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**POST FESTUM (*Lat.- after the fact) OF THE ANNUAL SESSION OF THE OSCE
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OSCE IN CROATIA UNTIL NATO AND EU ACCESSION?

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At the annual session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly held at the beginning of this week in Washington, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tonino Picula, called for the reform of this organization in Croatia, wondering about the purpose of the presence of the OSCE Mission in a country which has the status of a candidate and is awaiting the beginning of negotiations with the EU. According to the *Voice of America*, the OSCE Mission to Croatia should close in 2006 or 2007.

The opinion of the Head of the OSCE Mission to Croatia, Jorge Fuentes, is similar although a bit more careful in the assessment.

- Significant progress has been achieved in the areas such as development of democratic institutions and civil society, strengthening the freedom of the media and progressive democratization of the police. However, additional efforts still need to be made in the issues related to refugee return and provision of housing care, in the rule of law area, including the reform of judiciary, the conduct of war crime court proceedings, further implementation of minority rights and the reform of electoral framework. If Croatia undertakes the right steps to achieve progress in those most demanding areas, the implementation of the Mission's mandate could advance quite well by the end of 2006. That scenario depends on the willingness of Croatia to resolve in a satisfactory manner the outstanding issues which justify the Mission's presence. Since Croatia expressed interest in joining the European Union, the OSCE and the Croatian Government work jointly on defining tasks which need to be fulfilled in order for Croatia to achieve its set goal of joining the Euro-Atlantic community. The Government acknowledges the useful aspect of the Mission's presence in the achievement of the most significant national priority. Moreover, the mandate is extended every year with a consensus of 55 OSCE member states, including Croatia, based on the progress Croatia achieved related to the issues which are a part of the Mission's activities, said for our paper Jorge Fuentes.

Thereby Fuentes explained that Tonino Picula's statement refers to the "recent reports of the OSCE Panel of Eminent Persons in which they mentioned possible reform of the OSCE in its entirety and not the reform of individual missions".

Therefore, that report will not influence the work of the OSCE Mission in the Republic of Croatia. The Office in Zadar will continue to work with local and regional authorities, NGOs and other institutions at the local and regional level in achieving the same goals as those the Croatian Government is striving to achieve at the national level, added Fuentes.