CPC a 24-hour operational

capacity, so ensuring that the link to the field operations is maintained constantly with all departments in the Secretariat, as well as with the representatives of the Chairman-in-Office. The appointment of a Senior Security Advisor is a reflection of the changing and more challenging conditions in which some missions are required to work. The Forum for Security Co-operation Support Unit, in addition to its original tasks relating to CSBMs, is now engaged in giving sup-

port on small arms related issues.

The CPC also plays a key role in liaison with partner organizations, often in conjunction with the Secretary General's Office for External Affairs. The establishment of a Liaison Officer in the Operation Centre ensures close working links at expert level, with both military and civilian partner

organizations alike, so ensuring a healthy exchange of information at all times, and an asset of particular use during periods of crisis.

Thus, in the development and progress of the Organization as a whole, the Conflict Prevention Centre holds a special position. It does so with only 14 contracted staff and three professionals, under the leadership of a director, supported by a deputy director. The past ten years have seen significant reorganizations on the way to where it is today, but all reflect the timely changes that have been necessary to keep pace with developments in the international arena, and in turn to ensure that OSCE remains a lean and efficient organization.

Six years on from the Dayton Peace Accords: Article II proves a success

Numerous field activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina foster confidence- and security-building between the armed forces of the two BiH Entities

Implementing the provisions of the Dayton Peace Agreement that deal with the armed forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) has hardly ever attracted the spotlight of international media attention. It is, however, one of the continuing success stories of the OSCE, notably in terms of implementation of the so-called Vienna Agreement on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures (CSBMs) in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The continued work with the Parties to this agreement, which is laid down in Article II of Annex 1-B of the Dayton Accords, is one of the main responsibilities of General Carlo Jean, Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office (CiO) on Articles II and IV.

“The success of the Article II implementation is mainly due to the engagement of the Parties to the Agreement – to their goodwill and their conviction that the implementation process of the CSBMs will constitute the basis to build stability in the country”, says General Jean.

Together with the Parties to the Agreement, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the two Entities – the BiH Federation, and Republika Srpska – General Jean organized in Vienna the Third Review Conference on the Implementa-

tion of the Article II Agreement to discuss the achievements and future goals.

What actually constitutes the success of this implementation process, is the continued commitment of the Parties since 1996 to participate actively in the initiatives drawn up by General Jean’s office and the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina. The main purpose of the Agreement is to create confidence and co-operation between the three Par-

of co-operative security measures – for example in the field of natural disaster, military doctrine, and medical co-operation between the Entities’ forces’ medical services. In addition, we have developed a network of security studies in the BiH universities”, adds General Jean.

Expanded activities

Another way how of expressing the rate of success of the Article II implementation process is the number of activities involving the BiH armed forces. In 2000, a total of 11 inspections were conducted in the country, and two aerial observation flights were carried out in April and October. Workshops on disaster response preparedness and military budget, as well as seminars on code of conduct were held, and the Inter-University Steering Committee on Security Studies of BiH finalized six research studies.

One part of the Agreement, which was signed under the auspices of the OSCE in Vienna on 26 January 1996, covers the exchange of military information and follow-on notifications of any change. The OSCE provides experts who assist the Parties with their inspections within the regime. With the support of General Jean’s office, the Parties to the Agreement have adopted two protocols,



Several of the participants at the Third Review Conference for CSBMs in BiH, with General Carlo Jean, Personal Representative of the CiO, centre

ties, and to reduce this risk of conflict.

Since the signing of the Agreement, General Jean has initiated a multitude of different initiatives to further this cause. Together with the OSCE Mission to BiH, he has conducted educational courses and training programmes on subjects such as democratic control of armed forces, code of conduct and auditing defence budgets.

“We have also developed some sort

an Aerial Observation Protocol and a Visits to Weapons Manufacturing Facilities Protocol, the latter being approved during the Third Review Conference that took place last month in Vienna.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina itself, the Agreement is managed by the Joint Consultative Commission (JCC).

“The members of the JCC have suc-

ceeded in overcoming quite some political turbulence in BiH and in the region”, General Jean explains. “They deserve all our consideration for their dedication and professionalism”.

The Agreement does not foresee an end to its implementation. “The CSBMs are an open-ended process”, says General Jean, “It has the support of a num-

ber of other international organizations operating in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in particular the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe. It certainly has the potential to mobilize BiH to try to overcome the results of a terrible war and to try to rebuild co-operation and co-existence of the different peoples living in the country”.



News from the field

The OSCE currently has Missions or other field activities in Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Kosovo (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), Latvia, Skopje (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Yugoslavia. The following brief reports reflect some of the recent work which these field operations have undertaken.

Council of Ministers and Federation Presidency elected in BiH

The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) welcomed the election in February of a new Council of Ministers and the president and vice-president of the BiH Federation. The election of these BiH authorities, which took place on 22 and 27 February respectively, represents a significant step forward for the efforts of the Mission to implement the results of the November 2000 general elections. “Bosnia and Herzegovina finally has a new government, and now it must get on with the work of leading this country forward”, said Robert Barry, Head of the OSCE Mission to BiH.

“I was encouraged by the programme set out by the new Chairman, Bozidar Matic”, he said. “With the election of Karlo Filipovic and Safet Halilovic as Federation President and Vice-President, respectively, we are brought one step closer to completing the implementation of the November 2000 election results in the Federation,” said Mr. Barry. “Now we expect the political parties concerned to promptly propose a

government which is capable of coming to terms with the many social and economic problems which it is inheriting from its predecessors.”

Prior to these elections, the OSCE Mission had criticized the decision of the main Bosnian Croat party, the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) not to cooperate in the election implementation process. “The HDZ has been given every opportunity to participate in the state, entity and cantonal legislative bodies – including the Houses of Peoples at the state and Federation level – in order to implement the November election results”, stated Mr. Barry.

“In no democracy can parties pick and choose what laws and rules they want to obey and which ones they choose to dismiss. The only way to modify the system is from within – there is no room in a democracy for threats, boycotts, and withdrawals from government.”

OSCE-sponsored photo-album helps identification of victims in Kosovo

With the aim of making the identification of victims in Kosovo much easier, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo

(OMIK) has published a new album of photographs. The book, which contains 750 photographs of clothing and personal effects found with about 200 bodies recovered during 2000 by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), is an additional tool that the OSCE and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) hope will help identify some of the victims of ethnically-motivated killings whose bodies were exhumed by international investigators last year.

The album can be viewed at all ICRC field offices throughout Kosovo and through the Missing Persons Bureaux in Pristina and Gracanica. The ICRC’s and the Bureau’s mobile teams will also take the book to isolated communities.

The OSCE identification project is part of the Victim Recovery and Identification Commission, which was set up last May to help identify recovered remains and provide support and assistance to the families of the missing. Many of the articles featured in the book were put on view last year to help the identification process.

“We would like as many people as

possible to be able to view the photographs we have”, said OSCE Forensic Adviser, Dr. Tarja Formisto, “but going to a presentation can be very stressful. Often people don’t want to go or don’t want to recognize something because they want to believe their relative is still alive. With these books, people from all over Kosovo can look at them, reflect, and come back again if they feel there is something they recognize.”

Last year, 260 bodies were identified by the OSCE/VRIC team, but 370 bodies exhumed by the ICTY in 2000 remain to be identified, along with 890 bodies exhumed in 1999.

OSCE to open community centre in Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica

In February, the OMIK launched an important project in the Kosovo municipality of Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica. It is planned to open a community centre in the town, as part of OMIK’s continuing work with all Kosovo communities. The planned centre will receive a financial grant from the Swiss Government amounting to DM 220,000, which will cover the basic costs of the centre. OSCE’s community centres aim at encouraging the confidence building process in areas where Kosovo Serbs and other smaller communities live by helping to develop initiatives in areas where there is little formal civic organization. They provide space, resources, and support services for community-based civic initiatives and activities.

Such centres are currently operating in Leposavic/Leposaviq and Strpce/Shterpce. Other areas soon to benefit from this programme are Dragash/Dragas, Kamenice/Kosovska Kamenica, Viti/Vitina and Zubin Potok. The community centres form a part of the OSCE’s existing network of resource centres, which provide specialized training, counselling and referral services to

local organizations and other civic groups, as well as logistical support to the rapidly growing civil society.

OSCE runs prison assistance programme in Belarus

The OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group (AMG) in Belarus has continued to implement a programme aimed at improving conditions in the Belarusian penitentiary system. On 15 and 16 February, the AMG ran a distribution of hygiene and sanitary items to two women’s colonies in Gomel oblast (region). As a result, each of 2,700 female inmates received a hygiene kit.

The OSCE also distributed 3,000 pocket calendars containing ten rules for tuberculosis patients to inmates and administration at Tuberculosis Colony No. 12 in Orsha. Other initiatives will include a joint seminar with the Belarusian Committee for Criminal Punishment Implementation on prison management standards, to be held on 5 and 6 April 2001, and a study-tour of the Polish penitentiary system. This programme is financed jointly by the European Union and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

OSCE organizes round table on election legislation in Yerevan

Proposed amendments to the Electoral Code of Armenia were the focus of an expert round table held in Yerevan on 9 February. The event was a follow-up to a series of meetings and consultations held with the National Assembly and other authorities in the Republic of Armenia as part of the “Review of Electoral Legislation” project carried out by ODIHR. The participants discussed various aspects of election legislation in Armenia. Experts from ODIHR and the Venice Commission presented their assessment of the Electoral Code.

Participants agreed that a working

group within the Parliamentary Commission for State and Legal Affairs would summarize the proposals made at the round table and prepare, within 18 months, a draft for amending the Code. The text will be shared with ODIHR and the Venice Commission, and a public hearing on the draft will then be held in the National Assembly.

The round table was organized by the OSCE in co-operation with the Commission for State and Legal Affairs of the National Assembly, the Central Electoral Commission and the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe. Representatives of parliamentary and non-parliamentary political parties, independent experts, civil society, and media attended the event.

OSCE Centre in Ashgabat holds security and human rights events

The OSCE Centre in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, held a seminar on the OSCE concept of security on 27 and 28 February for mid-level officials of the Turkmen Ministries of Defence, Foreign Affairs, Internal Affairs, National Security Committee and State Border Service. The event was financed by the British Foreign Office.

The main speaker at the seminar was the former US ambassador to Uzbekistan, Joseph Presel, who served earlier in the US Delegation to the OSCE and was involved in the preparation of various OSCE security documents. The Centre staff described the political/security dimension of the OSCE and what constitutes confidence- and security-building measures. The Director of the National Institute for Democratization and Human Rights gave a presentation on the background of Turkmenistan’s status as a neutral country.

The seminar followed two courses on international human rights law organized by the Centre at the start of February.



The **OSCE Chairman-in-Office (CiO), Romanian Foreign Minister Mircea Geoana**, had a meeting on 2

February with the **United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan**, at the UN Headquarters in New York. Mr. Geoana highlighted the main objectives and priorities of the OSCE and expressed interest in an enhanced collaboration with the United Nations based on the principles of complementarity, subsidiarity and synergy. He also emphasized that the dialogue between the organizations should reflect the importance that both organizations attached to the operational co-operation between their staff in the field. He specifically mentioned co-operation in fighting organized crime and illegal trans-border trafficking as well as in the field of human rights.

The CiO stressed the importance of a comprehensive evaluation of the situation in south-eastern Europe, based on "lessons learned" in the Balkans, to be conducted by all organizations involved in the region. The UN Secretary-General welcomed the efforts made by the Romanian Chairmanship of the OSCE and expressed his personal support for a continuous and dynamic collaboration between the two organizations.

On 12 February, the **Chairman-in-Office** paid a visit to Albania, the main focus of which was on the preparations for the forthcoming parliamentary elections in June. These have been hampered by disagreements between the political parties on a number of issues. After his talks with political leaders in Tirana, Mr. Geoana issued an urgent appeal to all political forces in the country to contribute to the success of these elections. "The June parliamentary elections could

mark yet another milestone in Albania's democratic development. It is of the utmost importance that this opportunity should not be missed," he said, adding that "the process of democratic elections must not be held hostage to political polarization."

The CiO noted that Albania was already playing an important role in achieving stability in south-eastern Europe by strengthening its ties to other countries in the region and participating in many regional initiatives. He stated that the OSCE stood ready to assist Albania in the future as it had in the past, in close co-operation with the Albanian Government and institutions.

On 15 February, the **OSCE Secretary General, Jan Kubis**, and the **Secretary-General of the Council of Europe (CoE), Walter Schwimmer**, exchanged letters endorsing mutual co-operation between the two organizations with regard to their activities in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). The agreement identified areas of close co-operation and co-ordination between the two organizations' field operations in Belgrade and their work programmes. This included co-operation to strengthen the protection of human rights and the rule of law, and in their efforts to further the development of democratic institutions and civil society. The two organizations would focus, in particular, on minority issues, media, civil society and institution-building of the judiciary and law-enforcement agencies, and the reform of the penitentiary system. The CoE and the OSCE both share the common goal of integrating the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia into European structures, and agreed to exchange information regularly on their respective monitoring activities.

In a statement issued on 16 February, the **OSCE CiO** condemned in the

strongest terms the attack on a bus in Kosovo, which resulted in seven people being killed and dozens more injured. "I am outraged and revolted by this cowardly act against innocent civilians," said Mr. Geoana. "The OSCE is working hard together with other international organizations to heal the wounds of war and create a tolerant climate in Kosovo. This horrific crime has been perpetrated by persons who want to make peace and reconciliation among the ethnic groups in Kosovo impossible. Such acts undermine the efforts of the international community to build a multi-ethnic society in Kosovo and the wish of the majority of the people of Kosovo to live in peace and harmony. The murderers must be apprehended and brought to justice. The spiral of violence in Kosovo must be stopped here and now." The OSCE Chairman-in-Office extended his deepest sympathies to the families of those killed and wounded in the attack.

On 16 February, Nebojsa Covic, Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia, addressed the **Permanent Council** on possible solutions to solve the crisis in southern Serbia. He was accompanied by the Foreign Minister of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Goran Svilanovic. Speaking at a special session of the Permanent Council, Mr. Covic said the plan for a solution of the crisis proposed by him includes many small steps that can collectively lead to a long-term peaceful settlement for the area. He said that southern Serbia needed to remain a part of Serbia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and members of the Albanian community should have the same rights and freedoms as other people in Serbia. This plan also includes steps to de-militarize the area, create a period of amnesty and assist extremists to make the transition to becoming members of the civil society.

In a press release issued on 16 February, the **OSCE Chairman-in-Office** warned that delays in forming governments in Bosnia and Herzegovina were having a detrimental effect on the situation in the country. Mr. Geoana called on the political parties to end delaying tactics, form governments at all levels, and elect delegates for the parliaments at the Federation and State levels.

“We call on all political parties to respect the results of the elections, to obey the laws of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to fulfil the obligations that they accepted by participating in the November 2000 elections,” he said. “It has been three months since general elections were held and the process remains stalled at the State and Federation levels. These delays are having a detrimental effect on the economic and social situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.”

His statement followed the decision by the Croat Democratic Party (HDZ) not to co-operate in the implementation of election results at the State and Federation levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This decision was criticized by both the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Office of the High Representative. “The High Representative and the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina have shown patience during the period when the constitutional court was considering the HDZ complaint against the OSCE. However, the court issued its decision on 2 February, rejecting the HDZ appeal,” Mr. Geoana said. The statutes of cantons and the Constitution of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina set clear deadlines for holding inaugural sessions for these bodies,



During his visit to Tirana, OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Mircea Geoana (left) meets President Rexhep Meidani of Albania

and these deadlines had long since passed, he added.

On 19 February, the **Chairman-in-Office** visited Zagreb, where he noted progress in areas covered by the OSCE mandate in Croatia. He specifically mentioned progress in police reform and the improvement of police protection. Mr. Geoana welcomed the readiness of the Croatian Government to work with the OSCE Mission to Croatia in bringing about significant reform, particularly in areas such as the restitution of property, the return of refugees and displaced persons and the rights of persons belonging to national minorities.

The following day, 20 February, the **Chairman-in-Office** visited Sarajevo. Here he expressed concern over delays in forming governments in Bosnia and Herzegovina after the November 2000 general elections. He urged local offi-

cial to complete the process of implementing the election results, and stressed that there was no place for boycotts or other obstructionist tactics in the democratic process. “We support the rights of all constituent peoples in Bosnia and Herzegovina to defend their language, culture, religion and education. However, all parties must abide by their commitments to work within the system, by participating in the elected institutions,” said the Chairman-in-Office. “There are pressing economic and social problems which will require the engagement of all political parties and citizens to address.” Minister Geoana also called for local authorities to pass an election law, a vital prerequisite for Bosnia and Herzegovina’s admission into the

Council of Europe.

The **OSCE Permanent Council** issued a statement on 22 February condemning in the strongest terms the attack against a bus near the town of Podujevo in Kosovo, FRY, on 16 February. “These cowardly attacks undermine the efforts of the international community to build a multi-ethnic society in Kosovo, and the efforts of the authorities in the FRY and Serbia to find a peaceful resolution to the tension in southern Serbia,” the statement read. The Permanent Council called for an end to the violence and urged all concerned to show restraint and to remain calm, however great the provocation. The members of the Council expressed their deepest sympathies to the families of the victims of these attacks and stated that the extremists and criminals responsible for these acts of terrorism must be speedily brought to justice and punished in accordance with the law.

PRESS PROFILE



Excerpts from international media coverage of the OSCE and its activities over recent weeks.

ALBANIA

Reuters, 8 February

‘The OSCE said on Thursday it was disappointed with preparations for Albania’s general election due later this year. Gerard Stoudmann, director of the OSCE election watchdog, the ODIHR, urged Albanian parties to stop playing “political games”. “My conclusions are that the level of election preparations so far is disappointing,” he told a news conference... Stoudmann said failure to conduct proper elections would deter much-needed foreign investment. “The October elections were good. The parliamentary elections have to be better not only for the sake of democracy but for the signal that Albania is sending to the rest of Europe,” he added.’

BELARUS

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 5 February

‘Lately, (Lukashenko’s) rage has once again hit the mission of the OSCE in Minsk, which is headed by the German Ambassador, Hans-Georg Wiecek. Lukashenko accuses the mission, which has doggedly sought to foster a dialogue between those in power and the Opposition, of having trained at least 14,000 “Boyevyki”. This word means “fighters” and is usually reserved for Chechen separatists. In fact, those 14,000 “fighter” are election observers from non-governmental organizations, who should be observing the presidential elections which will supposedly take place in September, and thereby prevent the expected election fraud.’

Die Presse, 5 February

‘The OSCE mission in Minsk has also come under pressure. Lukashenko accused its diplomats of “distributing bread during daytime while taking out their weapons from under the bedsheets during the night.” And with reference to the fall of his friend Milosevic: “Should I wait until you start bombarding us with depleted uranium?”... Granted, “Luka” has reason to be worried about the presence of the OSCE in Minsk. The parliamentary elections last autumn, which were boycotted by the Opposition and by a part of the population, were documented in detail by 6,000 domestic election observers, who had been trained by the OSCE. In their report, over 3,000 violations of law were listed.’

Reuters, 7 February

‘The new chairman of the OSCE pledged on Wednesday to press on with efforts to ensure that a forthcoming presidential election in Belarus was free and fair. Mircea Geoana, who is also Romanian foreign minister, said the Minsk mission of the OSCE had received a more moderate note from authorities in recent days signalling an improvement in relations with President Alexander Lukashenko. The Belarussian leader accused the OSCE last month of colluding with the opposition before the poll, expected in September. “Recently, there was a more moderate note. The head of the mission was called by the foreign minister and we started renewing the dialogue,” Geoana told a news conference.’

Der Spiegel, 10 February

‘It comes as no surprise that Lukashenko’s anger specifically targets the OSCE-Ambassador Wiecek. With his observers, (he) had during the October parliamentary elections been able to detect numerous falsifications. And beyond that, this diplomat had succeeded with something that neither friend nor foe had thought were possible: in tough negotiations he managed

to bring the fragmented opposition to the important realization that they would have a chance against Lukashenko only if they could agree on a common candidate.’

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 24 February

‘Dayton is much more than a classical peace agreement. Diverse international organizations have been given the task of state building. The OSCE is only one of them. It however received crucial tasks, which enabled it to prove its competence and resourcefulness... It remains to be seen whether democratization, in a certain sense “undemocratically” introduced from the outside, will lead to success. The OSCE has accomplished – with the inclusion of the population – important contributions to the building of democratic civil society and respect for human rights. In these areas, however, it is still, five years after the end of the war, too early to draw any definite conclusions. What is clear is that the OSCE since Dayton has evolved from being a much reviled paper tiger to being an operational organization with the capacity to act and make decisions.’

CHECHNYA

Reuters, 7 February

‘A mission from the OSCE will soon return to battle-scarred Chechnya after pulling out more than three years ago, the OSCE’s new chairman said on Wednesday. Mircea Geoana, who is also Romania’s foreign minister, said after talks in Moscow the “assistance group” would go back after technical issues were resolved and praised “modest steps in the right direction” to reach a political settlement in Chechnya. Russian foreign minister Ivanov said there were no political obstacles to the group’s return.’

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 7 February

‘According to foreign minister Ivanov, Russia will allow representatives of the OSCE

to travel to Chechnya. After a meeting Wednesday in Moscow with the Romanian foreign minister Geoana, Ivanov said that the trip could take place in the near future. He however did not mention any date. The OSCE has been striving for over a year to be allowed to send observers to Chechnya.'

Financial Times, 16 February

'The west should provide Russia with greater help in fighting extremists in Chechnya, while pushing for financial assistance and political negotiations, the departing regional head of the OSCE said yesterday. Alfred Missonng, the Austrian diplomat who headed the mission over the past year, said in an interview that the international community should have done more to stop other nations from providing financial assistance to those he described as "terrorist" leaders in

Chechnya... Mr Missonng, who has been based in Moscow, also spoke out about his frustrations at the failure of the OSCE to be able to re-establish a mission within Chechnya, blaming Russian obstruction. Russian officials have repeatedly promised the imminent return of the OSCE to Chechnya, following its withdrawal on security grounds at the start of 1999, and have even hinted that Mr Missonng preferred to remain in Moscow rather than be stationed in the republic. But Mr Missonng said the Russians had repeatedly stalled negotiations with his organization and refused to provide permission to use communications equipment, adequate security and freedom of movement. He said the authorities had tried to force the OSCE to fire all its locally hired Chechen employees, and that in the latest move earlier this week they had even impounded one of three OSCE cars

based in the region and demanded large fines for its release.'

UKRAINE

Der Standard, 15 February

'The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Freimut Duvé on Wednesday in Vienna appealed to the participating states to investigate all cases of "censorship by murder". The Gongadze case and the fierce protests inside and outside the Ukraine give a clear message to those responsible for murders of journalists, said Duvé at a press conference: "The more you oppress media, the less are the chances that you will reach your goal." To kill journalists equals killing "the freedom and the future of your country." During last year, a total of 11 journalists were killed in the OSCE countries.'

UPDATE

from the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is located at Aleje Ujazdowskie 19, PL-00 557 Warsaw, Poland, tel.: (+48-22) 520 06 00, fax: (+48-22) 520 06 05, e-mail: office@odhr.osce.waw.pl



International community observes Moldova's elections for parliament

An International Election Observation Mission concluded that the 25 February parliamentary elections in Moldova complied with international standards. The Central Election Commission administered the elections in a non-partisan, transparent, efficient and timely manner.

The Electoral Code provided an adequate framework for the conduct of democratic elections and ensured that political parties and electoral blocs could enter the political arena on an equal basis. State-owned media strictly followed the provisions of the Electoral Code.

The international observers noted, however, that the election process could be further improved by addressing some shortcomings such as the inaccuracy and incompleteness of voter lists and the excessively restrictive media provisions in the Electoral Code.

The parliamentary elections did not take place in Transdniestria due to lack of co-operation of the de facto authorities in the territory. Eight special polling stations were set up on the right bank of the Nistru River for Transdniestrian residents to vote. Voting at these stations was conducted in a proper manner. However, only a very small percentage of the eligible voters from Transdniestria managed to exercise their right to vote.

The International Election Observation Mission was a joint undertaking of the ODIHR, the OSCE Parliamentary

Assembly, and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. An ODIHR long-term observation mission was deployed on 26 January and was headed by Ambassador Charles Magee (USA). On election day, the International Election Observation Mission deployed more than 140 short-term observers, including 35 parliamentarians from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and eight from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

Election observation report released

The OSCE/ODIHR released a final report on the parliamentary elections in the Republic of Serbia/Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (23 December 2000). The report is available on the ODIHR website:

www.osce.org/odhr/elecprep.htm



Round table on amendments to Armenian Electoral Code

The ODIHR took part in a round table on amendments to the Electoral Code of Armenia in Yerevan on 14 February. The round table was co-organized by the Parliamentary Commission for Legal and State Affairs, the Central Election Commission, the OSCE (ODIHR and Office in Yerevan) and the Council of Europe's Venice Commission. The objective of the meeting was to provide a forum to discuss amendments to the 1999 Electoral Code with the authorities and representatives of political parties and civil society. The round table was a useful step in a process that has involved detailed discussion with key stakeholders and the production of comments and recommendations. There appears to be general agreement about the major changes to be made to the Code.

DEMOCRATIZATION



ODIHR supports OSCE Mission build-up in Yugoslavia

The ODIHR has despatched two experts to Belgrade for six weeks to participate in the activities of the advance OSCE team before the opening of the OSCE Mission to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The experts prepared a comprehensive report with suggestions for ODIHR and Mission activities in the human dimension in Serbia and advised on the Mission structure in the field of democratization and the rule of law. They also prepared a broad list of contacts of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and their activities.

The team co-organized, with the Belgrade Centre for Human Rights, a brainstorming session on the human dimension situation in Serbia. The meeting was attended by a wide range of participants,

including artists, journalists, business people and the military. The ODIHR, in close co-operation with the Mission, will follow up the expert's suggestions.

ODIHR Office in Montenegro provides legal support

Besides the regular activities in the fields of trafficking, environment, assistance to municipalities and Roma issues, the ODIHR Office in Montenegro is finalizing preparations for an education programme for legal practitioners who currently work at the Ministry of Justice, the Institute for Public Administration, Judiciary and Local Self Government, and in the courts. The programme will, after a short introduction to international law, focus on the European Convention on Human Rights in theory and practice.

Together with officials from the Montenegrin prison service and the Ministry of Justice, the Office conducted a high-level information and co-ordination conference on prison reform activities in 2001. Participants included representatives from local governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations as well as members of the international community with interests in prison reform. As a follow-up to the conference the Office initiated a Prison Reform Working Group of international actors with the aim of reviewing the materials handed out at the conference, harmonizing positions for future activities, and identifying concrete actions for support and co-operation for local partners.

The Office discussed with the Assistant Minister of Justice the possibilities of advancing the Ombudsman initiative launched last year by the Office, in the light of the forthcoming elections. Activities will in the first phase focus on expert advice and consultation, in order to prepare the ground for implementation as soon as the political landscape becomes clear after the elections.

Dismissed Serbian judges are re-appointed

In February, a number of Serbian judges, who had been dismissed under the former Milosevic regime, were re-appointed to important posts in the justice system. The ODIHR had sponsored a presentation by three of the dismissed judges during the last OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting and had subsequently called for the re-appointment of those judges. The re-appointments are a first step in the reform of the Serbian and Federal Yugoslav justice system and the establishment of the rule of law.

Croatian prisons become more accessible to media

The Croatian Ministry of Justice in February liberalized provisions on contacts between the prison administration and the media. The move followed recommendations made by the ODIHR in a workshop on prisons and media last December. According to the new provisions, prison governors are now authorized to communicate to the media without prior approval of their statements by the Ministry of Justice. It is hoped that this measure will increase the transparency of the prison system. The ODIHR regards transparency as a key element for addressing human rights and management problems in prisons.

ROMA AND SINTI ISSUES

Consultation meeting on Roma issues takes place in Warsaw

As part of the series of regular consultations with Roma NGOs and experts, the ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues organized a consultation and information meeting on 8 and 9 February in Warsaw with the participation of representatives of the two leading international Roma organizations, elected Roma

representatives, officials from international organizations, and independent experts on Roma and Sinti issues.

Principal areas of discussion included the situation in Kosovo, the need to enhance the co-operation between Roma organizations, and the implementation of the ODIHR programmes on Roma for 2001.

It was acknowledged that the two leading Roma associations, the International Romani Union and the Roma National Congress, have managed to build a good working relationship in quite a short time and as a result have also reached understanding on some essential issues, including the assessment of the present situation in Kosovo and the proposed Consultative Group for the Contact Point. However, there is still room for improvement. Participants also advanced the opinion that Roma should be more active in taking on responsibility and raising their voice on behalf of other Roma living in difficult conditions.

Round table on Roma health issues held in Romania

In the context of its recently launched project on promoting non-discriminatory access of Roma to public health, the ODIHR supported a round table discussion on Roma health issues organized by the Romani Centre for Social Intervention and Studies (CRISS) and the Romanian Ministry of Health in Bucharest on 15 and 16 February. The ODIHR con-

tributed to the evaluation of a four-year health project carried out by the Ministry and CRISS in Romanian municipalities and provided information on its own activities in this field.

As a result of the meeting, the Ministry undertook to initiate a parliamentary hearing on Roma and health issues. A Roma community worker was proposed to be established in municipalities with Roma inhabitants, with a mandate that would include health issues. Participants urged the Ministry to integrate this new position in the regular local administration structure.

Round table on Roma takes place in Yugoslavia

A round table discussion on the status and perspectives of Roma communities in Serbia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was jointly organized by the ODIHR and the Project on Ethnic Relations in co-operation with the Foundation on Ethnic Relations on 16 February. The round table was part of the ODIHR programme on Roma and the Stability Pact.

The meeting was the first large-scale dialogue between Roma and representatives of the authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia. The conference had been preceded by a series of three regional meetings in January and February, also supported by the ODIHR.

As a result of these meetings, Roma

NGOs and political parties developed a draft common political platform. In this platform, Roma political parties and NGOs call for the acknowledgement of Roma as a “national minority” in a future law on national and ethnic minorities in Serbia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Presently, Roma are referred to as an “ethnic minority”, a concept criticized by Roma representatives as discriminatory in relation to the status of other groups in the country and contradictory to recently developed international standards on protection of national and linguistic minorities.

ODIHR launches Roma-to-Roma assistance project

As part of the ODIHR’s efforts to advance the political rights of Roma in the OSCE area, the Contact Point launched a programme on “Roma-to-Roma” assistance to further the development of civil society and NGO capacity building in Roma communities.

As a first measure, an expert from the Romani Centre for Social Intervention and Studies (Romania) assisted Roma associations in Moldova to assess the participation of Roma voters in the parliamentary elections on 25 February and to launch a series of round table meetings on policy making on Roma issues, to be held throughout 2001, in co-operation with local and national authorities and the support of the OSCE Mission to Moldova.

Latest edition of OSCE Handbook

Updated to 1 July 2000

English version available online at

www.osce.org/publications/handbook

Hard copies also available from the OSCE Secretariat,
Kärtner Ring 5-7, A-1010 Vienna, Austria

NEWS from the High Commissioner on National Minorities

The Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) is located at Prinsessegracht 22, NL-2514 AP The Hague, The Netherlands, tel.: (+31-70) 312 55 00, fax: (+31-70) 363 59 10, e-mail: hcnm@hcnm.org

High Commissioner encourages inter-ethnic co-operation in FRY

On 2 and 3 February, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Max van der Stoel, participated in a conference in Belgrade on the development of multicultural and multinational society. The thrust of his remarks was how to integrate diversity in multi-ethnic societies. His speech, entitled "Living Together: Fostering Inter-Ethnic Co-operation in Post-Conflict Yugoslavia" is available on the HCNM section of the OSCE website. On the margins of the conference, the High Commissioner met Government and minority representatives to discuss the latest developments concerning inter-ethnic issues in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

New Albanian language university project unveiled in Tetovo

On 11 February, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities was among those who addressed an official ceremony in Tetovo, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, to mark the start of the construction of a new private institution of higher education. The curriculum at the so-called "South Eastern Europe University" will be in Albanian. Courses will also be offered in Macedonian and other European languages.

The university, which will include faculties of law, business administration, public administration, communications and computer studies, and teacher training, should be ready to open its doors on 1 October 2001.

The creation of the university has been a contentious issue in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The country's significant Albanian minority has long called for the creation of such an institution of which could offer a curriculum in Albanian. The legal framework for the establishment of such an institution became possible with the adoption of a new education law on 25 July last year. It allowed for the use of the Albanian language and other languages in private institutions of higher education.

The unveiling ceremony on 11 February was attended by members of the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (including the Foreign Minister and Minister of Education), representatives of the country's Albanian community, the mayor of Tetovo, members of the national and international boards of the institution, and representatives of the diplomatic corps.

The ceremony was addressed by the Prime Minister, Ljubco Georgievski, the Chairman of the national board of the University, Zamir Dika, the future director of the University, Alajdin Abazi, and Mr. Van der Stoel (who also chairs the university's international board).

The High Commissioner has concentrated on this project as a means of improving inter-ethnic relations in Macedonia. Together with international experts, he offered advice on the compatibility of the education law with international standards. Under his guidance, a business plan was developed for the

university. Last November, an International Foundation was created, under his auspices, to plan and oversee the creation of the university, funding for which is being provided by international donors including individual OSCE States, the European Union and the Soros Foundation.

High Commissioner addresses security concerns in SE Europe

On 23 February, the High Commissioner addressed a conference on democracy, human rights and the protection of persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities in south-eastern Europe, which was held in Bled, Slovenia.

In his speech, Mr. Van der Stoel discussed the present and future challenges of preventing inter-ethnic conflict in South-Eastern Europe. Concerning the recent violence in the Presovo valley, he said that he was encouraged by the Yugoslav Government's decision to allow for a greater amount of self-administration, adding: "This sets a good precedent for dealing with other complex local government issues in other areas of the country".

At the same time, he warned against the threat of extremism, noting that small groups of "ethnic entrepreneurs. . . can poison relations to the point that fear and suspicion grip all sides. This is fertile ground for the growth of extreme nationalist and sectarian violence". The full text of his speech can be found on the HCNM section of the OSCE website:

www.osce.org/hcnm

REPORT

from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

The Secretariat of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly is located at Rådhusstræde 1, DK-1466 Copenhagen K, Denmark, tel.: (+45-33) 37 80 40, fax: (+45-33) 37 80 30, e-mail: osce@oscepa.dk

OSCE PA STANDING COMMITTEE CONVENES MEETING IN VIENNA

No consensus reached on Belarus Parliamentary Representatives

The Credentials Committee on Belarus met in Vienna on 22 February prior to the Standing Committee meeting to address the challenge of the Belarus National Assembly regarding the credentials of the Belarus 13th Supreme Soviet. The Committee, headed by Mrs. Tone Tingsgaard (Sweden) and also composed of Antonio Reis (Portugal), Mrs. Geertje Lycklama a Nijeholt (Netherlands), Kazys Bobelis (Lithuania) and Charles Janssens (Belgium), heard testimony from both parties and from the Head of the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus, Hans-Georg Wieck, as well as from Gert Weiskirchen (Germany) and Urban Ahlin (Sweden), both of whom had returned directly from a visit by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (PA) Ad Hoc Committee on Belarus to Minsk.

On the basis of the information presented, the Committee could not recommend recognizing either of the two delegations since the mandate of the 13th Supreme Soviet, as set out in the Belarusian Constitution, had expired, and the elections for the National Assembly had not met OSCE standards, according to

the Office for Democratic Institution and Human Rights (ODIHR). The Committee recommended that both delegations be invited to Paris in order to address the Assembly on democratic developments in Belarus and that the Ad Hoc Committee should continue its work in Belarus.

This recommendation was presented to the Standing Committee and, after serious discussion, it was concluded that there was no consensus on the language contained in the recommendation. As a result, the Belarus seat will remain empty and await further developments.



Romanian Foreign Minister and OSCE CiO, Mircea Dan Geoana (left), addresses the Standing Committee, observed by OSCE PA President Adrian Severin

Parliamentary Assembly “brings added value” to the OSCE - Severin

In his address to the Standing Committee, composed of the Heads of Delegation from OSCE parliaments, the President of the OSCE PA, Adrian Severin (Romania), focused on the practical “added value” that the Parliamentary Assembly brought to the OSCE overall. “Since 1990, when the Heads of State or Government created our parliamentary

dimension in the Charter of Paris, and since 1991 when we adopted our basic modalities and procedures and then implemented them at our first fully-fledged Assembly meeting in Budapest in 1992, we have indeed brought “added value” to this Organization and have made many important contributions to the successful growth of the Organization into an important and respected regional political entity”.

Mr. Severin referred in particular to the creation, in nearly all member national parliaments, of an informed cadre of elected parliamentarians who knew and understood the OSCE and who supported the important work that it was doing, particularly through its missions in the field. He also drew attention to the fact that the Assembly had provided added visibility, as well as enormous political credibility, to OSCE election monitoring projects through the hundreds of parliamentarians who had participated in and led OSCE observation missions over several years.

Much, however, remained to be done: “It is today more clear than ever that our Organization, the OSCE, needs a political impulse”. Such an impulse could only come from strengthening the involvement of national governments and parliaments in the processes of the OSCE, he said, and “by a much needed institutional rethinking and co-operation of all our bodies”. In this respect, he emphasized that the OSCE could improve its effectiveness and gain greater public visibility by



OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President Adrian Severin (left) meets Portugal's Prime Minister, Antonio Guterres.

improving its decision-making procedures and working methods, and by developing procedures that would bring openness, transparency and accountability to the OSCE.

OSCE Chairman-in-Office addresses PA Standing Committee

In his address to the Standing Committee, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Romanian Foreign Minister Mircea Dan Geoana, drew attention to the important role played by the Assembly when he expressed his "firm belief that the multifaceted activity of the OSCE would not be complete without its parliamentary dimension...The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has developed into one of our most important Institutions, continuously providing new ideas and proposals for the promotion of democracy, prosperity and increased confidence within and between participating States. It is an essential actor in our efforts to push the boundaries of democracy outwards."

Heads of OSCE Institutions were also given the opportunity to address the Standing Committee. The OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Max van der Stoep, gave his final report to the Standing Committee in this capacity and was thanked for his services to

the OSCE by the PA Vice-President Steny Hoyer on behalf of the Assembly. Other OSCE Officials who reported to the Standing Committee included the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Freimut Duve, the Secretary General Jan Kubis, the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, Tom Price, and Ambassador Liviu Bota, the Chairman of the Permanent Council in 2001.

Theme announced of 10th Annual Session in Paris

The Head of the French Delegation to the OSCE PA, Michel Voisin, reported on the preparations for the forthcoming Annual Session in Paris, from 6 to 10 July. He informed the Standing Committee that preparations were advancing according to plan and expressed his confidence that the next Annual Session would be as successful as the last one in Bucharest. Mr. Voisin added that both the French Parliament and Government were preparing to welcome the Assembly and urged all delegations to register their participation as early as possible.

The President announced that the Session's theme would be 'European Security and Conflict Prevention: Challenges to the OSCE in the 21st century'.

Annual Winter Session approved by Standing Committee

At its meeting in Vienna on 22 and 23 February, the Standing Committee approved the holding of an annual OSCE PA Winter Session in Vienna, as part of a general revision of the Rules of Procedure. Based on the winter meeting of the Standing Committee, the Winter Session will allow the three General Committees to have additional discussions and debates among themselves as well as to be briefed by high-level OSCE Officials who have responsibilities related to the competence of each of the three General Committees.

The Session will increase the opportunity for dialogue between OSCE Parliamentarians, as well as augment their familiarity with the ongoing work of the OSCE, without challenging the status of the Annual Session that remains the main event in the OSCE PA calendar.

Ad Hoc Committee on Abkhazia

At the proposal of the Georgian Delegation, the Standing Committee authorized the establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee on Abkhazia. The mandate tasks the Ad Hoc Committee to promote the creation of a broader political framework in which a peaceful and just settlement can be achieved on the basis of OSCE principles and commitments. PA President Severin will soon announce the membership of the Committee.

Parliamentarians observe elections in Moldova

The OSCE Observation Mission to the Moldovan parliamentary elections on 25 February, which included 35 parliamentarians from 14 OSCE participating States, concluded that the elections in general complied with international standards.

"These elections in Moldova consolidated a democratic trend that should continue. Unfortunately, people in

Transdnestria were not able to exercise their right to vote. The high voter turnout of 69 per cent indicates confidence in the democratic process”, said Finnish parliamentarian Kimmo Kiljunen, the leader of the Observation Mission and Special Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, during the press conference on 25 February.

The Mission did, however, note some shortcomings during the elections including incomplete voter lists and excessively restrictive media provisions in the Electoral Code. The non-co-operation of the de facto authorities in Transdnestria meant that only a very small percentage of the Moldovan citizens in Transdnestria managed to exercise their right to vote. The Preliminary Statement on the Moldovan elections was a joint effort of the OSCE PA, the Council of Europe PA and the ODIHR.

Parliamentary Troika delegation visits Belarus

The Parliamentary Troika, composed of members of the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assemblies of the Council of Europe and the OSCE, visited Belarus from 5 to 7 March. The delegation was chaired by Adrian Severin, President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Jan Marinus Wiersma, Chairman of the European Parliament delegation for relations with Belarus and Terry Davis, Chairman of the Political Affairs

Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Other members of the European Parliament and the parliamentary assemblies of the OSCE and the Council of Europe were also part of the delegation.

The visit took place as part of a continuing, joint effort of the three parliamentary institutions to “further democratic developments in Belarus, and on the basis of a profound wish to integrate Belarus and its people in the democratic structures of Europe”.

The delegation had a considerable number of meetings with representatives of the Government and the institutions of the Republic of Belarus, as well as with representatives of the political Opposition and civil society, in order to be informed about the situation in the country after the parliamentary elections of October 2000 and in the run-up to the presidential elections due later this year.

With a view to the presidential elections, the Parliamentary Troika stressed that a free and democratic conduct of these elections would be considered as major progress in the process of democratization in Belarus and would therefore contribute to ending the international isolation of the country.

Parliamentary Assembly President invited to Portugal

From 16 to 18 February, PA President Severin paid an official visit to Portugal,

which takes over the Chair of the OSCE next year and is therefore a member of the OSCE Troika. He went at the invitation of Antonio Reis, Head of the Portuguese Delegation to the OSCE PA. In addition to meetings with Mr Reis and the Portuguese Delegation, Mr. Severin met the President of Portugal, Jorge Sampaio, Prime Minister Antonio Guterres and the Deputy Speaker of the Portuguese Parliament, Narana Coissoro.

He also met the Secretary of State Luis Amado, as well as Ambassador Joao Rosa La, who will lead the OSCE unit in the Foreign Ministry during the Portuguese Chairmanship next year. During his meetings Mr. Severin emphasized that the Assembly was an essential OSCE Institution that brought added value to OSCE undertakings.

Mr. Severin also underlined the need for transparency in OSCE decision-making mechanisms as well as for better inter-Institutional co-ordination in the OSCE. He also discussed the preparations for the international conference on migration being jointly organized by the OSCE PA and the Portuguese National Assembly.

This will be held in Sintra on 10 and 11 October 2001, in conjunction with a meeting of the OSCE PA Expanded Bureau on 9 October. During his visit to Portugal, Mr. Severin was accompanied by the PA’s Secretary General, Spencer Oliver.

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Freimut Duve, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

RFOM reports to Permanent Council on the Gongadze case

The fate of the Ukrainian journalist, Georgiy Gongadze, who disappeared in September last year, has continued to be a focus of the work of Freimut Duve, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media. On 8 February, he presented a report to the Permanent Council entitled Ukraine: the Gongadze Case.

This dealt with the disappearance and subsequent developments in the case of Mr. Gongadze, who was the editor of an on-line publication, *Ukrain-skaya Pravda*. Although the body of Mr. Gongadze was later found, the investigation into this case, conducted by the Office of the State Prosecutor, has raised numerous questions.

Among other things in his report, the OSCE Representative recommended that the Government of Ukraine should undertake a new effort to investigate the

Gongadze case, especially those aspects related to the identification of the body and to the circumstances surrounding his disappearance.

The possibility should be explored of starting such a new investigation, headed by a well-respected independent judge and involving foreign experts. The investigation should be transparent with information provided in a timely manner to the public.

The report was criticized by the Ukrainian delegation to the OSCE. As a result, on 19 February, Mr. Duve wrote to the Head of the Delegation, Ambassador Volodymyr Ohrysko, informing him of the position of his Office.

Detained Russian reporter released after appeal by RFOM

On 20 February, Anna Politkovskaya, a reporter for the Russian newspaper, *Novaya Gazeta*, was detained by Russian troops at a checkpoint in the Chechen republic of the Russian Federation. The following day, the Representative on Freedom of the Media intervened with the Russian Foreign Minister, appealing for her full safety and security until her release.

On 22 February, the Office of the Representative contacted the Office of Sergei Yastrzhembsky, Assistant to the Russian President, to voice concern regarding the fate of Ms. Politkovskaya. Later that day, she was released and subsequent issues of *Novaya Gazeta* carried her personal reports, describing her plight. Her stories have since been published by major newspapers throughout Europe.

Journalists allegedly attacked by police in Azerbaijan

On 27 February, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media wrote to the Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan, Vilayat Guliyev, regarding a recent action by the police in Baku who prevented a group of journalists from covering a mass protest fast by Karabakh war veterans.

Allegedly, the police used batons to beat a woman reporter, Sevindzh Muradkhanli from *Adalyat* and *Alillyar*, while plainclothes police manhandled another woman journalist, Saadat Akifgyzy from *Avropa*, and deprived her of her work identification document.

In another reported incident, the police forcefully prevented a camera crew from the television station Space from filming the beating by policemen of a handicapped veteran. The OSCE Representative has asked for clarification on these cases of alleged violations against freedom of the media.

Conference held on journalists and free media in south-eastern Europe

Protection of journalists and their role in reconciliation, promoting inter-ethnic peace and preventing conflicts was the theme of a conference on free media that was organized jointly by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and the Council of Europe. Hosted by the OSCE Mission to Croatia, the conference was held in Zagreb from 28 February to 2 March. The conference attracted some 120 participants including from 17 countries (*see news feature on page 5*).

REPORT

from the OSCE Secretary General and the Secretariat

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Secretary General attends meeting of UN and Regional Organizations

The Secretary General of the OSCE, Jan Kubis, travelled to New York last month to take part in the Fourth Meeting of the United Nations and Regional Organizations, chaired by the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan. The meeting, which took place on 6 and 7 February, dealt with peace-building in all its aspects, including the conflict prevention and post-conflict phases. It concentrated on the interaction and co-operation of international organizations and the principles and modalities guiding this co-operation.

The OSCE, also represented by Sorin Ducaru, the Ambassador of Romania (which holds the Chairmanship of the OSCE during the current year), took an active part in the deliberations and distributed background documents on OSCE instruments, experiences and activities.

While at the UN, the Secretary General held separate meetings with his counterpart, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, as well as with a number of UN officials. With Deputy Secretary-General Louise Frechette, Mr. Kubis discussed preparations for a lessons-learned meeting of all major international organizations co-operating in south-eastern Europe; with the Under Secretary-General for Disarmament, Jayantha Dhanapala; Mr. Kubis discussed preparations for the UN Conference on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons (on this subject, he briefly met the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee, Carlos dos Santos of Mozambique).

The Secretary General also met the Under Secretary-General for Political Affairs Kieran Prendergast, the Under Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Jean-Marie Guehenno, and the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Afghanistan Francesco Vendrell, as well as the current President of the General Assembly, Harri Holkeri (Finland) and Kalman Mizsei, the new United Nations Development Programme Assistant Administrator and Director of its Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

In all these meetings, the talks covered ways and means to improve information-sharing and establish more regular and structured co-operation between the two organizations and their staff, in the light of the recommendations of the Brahimi report and structural and organizational changes in the OSCE and its Secretariat.

These meetings, which in many respects followed up on the visit of the Chairman-in-Office to New York on 2 February (*see News In Brief on page 11*), focused on areas where the two organizations co-operate directly, such as the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Finally, Mr. Kubis discussed matters of common interest with the Secretaries General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Abdulah Belkeziz, and of the Organization of African Unity, Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim, as well as with the Executive Secretary of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Yuri Yarov.

OSCE hosts annual tripartite event with UN and Council of Europe

On 16 February, the Secretary General chaired the annual Tripartite Meeting between the United Nations, the OSCE and the Council of Europe (CoE), which the OSCE organized this year in Vienna. The European Commission, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Organization for Migration were also invited.

South-eastern Europe and the Caucasus were the main areas discussed. The participants agreed that the newly established OSCE Mission to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Council of Europe Office in Belgrade would co-operate closely with representatives of the United Nations and its specialised agencies, offices and programmes, and representatives of the European Commission in Belgrade.

The participants agreed in particular that Kosovo-wide elections should be thoroughly prepared and that the exact role and status of the elected body should be defined before taking a decision on the date for the elections. The participants also noted with great concern the situation in southern Serbia. They expressed concern about the political situation in Albania, and noted that in view of the elections to be held this year, it was high time for political parties, including those in the opposition, to seek common ground.

On the Caucasus, the participants discussed the present situation in both the north and the south of the region, and decided to pursue closer co-operation and exchange information in a number

of areas, including the possibility of launching joint projects and pursuing a joint assessment mission in south Caucasus.

The next high-level tripartite meeting will be hosted by the Council of Europe in 2002 in Strasbourg.

Address given to conference on democracy held in Washington

At the invitation of the Organization of American States, the Secretary addressed a conference in Washington, on 20 and 21 February, on the role of regional and multilateral organizations in the defence and promotion of democracy, which was organized in co-operation with the NGO, Community of Democracies. In the margins of the conference he had a bilateral meeting with the Secretary General of the OAS, Cesar Gaviria, and also with the Chairman of the Committee on Hemispheric Security, Ambassador Ostria.

Topics discussed included the experience of the two organizations in dealing with confidence- and security-building measures. It was also agreed to continue the practice of exchanging occasional visits and other contacts and exchange of official information. Similarly, at the margins of the Conference the Secretary General discussed matters of common interest with Mats Karlsson, External Affairs Vice President of the World Bank.

The Secretary General also used his stay in Washington to hold working consultations at the State Department with the Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and the US Policy Co-ordinator for the CIS, as well as at the National Security Council with the

Senior Director for Europe and Eurasia.

SG attends meetings with EC and BOAC in Brussels

At the invitation of the Swedish EU Presidency and Ambassador Bjurner, Chairman of the Political and Security Committee, the Secretary General visited Brussels on 27 February. During his stay he also had meetings at the European Commission, External Relations Directorate General and at the Council's Secretariat. He met Mr. Valenzuela, Deputy Director-General, Mr. Vinas, Director for Multilateral Affairs, and his colleagues; Mr. Briet, Director for Common Foreign and Security Policy; and other representatives of the EC and the Council's Secretariat. He discussed

this co-operation, as well as internal capacity-building and developments in the two organizations.

Also on 27 February, together with Bruce Connuck, Deputy Head of the OSCE Mission to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Secretary General attended a meeting in Brussels focusing on the developments in southern Serbia, the Covic plan (named after Nebojsa Covic, Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia) and its implementation, and the responses of the international community. The so-called Balkan Operational Agencies Co-ordination meeting – BOAC – was chaired by UN Special Envoy, Carl Bildt, and hosted by the NATO Secretary-General in Brussels; it was attended by Foreign Minister Lindh of Sweden/EU Presidency, HR/SG Javier Solana, European Commissioner Chris Patten, OSCE and UNHCR. Phased and conditioned adjustments of the Ground Safety Zone were discussed, as well as confidence-building and other measures to defuse tensions and promote confidence, stability and development in southern Serbia.

Seminar held on 'lessons learned' during the Austrian Chairmanship

On 23 February, a seminar on 'OSCE: Lessons learned during the Austrian Chairmanship – a look forward', was held at the Diplomatic Academy, Vienna, and initiated by the Academy together with the Permanent Missions of Austria and Romania to the OSCE. The OSCE Secretariat co-sponsored the event and also provided assistance in the preparations for the seminar.

The event was opened by the Chair-



Now on the OSCE website: a page describing the new Mission to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

issues of co-operation between the EU and the OSCE, notably in civilian crisis management, co-operation in specific areas and situations, and ways and modalities to structure and better focus

person of the Permanent Council in 2000, the Austria's Head of Delegation, Jutta Stefan-Bastl, who outlined some of the events during last year's Austrian OSCE Chairmanship by pointing out the priorities and the achievements, but also the problems. In the OSCE system of rotating Chairmanships, she stressed the importance of close co-operation with the OSCE Secretariat, as this provided the institutional memory of the Organization.

The OSCE Secretary General, in his address to the seminar, also supported this view and underlined the importance of good modalities of co-operation between the Chairmanship and the Secretariat. Mr. Kubis also pointed to last year's strengthening of the Organization's capability to act quickly in civilian crisis management, especially on the ground. For the OSCE Secretariat, this had brought about a re-structuring and capacity-building, as well as changes in some key positions in the Secretariat.

The aim of the seminar was to discuss different aspects of the experiences gained during the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship in 2000, both from a theoretical and a practical point of view, and on that basis assess future challenges to the OSCE. To that effect, the list of speakers included Heads of OSCE Delegations in Vienna, as well as academics with a profound knowledge of the Organization. Interesting and fruitful discussions covered areas such as comprehensive security, peace-keeping operations and civilian police, the regional approach, and the human dimension.

The seminar provided an opportunity to discuss and exchange experience and ideas, and lively discussions. It drew around 50 participants, the majority from the Delegations in Vienna, but also including students and representatives of the academic community and non-governmental organizations.

OSCE once again stages its annual charity ball in Vienna

On the evening of 9 February, over 1,000 guests flowed through the elegant halls of the former Imperial Hofburg Palace in Vienna to while away the hours at the OSCE Ball, and at the same time to contribute generously to international charities. Organized by the Conference Services section of the Secretariat, the event enjoyed the generous support of the Hofburg Kongresszentrum (which manages the premises), Vienna Intercontinental Hotel (which provided the buffet supper), and the City of San Remo, Italy which donated 7,000 flowers donated to decorate the rooms).

For the first time in its short history, the historic Zeremoniensaal was made available as a ballroom. Music was provided by the Istvanits Ball Orchestra, the Modern Dance Orchestra, the Wolfgang Wehner Jazz Quartet, and as a midnight surprise, the Elvis Presley Revival Band!

Among the special guests whom the Secretary General welcomed at his table were the Deputy Mayor of San Remo, Giovanni Berrino, the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Adrian Severin, and the Ambassadors of Morocco and Thailand. Altogether 45 Ambassadors attended the Ball.

The net income will be again donated for the benefit of a humanitarian organization or project, to be decided upon soon. One final word from the organizers is that potential sponsors are needed for next year.

News from the OSCE website

The OSCE website continues to provide timely news and information. During February, a new section was launched to highlight the OSCE's latest Mission, recently established in Belgrade, capital of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It can be found at the following address:

www.osce.org/yugoslavia

In addition, several new web features have been introduced. The Article II Agreement under the Dayton Peace Accord and the success of OSCE CSBM's in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) have been profiled.

Other stories describe OSCE international co-operation with the United Nations and the European Union. Multimedia web features currently focus on free media in south-eastern Europe, 'Censorship by killing' and new media legislation in BiH, as well as the recent OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Seminar, which examined the topic of freedom of expression. Listings of these and other OSCE feature stories can be found by visiting:

www.osce.org/features

In order to follow daily happenings in the OSCE region, or to subscribe to OSCE news releases by e-mail, it is recommended to visit OSCE Online News, at:

www.osce.org/news



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