

## OSCE Reports on Events in Kosovo



*The Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania, Ambassador Daan Everts, visits an observation post on the Albania/Kosovo province border.*

Photo: Bjorn E. Brustad

Throughout April the OSCE closely monitored events in and around Kosovo. Its reports to the United Nations and the Contact Group have been instrumental in keeping the international community abreast of developments.

### ***Referendum a "Rhetorical" Exercise***

On 15 April the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), Zivadin Jovanović, invited the OSCE to observe a referendum on "whether or not the Republic of Serbia should accept the involvement of foreign representatives in the resolution of problems in Kosovo and Metohija." This offer was rejected by the Chairman-

in-Office in a letter to Mr. Jovanović on 17 April in which he wrote that the referendum was more "rhetoric than a meaningful effort to contribute to the improvement of the situation." He drew Mr. Jovanović's attention to the statement of the OSCE Troika Ministers on 8 April in which they warned the FRY that "the organization of the referendum could have a disruptive effect on an already inflamed situation."

### ***Contacts with the International Community***

On 20 April a report on "The situation in Kosovo and on measures taken by the OSCE" pursuant to paragraphs

13 and 16 of United Nations Security Council resolution No. 1160 was submitted to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan by the Polish Chairmanship. The report concluded that "the basic demands of the OSCE have not been sufficiently considered by the authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia." Furthermore, "the conditions required for bringing about a meaningful dialogue have not improved, and a resolution of the crisis is not in sight." It reiterated that the OSCE stands ready to participate in efforts to advance a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

This point was raised by the Chairman-in-Office on 21 April when

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he met with United States Assistant Secretary of State Strobe Talbott in Warsaw.

### ***Field Operations Monitor Borders***

The security situation in and around Kosovo worsened. The OSCE Presence in Albania which, in co-operation with the European Community Monitoring Mission (ECMM), is monitoring the Albania/Kosovo province border, observed increased military activity on the Yugoslav side of the border with Albania. The Presence's field office in Bajram Curri (in northern Albania) reported some incidents along the border in April. The Presence's monitoring capabilities (which are concentrated on the northern half of the Albanian border with the FRY) will be strengthened in the near future with the establishment of a monitoring team in Kukes.

The situation along the border of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is being monitored by the OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje in co-operation with the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP). The Mission reports that the situation is "stable and calm" and that "there has been no observable change in the pattern of border activity."

### ***OSCE Submits "Report on Compliance"***

In line with a statement made by the Contact Group in Bonn on 25 March, which requested the OSCE to submit a "report on compliance," the Chairman-in-Office issued a report to the Contact Group meeting in Rome on 29 April. It noted that since the last Contact Group meeting, all Troika Ministers had paid visits to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and that the Chairman-in-

Office, in addition to holding talks in Belgrade, had also visited Priština.

The report outlined five conditions raised by the Contact Group in their meeting of 25 March. On the issue of "meaningful dialogue, without preconditions, towards a peaceful solution to the Kosovo crisis," the report noted that no progress had so far been made on either procedure or substance "although both sides declared their readiness to enter into such a dialogue."

Concerning the condition relating to stopping violence and excessive use of force, withdrawing special police units, condemning terrorism and co-operating with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, the Chairmanship's report noted little progress and in some cases, particularly regarding the security situation, warned of a deterioration.

On the third point, "access to Kosovo," the report noted that there had been many high-ranking visitors to the FRY, including to Priština, during the reporting period. However, it pointed out that no visas had been granted by the FRY to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights' Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial or Summary Executions. It also reported that international humanitarian non-governmental organizations were experiencing difficulties in receiving visas to the FRY.

The report also addressed the question of acceptance of the Gonzalez mission and the return of the OSCE missions of long duration to Kosovo, Sandjak and Vojvodina. It noted the willingness of the FRY authorities to accept the mission of Mr. Gonzalez, provided that his mandate was confined to the

FRY's relations with the OSCE. It stated that "both President Milošević and Foreign Minister Jovanović have made it clear that Yugoslavia would not be ready to allow the return of OSCE missions of long duration before being granted full participation in the work of the Organization."

Another condition, the implementation of the 1996 education agreement, was referred to as "a positive step forward," but the report stated that "there is a long way to go towards its full implementation."

The report noted that "basic requirements for a peaceful political solution of the Kosovo crisis, as set forth by the Contact Group and the OSCE, have not been sufficiently met by the authorities of the FRY." It said that "unconditional dialogue remains the only way to achieve a durable and peaceful solution to the conflict. Responsibility for reaching such a solution lies on the parties to the conflict, and first and foremost the FRY authorities."

This report was submitted to the Contact Group which met in Rome on 29 April.

### ***Contact Group Meets in Rome***

After that meeting, the Contact Group issued a statement in which it described the OSCE report as "an important and balanced contribution to the assessment of the situation."

The statement made it clear that "the Contact Group regards an appropriate international involvement as an essential factor to establish confidence between the parties and to facilitate talks." A framework for dialogue and a stabilisation package were proposed.

One of the elements of the stabilisation package is the reopening of the OSCE missions in the FRY, including Kosovo. The Contact Group also stressed the importance that it attaches to the González mission which is seen as a means of reducing tension, restoring confidence and improving the general prospects for dialogue. It stated that “the top leadership in Belgrade should therefore immediately invite the González mission to start its work.”

The statement of the Contact Group held out the possibility for closer integration of the FRY into the international community if certain conditions are met. It said that if the leadership in Belgrade agrees to the framework for dialogue and the stabilisation measures outlined in the Contact Group statement, and if the González mission is launched, and substantive talks begin, “the Contact Group will promote a clear and achievable path towards Belgrade’s

full integration in the international community, including participation in the OSCE.” The Group members stated that “we want the FRY to reap the benefits of membership in international financial and political institutions.”

The next meeting of the Contact Group will take place in Paris in May. In the interim, the OSCE will continue its monitoring activities and its efforts to find a peaceful solution to the crisis.

## Troika Ministers Meet in Warsaw

On 8 April the Ministers of the OSCE Troika, the Foreign Ministers of Poland, Norway and Denmark met in Warsaw to review a number of regional issues of particular concern to the OSCE. Also attending the meeting were the Secretary General of the OSCE, Giancarlo Aragona, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, Max van der Stoep, the Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Gérard Stoudmann, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Freimut Duve, the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Javier Ruperez and the Head of the Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Robert Barry.

The Ministers reiterated their call for an unconditional dialogue between the authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Serbia and the leadership of the Kosovar Albanians. They reaffirmed their conviction that participation of an outside representative or representatives will provide an essential contribution to the dialogue. They urged the FRY authorities to accept

without further delay the mission of Felipe González, the Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office and Special Representative of the European Union.

In a statement issued after the meeting they noted that “the organization of the referendum could have a disruptive effect on an already inflamed situation.” They also called on the FRY authorities to allow for the reinstatement of the OSCE’s long-term missions in Kosovo, Sandjak and Vojvodina.

Disturbed by reports of the continued presence of the Serbian special police force, the Ministers reiterated their call for their immediate withdrawal. They expressed deep concern over recent reports of further violence and urged both sides to use utmost restraint.

They welcomed the beginning of implementation of the Education Agreement and encouraged both sides to move the process forward quickly and in a constructive way.

The Ministers expressed appreciation for the moderate and constructive approach adopted by the neighbouring countries, Albania, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and reviewed the steps which are being undertaken by the OSCE to contribute to the prevention of any spillover from the Kosovo conflict.

Having agreed to the request by the Contact Group to report to its next Meeting on the status of compliance of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Ministers discussed the preparations for this report and agreed to the mode of the report’s presentation. They also heard a report from the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Foreign Minister Bronisław Geremek, on his trips to Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and the FRY.

On a separate issue, the Ministers welcomed the decision of the Permanent Council to provide financial support for the OSCE supervision of the September elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Additionally, they called upon the inter-

national community to make substantial contributions for the purpose of partial funding of the elections. They also underlined the importance of increased participation by the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the election process.

With regard to Croatia, the Troika Ministers emphasized the importance of ensuring the unconditional return of refugees and reiterated the continued readiness of the OSCE to work with the Croatian authorities to that effect.

The Ministers encouraged the Assistance Group in Grozny to continue its efforts, including facilitating humanitarian aid, and called on all parties to offer their full co-operation.

Citing a continued need for rehabilitation and reconstruction in post-conflict areas, the Troika Ministers appealed to

OSCE States to provide more resources and assistance.

They expressed satisfaction that the new financing mechanism for larger OSCE Missions and projects adopted by the Copenhagen Ministerial Meeting is now in operation.

The Ministers received a report by Denmark on the enhancing of the Secretariat's operational capabilities. They expressed support for the orientation and methods adopted for this review.

They welcomed the decision reached in Vienna to hold the next Ministerial Council Meeting in Oslo in December 1998 and to hold the next Summit Meeting of Heads of State and Government in summer-autumn 1999. They reemphasized their commitment to work actively on a

Document-Charter on European Security for submission to the Heads of State or Government of the OSCE countries.

The Ministers took note with satisfaction of the increased efforts by the Secretariat and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) to strengthen co-operation between the OSCE and other international organizations active in Europe. In particular, they pointed to the example of the recent joint mission of the ODIHR to Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia together with a delegation from the Council of Europe, the European Commission, UNHCR, the Soros Foundation and the Danish Refugee Council.

The Ministers welcomed the upcoming trip of the Chairman-in-Office to Central Asia as a signal of OSCE commitments to the region.



On 2 April **H.E. Jadranko Prlić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina**, addressed the Permanent Council. He emphasized the importance of the OSCE in promoting good-neighbourliness and co-operation and noted several aspects of the Organization's work (particularly on

the security model) that could further enhance security in Europe. He cited the "indispensable role" of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina and called for continued support from the international community in order to build a democratic and economically sustainable Bosnia and Herzegovina.

On Monday 20 April **Slovak Minister for Foreign Affairs Zdenka Kramplová** met with OSCE Secretary

General Giancarlo Aragona. Among the topics discussed was the role of the OSCE in the parliamentary elections in Slovakia scheduled for 25 and 26 September. Other topics included the restructuring of OSCE institutions, financial reform of the OSCE, conflict settlement and the tasks of OSCE missions, the place of the OSCE in the evolving European Security system, as well as co-operation between the OSCE and other international organizations.

At a meeting of the Commonwealth of Independent States in Moscow on 28 April, the presidents of **Armenia and Azerbaijan** pledged to maintain a cease-fire and to continue working for peace within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group.

## Chairman-in-Office Visits Central Asia

The Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, Polish Foreign Minister Bronisław Geremek, visited the countries of Central Asia between 14 and 20 April. He was accompanied by members of the Troika and representatives of the OSCE Secretariat and institutions. The delegation was received at the highest level in all states visited.

In each of the five countries he visited, Turkmenistan, Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, the Chairman-in-Office emphasized the importance of Central Asia as an integral part of the OSCE community, in accordance with the principle of indivisibility of the security of the OSCE area. He stressed the importance of their active participation in OSCE work, in all its dimensions. He also invited them to participate actively in the work on a document-charter on European security in order to ensure a proper link between European and Central Asian security.

At each stop, the Chairman-in-Office underlined early warning, conflict prevention, regional security and the human dimension as his central concerns. He said it was critical for all Governments to implement their OSCE human dimension commitments. He pointed out that the OSCE is following closely the progress of democratic reform in the countries of Central Asia. He offered the Organization's assistance in implementing OSCE commitments and welcomed various country requests for specific OSCE programmes. In this regard, he said that the ODIHR and the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities are prepared to continue and expand their activities in the region. The economic dimension also figured in discussions, as well as environmental protection, in particular regarding the Caspian and Aral Seas.

Mr. Geremek welcomed regional initiatives for conflict resolution and

prevention. The conflicts in Tajikistan and Afghanistan and their potential for spillover were high on the agenda of all his talks. Government officials expressed concerns about the risk of the spread of fundamentalism. Other threats to regional stability and security were also discussed at length. For example, drug trafficking, arms smuggling and crime originating in the region and in Afghanistan were raised as threats which affect all OSCE participating States. Allocation of water resources was also cited as a security issue of major concern.

All countries in the region expressed their profound interest in the presence and activity of the OSCE in the region as well as their deep appreciation for the work of the OSCE Liaison Office in Central Asia and indicated that they support its continuation and expansion.



*Der Amtierende Vorsitzende und polnische Außenminister Bronisław Geremek wird bei seinem Besuch in der Ala-Artscha-Schlucht in Kirgisistan von einem leitenden Parkangestellten willkommen geheißten.*

Foto: Melissa Fleming

OSCE

NEWSLETTER



## Focus on Central Asia

The visit of the Chairman-in-Office, Polish Foreign Minister Bronisław Geremek, to Central Asia from 14 to 20 April highlights the involvement of the OSCE in this region. It is the latest in an increasingly frequent number of visits to Central Asia by high-level OSCE officials, including the Secretary General, the Director of the ODIHR, the High Commissioner on National Minorities and representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly. Many high-level representatives of the Governments of the Central Asian States, including the Foreign Ministers of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, have addressed the Permanent Council in Vienna.

In addition to these high-level visits, more regular contacts have been established through OSCE institutions in the area.

The **OSCE Liaison Office in Central Asia**, which is located in Tashkent, has been operating since the spring of 1995. It provides a key link between the OSCE institutions and the Organization's Central Asian participating states and plays an important role in promoting the implementation of OSCE principles and commitments in that region. Furthermore, the Office assists with the organization of OSCE events in the region (like seminars, round-tables and high-level visits) and maintains contacts with the region's universities, research institutes and NGOs.

The Office's international staff includes the Head of Office, Ambassador Gancho Ganchev of Bulgaria, and a human dimension expert. Two additional staff members will join the Office in the summer of 1998; a human dimension/legal

adviser and an economic/environmental expert. This reflects the increased emphasis placed on the OSCE's work in Central Asia and will strengthen the Liaison Office's effectiveness in implementing its widening range of responsibilities. The possibility of establishing a branch office in Bishkek is also being considered.

The **OSCE Mission to Tajikistan** provides the Organization with another important presence in the region. Since its deployment in February 1994, the Mission (through its headquarters in Dushanbe) has been actively involved in contributing to the process of the overall political settlement of the crisis in the country and assisting in the restoration of peace and stability. It also promotes and monitors adherence to OSCE norms (particularly as regards respect for human rights), assists in the development of legal and democratic political institutions and processes and keeps the OSCE community informed about developments in the country.

Since July 1995 the Mission has been following the human rights situation of returning refugees and internally displaced persons and has been facilitating their integration into Tajik society. In order to create adequate conditions for this work, three branch offices have been opened in Kurghon-Teppe, Sharituz and Dusti in the southern part of the country (see map).

The Mission has also been very active in assisting in the implementation of the Moscow Agreement of 27 June 1997 between the Government and the United Tajik Opposition. In particular,

it is working with the Commission on National Reconciliation and contributing to the process of amending the constitution.

Much of the OSCE's work in Central Asia relates to the human dimension. **The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights** (ODIHR) is therefore taking an increasingly active role in the region. It has several regional projects, including on human rights education, women in public life, and elections. The latter is of particular importance as most of the countries in the region have elections scheduled for 1999 and 2000.

The ODIHR is also engaged in country-specific projects. For example, in October 1997 the ODIHR and the Government of Uzbekistan signed a Memorandum of Understanding providing for assistance by the ODIHR in the fields of democratization, human rights, training for NGOs, and election preparation. A needs assessment mission to the other four countries of the region has recently been carried out, and its recommendations should contribute to the discussions between the ODIHR and the Governments of Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan on the scope of further co-operation in human dimension projects.

The **High Commissioner on National Minorities** (HCNM) is active in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The main focus of his work has been on the further development and strengthening of the principal mechanisms for dialogue and inter-action between the

majority and minority ethnic groups and between different minorities in those two countries, namely the Assembly of Peoples of Kazakstan and the Assembly of Peoples of Kyrgyzstan. Following recommendations of the High Commissioner, both Assemblies have streamlined their internal structures and are developing their own tools for early warning and early prevention of potential conflicts.

In co-operation with the Foundation on Inter-Ethnic Relations, the Governments of Kazakstan and Kyrgyzstan and local NGOs, the Office of the HCNM is supporting a number of projects to develop monitoring networks and analytical units within the two countries which could provide reliable, objective and current information on inter-ethnic relations. The HCNM also assists with target-oriented seminars and gives

advice on a wide range of national minority-related issues, including legal questions, language laws (in Kazakstan) and the development of textbooks for national minorities (in Kyrgyzstan).



# The OSCE Presence in Albania: “A Remarkable Success Story”

One year ago, in April 1997, the OSCE established its Presence in Albania. As the OSCE Head of Presence, Ambassador Dan Everts, told an audience (including Danish Foreign Minister and former OSCE Chairman-in-Office Niels Helveg Petersen) which was celebrating that anniversary in Tirana on 16 April 1998, the establishment of the Presence “marked the beginning of what is generally considered a remarkable success story of crisis prevention and resolution.”

The events of last year are well known. Responding to the serious political crisis of February 1997, the then OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Danish Foreign Minister Niels Helveg Petersen, appointed on 4 March former Austrian Chancellor, Dr. Franz Vranitzky, as his personal representative to Albania. On 27 March the Permanent Council established the OSCE Presence (under the direction of Ambassador Herbert Grubmayr) to provide Albania with advice and assistance in democratization, the establishment of independent media and the protection of human rights as well as in election preparation and monitoring. Furthermore, the OSCE was to function as the co-ordinating framework for the work of other international organizations and for facilitating improvements in the protection of human rights and the basic elements of civil society.

One day later, on 28 March, the United Nations Security Council adopted a resolution (1101) authorizing a group of member countries, led by Italy, to establish a Multinational Protection Force (MPF) to facilitate the safe and prompt delivery of humanitarian as

sistance and to help create a secure environment for the missions of international organizations in Albania.

The OSCE Presence, supported by the MPF and other international and non-governmental organizations, helped to stabilize the situation. But this was no easy task. As Ambassador Everts remarked on 16 April 1998, “not often is an international organization challenged to play such a decisive role at such a crucial juncture in a country’s history as was the case with the OSCE in Albania.” That role was played successfully.

Parliamentary elections were held in June and July 1997. The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) was instrumental in supporting these elections with technical assistance and international monitoring. Dr. Vranitzky played a key role in ensuring full participation by the political parties and the proper conduct of the elections.

International observers, led by the OSCE Special Co-ordinator, Mme. Catherine Lalumière, Member of the European Parliament, Sir Russell Johnston, Head of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly Delegation, and Mr. Javier Rupérez, President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, declared these elections “adequate and acceptable” and stressed that the international community expected a “major effort toward national reconciliation after the elections”, without which there would “be no basis for defining the terms of international aid.”

These elections, along with a national reconciliation and economic recovery programme introduced by the new coalition Government, opened the way for significant international assistance agreed at international conferences in Rome and Brussels in July and October 1997. On 17 October the Rome Ministerial Conference “welcomed the intention of the OSCE to continue to serve as a flexible co-ordinating framework for international assistance to Albania in concert with the Albanian Government.”

After the completion of the election preparation and monitoring process, the number of international staff in the Presence was reduced. At the same time, the OSCE Presence opened two field offices in Vlore and Gjirokaster in October 1997 to support the main office in Tirana. The three offices work in the fields of human rights and rule of law, democratization and civil rights, electoral assistance, media monitoring and institution-building.

Another important activity of the Presence is its support for the Administrative Center for the Co-ordination of Assistance and Public Participation (ACCAPP), which is co-ordinating foreign and domestic assistance and public participation in the constitutional drafting process. Since its establishment in October 1997 the ACCAPP has been working with the national and international community to collect information and commentary (both technical and non-technical), provide training, organize polls, distribute information, and organize civic election initiatives.



The Presence is also monitoring parliamentary elections. This is a logical progression of the work carried out by Dr. Vranitzky in the spring of 1997 when he was instrumental in breaking the political deadlock between the parties that threatened to delay the parlia-

mentary elections. It is also part of the follow-up to the unprecedented joint mission of the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assemblies of the Council of Europe and the OSCE that visited Albania on 22 and 23 January 1998. Related to these activities

is the Presence's role as a mediator between opposition groups and the Government. The Presence has been instrumental in ending several hunger strikes and finding solutions to contentious issues.

The Presence works closely with the ODIHR which, in the last year, assisted in a voters' and civic registration process, provided technical assistance to the judicial system, assisted in the establishment of national human rights institutions such as an ombudsman, undertook media freedom assessments, and completed the first two phases of an NGO network programme.

The Presence also works in close coordination with the Albanian authorities, embassies and bilateral assistance missions, other international organizations such as the Council of Europe, the WEU (Multinational Advisory Policy Element) and the EU/EC, particularly the Customs Advisory Mission and the European Community Monitoring Mission (ECMM), which is active in field monitoring in co-ordination with the OSCE. This co-operation is both symbolized and concretely manifested in the co-ordination meetings that take place in "Villa 6", the OSCE headquarters in Tirana.

This co-operation has increased as a result of the recent events north of the border in Kosovo. Through its border monitoring office in Bajram Curri, which was established in March 1998, the Presence is working with the ECMM and the UNHCR to observe developments on the border between Albania and the Yugoslav province of Kosovo.





## News from the Field

*The OSCE currently has ten Missions in the field as well as the Assistance Group to Chechnya, the Presence in Albania and the Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus. The following are highlights from the work of some of the field operations during the past month:*

### **The OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus Organizes Seminar and Sets Priorities**

The OSCE Assistance and Monitoring Group (AMG) in Belarus organized a conference on "Free and Fair Elections" in Minsk on 29 and 30 April. The conference was attended by more than 100 representatives from governmental institutions, the opposition (13th Supreme Soviet), political parties, non governmental organizations, governmental and non-governmental press and institutes, and the diplomatic corps. It afforded a rare opportunity for a dialogue between opponents in the constitutional conflict and gave governmental and non-governmental institutions an insight into views of international experts. The conference highlighted the benefit of dialogue in bringing about consensus on constitutional issues.

As a result of the seminar, the OSCE AMG has become recognized throughout the governmental and non governmental structures of the country, including the media, as an important institution that can help to advance the development of a new political consensus in Belarus on specific issues relating to an open and pluralistic democratic society.

Issues identified by the AMG as priorities in fostering this process include a new election law; a law on the establishment of an Ombudsman institution; the penal code and penal code procedure; and legislation on the mass media.

Many of these points were raised in a working session between Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka and the Head of the AMG, Ambassador Wieck, on 9 April. In the meeting Ambassador Wieck stressed the importance of "free debate without fear."

### **In Bosnia, 1997 Election Implementation Winds Down While 1998 Preparations Intensify**

Implementation of the municipal elections of September 1997 is almost complete now that almost all of the 136 municipalities have been finally certified. The case of Srebrenica proved intractable and, as a result, Head of Mission Ambassador Barry and High Representative Westendorp issued a Supplementary Arbitration Award which suspended the work of the municipal assembly and established an Interim Executive Board composed of four Bosniac and four Serb members. The Acting Chairman of the Board, Mr. Larry Sampler of the OSCE, is empowered to cast a tie-breaking vote when there is a deadlock between the two sides.

Preparations for the 1998 elections intensified in April. On 2 April the Provisional Election Commission adopted additional rules and regulations concerning the registration of political parties, coalitions and independent candidates. This registration process began on 27 April. Rules for voter information and the media have also been approved. Plans for voter registration are in place and a voter

information campaign will be launched in early May.

Local Election Commissions are currently being constituted. Election officers and trainers are taking up their positions throughout the country. Wherever possible, international officials are being paired with national staff in order to create a qualified and experienced pool of national staff who will be able to conduct future elections without foreign supervision.

### **Assistance Group Facilitates Humanitarian Aid to Chechnya**

The OSCE Assistance Group (AG) to Chechnya reports that the situation in the Republic remains complex and that there has been little progress in resolving the wave of hostage-taking incidents in the North Caucasus. Most assistance providers have curtailed their programmes in the region, and the AG is now the only international organization with a permanent presence in Chechnya. It therefore plays an important role by working with NGOs and international organizations to find flexible ways of continuing the delivery of assistance.

For example, when spring landslides destroyed homes in the mountainous regions of south-eastern Chechnya, the OSCE funded the delivery of building materials to the Vedeno region, one of the hardest hit areas.

The AG is also working to contact potential donors to fight the spread of

tuberculosis and hopes to report success in this effort soon.

**Mission to Croatia Disappointed by Draft Procedures**

The OSCE Mission to Croatia has expressed serious reservations about the latest draft of "Procedures for Return of Persons who have left the Republic of Croatia." The original Government draft, published on 31 March, was criticized by the international community, since it implied restrictions on the rights of citizenship and postponed the presentation of a comprehensive return plan until after a donors' conference.

In a new draft, approved by Parliament on 28 April, some of the elements criticized by the international community, including the OSCE Mission, have been amended, but other elements have not.

One of the main criticisms is that the unconditional right of return is not clearly affirmed.

It should be noted that in the light of this, and other, developments the international community is reconsidering its participation in the upcoming "Conference on Reconstruction and Development in the Republic of Croatia".

**Mission to Latvia Follows Citizenship Issue**

The OSCE Mission to Latvia has been closely following the debate on the so-called "windows" system for naturalization applications. Under that system, every year a new category of applicants would be eligible for naturalization (in other words a new window would be opened).

The system, which is contentious because of the large number of non-Latvian citizens in the country, has been criticized since the Citizenship Law was passed in July 1994. In April the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities was instrumental in encouraging the Latvian Government to reassess this section of the Citizenship Law (see page 13).

On 21 April the Latvian Government announced its decision to submit for the approval of the Latvian Parliament amendments to the Citizenship Law, including the abolition of the "windows" system. The Mission greatly welcomed this proposal and said that the adoption of this and other measures, which have been recommended by the OSCE, "would represent a truly significant step forward in promoting the integration process in Latvia."

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

	9-10	10-11	11-12
MO		!	
DI			
MI	X		
DO			
FR			X
SA		X	
SO			

**NGOs and Freedom of the Media  
20 May, Vienna**

An informal ad hoc meeting of the Permanent Council on the activities of the OSCE Representative on the Freedom of the Media, Mr. Freimut Duve, and on his office's relationship with NGOs will take place at 10 am on 20 May in Vienna.

Non-governmental organizations are invited to the meeting, including those that contributed to the drafting of the mandate of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media. Representatives from the ODIHR and the

Council of Europe will also attend the meeting.

The aim of the meeting is to discuss media-related issues within the scope of the mandate of the OSCE Representative on the Freedom of the Media, including the question of how NGOs can further contribute to the work of the Media Representative.

All NGOs wishing to participate in the meeting are requested to register with the OSCE Office of the Media Representative not later than 19 May (Fax: +43 1 512 21 459, Contact person: Mr. Stanley Schrage).

**Human Dimension Seminar: Ombudsman and National Human Rights Protection Institutions  
25 - 28 May, Warsaw**

The human dimension seminar on Ombudsman and National Human Rights Protection Institutions will be held in Warsaw beginning at 3 pm on 25 May. Keynote speeches and presentations will be made by different types of ombudsmen and human rights protection institutions. Thematically the work of the three day seminar will be conducted in four discussion groups (DG): practical and internal management of newly established ombudsman/human rights protection institutions (DG 1); ombudsman/human rights

protection institutions and their relationships with public authorities and the judiciary (DG 2); the preparation of national human rights education plans (DG 3); and the development of existing and emerging European and regional networks of ombudsman/national human rights protection institutions (DG 4).

The seminar is being organized in close co-operation with the United Nations Development Programme, the Council of Europe and the Polish Ombudsman Office. The European Ombudsman Institute and the International Ombudsman Institute have been invited to take part.

The seminar is designed to allow participants to come up with practical suggestions for dealing with the issues raised in the discussion groups and to formulate possible commitments to develop ombudsman/national human rights protection institutions and to strengthen contacts among them.

#### **Economic Forum 1-5 June, Prague**

The Sixth Meeting of the Economic Forum will take place at the Czernin Palace, Prague, from 1 to 5 June. The overall theme of the meeting will be "Security aspects of energy develop-

ments in the OSCE area." The Economic Forum will concentrate on the following main subjects: a) economic, legal and other settings, b) infrastructure and investment, and c) environmental implications. On the final two days it will also review the implementation of commitments in the economic dimension.

Representatives of non-governmental organizations having relevant experience in the area under discussion are free, after registering with the OSCE Secretariat, to attend and contribute to the meeting. Interested NGOs should contact Jutta Zedtwitz (fax +43 1 514 36 96).

#### **Regional Consultation on "Women in Public Life" 16-18 June, Tashkent**

The Regional Consultation for Central Asia and the Caucasus on "Women in Public Life" has been rescheduled and will now take place from 16 to 18 June in Tashkent. The Consultation is being organized by the ODIHR in co-operation with the UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS. There will be three participants from each Caucasian state and 10 from each Central Asian state. This includes representatives from governments and parliaments, NGOs and the media.

The discussions during the first day will concentrate on legal frameworks and practical implementation of legislation, while the focus of the third day will be on lobbying for and monitoring the advancement of the status of women.

In addition, on the second day, there will be working groups under the headings Challenges to Gender Equality, Transition to Democracy, Economic Restructuring, Traditions and Culture.

The keynote speaker will be the Norwegian Ombudsman for Gender Equality, Ms. Anne Lise Ryel.

#### **Seminar on Inter-Relationship between Central and Regional Governments 1-2 July, Chisinau**

The OSCE (Department for General Affairs), in co-operation with the Government of Moldova, is organizing a seminar on the Inter-Relationship between Central and Regional Governments, which is scheduled to take place in Chisinau, Moldova, from 1 to 2 July. The participation of high-level experts from OSCE participating states, international organizations and NGOs is expected.

For more information please contact Monika Wohlfeld (fax +43 1 514 36 96).

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**OSCE**

**NEWSLETTER**

## **REPORT** from the High Commissioner on National Minorities

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### **Latvia**

From 31 March to 2 April the High Commissioner visited Riga, where he was received by President Guntis Ulmanis. He also had meetings with Prime Minister Guntars Krasts, Speaker of the Saeima Alfreds Cepanis, and Foreign Minister Valdis Birkavs. Other meetings were held with Minister for Internal Affairs Ziedonis Cevers, Minister of Education Juris Celmins, and Head of the Naturalization Board Ms. Eizenija Aldermane. At the Parliament the HCNM met with Saeima deputies from the Foreign Affairs, European Affairs, and Human Rights Committees. He also had talks with the Chairman of the Saeima Commission on Education, Culture and Science Mr. Dzintars Abikis.

The main object of the High Commissioner's visit was to discuss once again the urgent need to simplify naturalization procedures and consider possible ways to encourage more people to apply for Latvian citizenship. He was keen to inquire how Latvian interlocutors viewed prospects for adopting his recommendations in favour of granting citizenship to stateless children born in Latvia since the country regained independence in 1991. He was informed of government plans to formulate amendments to citizenship legislation which would then be submitted to the Latvian Parliament with a request for the changes to be accepted.

On another issue the High Commissioner had a detailed and constructive

discussion with Saeima Committee Chairman Dzintars Abikis about the need to ensure the full compliance of the Latvian Draft Language Law with international standards. Mr. Abikis invited the High Commissioner to send some experts for a number of days to Latvia in order to help prepare a revised text before the third and final reading of the draft.

Following the High Commissioner's visit in early April, he was invited again to Riga for further consultations with Prime Minister Krasts on 17 April regarding proposed Government amendments to the Citizenship Law.

After discussions with the Prime Minister and other officials, the High Commissioner issued a statement in Riga on 17 April welcoming the decision of the Latvian Government to support his recommendations for the abolition of the so-called windows mechanism of naturalization and also with regard to the granting of citizenship to stateless children born in Latvia. He noted that, if adopted by the Saeima, these changes would mark a very important step towards the solution of the naturalization problem. He also acknowledged the Latvian Government's recognition of the need to ensure that the new language law and amendments to the Labour Code would have to be compatible with international norms. Finally, the High Commissioner expressed his particular support for the Latvian Government's decision to develop an integration policy.

### **Estonia**

On 15 and 16 April the High Commissioner paid a brief visit to Estonia where he was received by President Lennart Meri. He also had meetings with Prime Minister Mart Siimann and Minister for Inter-Ethnic Relations Ms. Andra Veidemann. Among subjects discussed was the adoption by the Government in February of the Integration Strategy, which the High Commissioner welcomed as a positive and encouraging policy document. He inquired about recent developments in the naturalization process, and specifically about proposals currently under discussion in the parliament for granting citizenship to stateless children born in Estonia. He was also informed about the latest proposals to create the institution of an ombudsman.

The High Commissioner had planned to attend a meeting of the Presidential Round-table on 17 April to which he had been invited, and also to take part in a one-day education seminar in Tallinn. However, because of an urgent request by the Latvian Prime Minister to come to Riga for consultations on that date, the High Commissioner had to change his plans and curtail his visit to Tallinn.

### **Croatia**

From 19 to 22 April the High Commissioner visited Croatia where he first travelled to Vukovar and Osijek in the Danube Region (former UNTAES area). There he had meetings with county



officials, the Joint Council of Municipalities, as well as with representatives of the Serbian minority. Thereafter, he travelled to Zagreb where he met with Deputy Prime Minister Ms. Mintas-Hodak, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Granić, Minister for Administration Mr. Ramuscak, the Head of the Office for Displaced Persons and Refugees, Mr. Pejković, the Adviser to the President on Foreign Affairs, Mr. Mades, and the

Chairperson of the Council for National Reconciliation, Ms. Skare-Osbolt. In addition, the High Commissioner visited the headquarters of the OSCE Mission, the UNHCR office in Osijek, and UNCIVPOL in Vukovar.

Return and resettlement of refugees as well as integration of returnees were the main subjects of discussions. In this context, questions were raised as to how the ongoing process of ethnic

Serbs with Croatian citizenship leaving the Danube Region can be stopped. Acts of intimidation perpetrated by owners of houses presently occupied by Serbs, the lack of access to employment, and continued uncertainty about the application of the Amnesty Law were all cited as major factors contributing to the outflow of Serbs. However, a general improvement of the security situation was acknowledged by all sides.

## **UPDATE** from the ODIHR

*The OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is located at Krucza 36/Wspólna 6 (3rd floor), PL-00-522 Warsaw 53, Poland, tel.: (+48-22) 625 70 40, fax: (+48-22) 625 43 57.*

### **Presidential Election in Armenia “does not meet OSCE standards”**

In its final report issued on 16 April, the ODIHR concluded that “the Extraordinary Presidential Election of March 16 and 30 does not meet the OSCE standard to which Armenia has committed itself in the Copenhagen Document of 1990.” Although improvements were noted over the 1996 election, the Election Observation Mission “observed ballot stuffing, discrepancies in the vote count, a large presence of unauthorised persons in polling stations, and instances of intimidation directed toward voters, election commission members, candidate proxies and international observers.”

The ODIHR extended its observation in order to review material related to these problems. Several recommendations were given, most notably that “a thorough, impartial and vigorous investigation of the serious irregularities and evidence of manipulation” cited in the ODIHR report “be undertaken urgently by the Armenian authorities.”

### **ODIHR to Observe Parliamentary Elections in Hungary. . .**

The ODIHR will observe the upcoming parliamentary elections in Hungary on 10 and 24 May this year. An observation mission, headed by Mark Power-Stevens, was established on 10 April and it will be responsible for coordinating the activities of an estimated 100 international observers over the election period.

These observers will be drawn from a wide range of OSCE participating States, and will include parliamentarians from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly as well as members of the international community in Hungary.

The OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission plans to issue a preliminary statement based on its long-term and short-term findings in a press conference on 11 May. A final report will be issued a few weeks after the publication of the final results.

### **. . . and in Montenegro**

The ODIHR has been invited to monitor parliamentary elections in Montenegro which are to be held on 31 May. The OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission, headed by Mr. Kåre Vollan, has a core staff of six as well as twelve long-term observers deployed throughout the country. Closer to election day, 100 to 120 observers from a number of OSCE participating states, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, foreign embassies to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and international governmental and non-governmental organizations present in the country will carry out short-term observation.

As always, a preliminary statement will be issued shortly after election day and a more comprehensive final report a few weeks later.

### **Human Rights Course in Tashkent**

A Human Rights Course for the Central Asian States will be held in Tashkent

from 25 to 30 May. Each country will send six representatives from the government, NGOs, research institutes and universities. The course will be conducted by Prof. Jeremy McBride (University of Birmingham) and Ms. Birgitte Kofod Olsen (Danish Center for Human Rights).

Topics will include philosophical foundations of human rights; human rights in the international order; human rights, democracy and rule of law; international obligations and domestic practices; international enforcement mechanisms; and the human dimension of the OSCE.

The course will conclude with an exam. The results of the exam will help in the selection of participants in the third phase of the Human Rights Education Programme, which will include a visit to Western human rights institutions.

## **REPORT** from the Parliamentary Assembly

*The Secretariat of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly is located at Rådhusstræde 1, DK-1455 Copenhagen K, Denmark, tel.: (+45-33) 32 94 00, fax: (+45-33) 32 55 05.*

### **Expanded Bureau Meets in Madrid**

The Expanded Bureau of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (PA) met from 23 to 25 April in Madrid at the invitation of the Parliament of Spain. The Expanded Bureau, comprising the President of the Assembly, the Vice-Presidents, the Treasurer, the President Emeritus and the Chairs, Vice-Chairs and Rapporteurs of the three general committees, considered the reports and draft resolutions prepared for the

annual session of the OSCE/PA to be held in Copenhagen from 7 to 10 July 1998. The main subject of the annual session will be "The Development of the Structures, Institutions and Perspectives of the OSCE." The Secretary General of the OSCE, Ambassador Giancarlo Aragona, and the ODIHR Director, Ambassador Gérard Stoudman, participated in the discussions.

Members of the Expanded Bureau considered the activities of the PA's

International Secretariat, a draft budget for the next financial year and the organizational arrangements for the forthcoming annual assembly session in Copenhagen. A follow-up to the Monaco Conference on subregional co-operation was also discussed. The French delegation informed the members of the Expanded Bureau of its intention to host the second conference on subregional co-operation in Nantes (France) in 1999.



*Spanish Prime Minister José Maria Aznar addresses the Expanded Bureau of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Madrid.*

Preparations for "an OSCE PA Seminar on Conflict Resolution and Democratic Development in the Caucasus" were also reviewed. The seminar will be held at the beginning of October 1998 in Tbilisi (Georgia) at the invitation of the Georgian Parliament. It is the third seminar organized by the OSCE PA for the countries of this region: the first seminar for the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus was held last January in Vienna, followed by a seminar in September in Tashkent.

The Bureau of the OSCE/PA, meeting on the periphery of the Expanded Bureau, considered a number of nominations for the OSCE/PA Prize for Journalism and Democracy and decided to award it this year to a distinguished British writer and journalist, Mr. Timothy Garton Ash.

A resolution on the situation in Kosovo was unanimously adopted by the Bureau members who expressed their deep concern about the grave and ever-worsening crisis in Kosovo. The OSCE/PA reminded the Yugoslav and Serbian authorities, the leaders of the Albanian population in Kosovo, and all the other actors in the region, that they must observe OSCE principles and commitments, in particular those concerning democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The Yugoslav Government was called upon to immediately allow the reopening of the OSCE missions of long duration to Kosovo, Sandjak and Vojvodina without any pre-conditions.

The Bureau asked the President of the OSCE/PA, Mr. Javier Ruperez, to undertake a mission to discuss the crisis with the leaders in Belgrade and Priština in order to assist in the promotion of peaceful negotiations.

The members of the Expanded Bureau were addressed by the President of the Spanish Chamber of Deputies, Mr. Frederico Trillo-Figueroa, the President of the Spanish Senate, Mr. Juan Ignacio Barrero, and the Spanish Prime Minister, Mr. José Maria Aznar. They were also received by His Majesty Juan Carlos I, King of Spain.

### **OSCE Prize for Journalism and Democracy Awarded to Timothy Garton Ash**

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has awarded the OSCE Prize for Journalism and Democracy for 1998 to the British writer and journalist, Timothy Garton Ash. The prize is awarded annually to journalists who, through their work, have promoted the OSCE principles on human rights and democracy. Mr. Garton Ash is the third recipient of the prize. In 1996 it was awarded to Polish journalist Adam Michnik. Last year it was given to the organization "Reporters sans frontières."

Timothy Garton Ash, a distinguished writer and journalist, born in 1955, is currently a Fellow at St Antony's College, Oxford. He is considered to be one of the best analysts of Central and Eastern Europe during the Communist period. He has written many books, essays and articles on that region, particularly on East Germany and Poland, and the fall of Communism. Through his work, he has contributed to the building of democracy and human rights in former communist countries.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly selected Mr. Garton Ash from several candidates including a Serbian journalist, Dejan Anastasijević, who works in Belgrade, and also the American-based

organization "Committee to Protect Journalists." The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly also took note of the courageous work of Ms. Ilari Alpi, an Italian journalist who died in Somalia in 1994 during the United Nations peace mission.

The Prize will be presented to Timothy Garton Ash during the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Annual Session on July 7 in Copenhagen.



The OSCE **NEWSLETTER** is published monthly by the Secretariat of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Department for General Affairs.

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