

## OSCE Chairman-in-Office Pulls OSCE Personnel out of Kosovo



OSCE/Szandelsky

*OSCE verifiers crossing the border into the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.*

On 19 March, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Norwegian Foreign Minister Knut Vollebæk, decided to withdraw the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM) from Kosovo.

The OSCE Chairman-in-Office said that the situation for the unarmed OSCE verifiers had gradually deteriorated. The ceasefire had virtually collapsed, the KVM was often being refused access, and co-operation on the part of FRY officials had totally broken down. Under such conditions, and citing also increasing threats to individual security, the Chairman-in-Office said it was no longer justifiable to keep KVM personnel in Kosovo.

In a press statement announcing his decision, he said, "The OSCE Mission has made an important contribution to stability in Kosovo under very difficult conditions. But as OSCE Chairman-in-Office, responsible for the safety of approximately 1,400 verifiers from many different countries in Kosovo, I have no other choice in the present situation than to withdraw the OSCE personnel."

In the same statement, the Chairman-in-Office deplored the negative outcome of the Paris negotiations. "The Yugoslav authorities have taken on a heavy responsibility in refusing to sign the peace agreement," he said. "This may lead to a further escalation of the

conflict, with much human suffering as a result."

### **Steadily Deteriorating Situation in Kosovo leads to Evacuation Decision**

The month of February was a period of increasing tension as peace negotiations proceeded in Rambouillet in France. The OSCE Mission in Kosovo continued to increase in size, reaching 1,300 international mission members by the end of the month. Relations with the Yugoslav authorities were uneasy at best, with some serious incidents of harassment of KVM personnel by Serbian police and Yugoslav border officials. The OSCE Mission was, however,

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largely able to carry out its work, and the daily presence of the OSCE verifiers all over Kosovo prevented local clashes from developing into large-scale fighting, keeping the lid on an escalation of violence.

On 1 February, the Permanent Council of the OSCE issued a statement expressing full support for the efforts of the international community to achieve a political settlement in Kosovo and the readiness of the OSCE to facilitate the implementation of such a settlement, including the supervision of free and fair elections, and the development of democratic institutions and processes as well as human rights in Kosovo. The draft peace agreement which was presented to the Kosovo Albanian and Yugoslav delegations in Rambouillet foresaw a lead role for the OSCE in the post-conflict period. As the peace negotiations in France continued, the OSCE Mission members in Kosovo were preparing themselves for the tasks ahead, at the same time as carrying out their immediate mandate. When the Rambouillet negotiations were suspended on 23 February, the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, Norway's Foreign Minister Knut Vollebæk, issued a statement reiterating OSCE's readiness to play a key role in the implementation of an agreement.

This was the month of urban terrorism in Kosovo, with attacks against shops, cafés and restaurants in several cities. On 6 February, an explosive device killed three people in a grocery store in Priština. The Head of the OSCE Mission, Ambassador William Walker, expressed his fears to reporters that the conflict was taking a more violent turn. More attacks took place in Peć, Mitrovica and Urosevac, wounding several people.

Elsewhere in the province, local clashes between Yugoslav army troops or Serbian police forces and the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) threatened to escalate into large-scale fighting. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported that 9,000 people had been forced to flee their homes in Kosovo during February because of local fighting. OSCE verifiers were struggling to prevent local fighting from spreading, but they had to admit that the ceasefire in the province had all but collapsed. Overall, the OSCE Mission reported a steady level of high tension, with neither party willing to step down from a posture of military confrontation. Increased movements by Yugoslav and Serbian army and police troops were observed by the OSCE, although a substantial increase in the number of troops entering Kosovo was difficult to verify. It was clear, however, that the Yugoslav Army and Serbian police forces were present on the ground far in excess of what was allowed in the agreement that the OSCE Mission had been tasked to verify. Sporadic violence continued as well, including kidnappings, shooting incidents and individual murders. Incidents contributing to increasing tension in the province included apparent KLA intimidation of Serb civilians and ethnic Albanians seen to be loyal to the Serbian State.

The OSCE Mission itself was subjected to increasing pressure and intimidation while carrying out its tasks. The attitude of the Yugoslav authorities was described as uncooperative. Some security incidents involving KVM personnel highlighted the vulnerability but also the courage of the verifiers. Two KVM Field Offices in the Prizren area were given an ultimatum to close their offices and leave by the local Army commander. The order was ignored. In another

incident, two verifiers were physically abused by Serbian police officers, dragged out of their car and beaten. On 26 and 28 February, Yugoslav customs officials detained a number of OSCE vehicles at the border to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, demanding to check the luggage of the verifiers. The OSCE Mission members refused, citing their diplomatic immunity. An impasse ensued, with the verifiers spending the night in their locked cars. Eventually the customs officials enforced a search of the vehicles.

As the month of February drew to a close, there were both optimistic and pessimistic predictions of what was going to happen in the coming weeks. The extremely tense situation on the ground in Kosovo was summed up as follows by the Head of Mission, Ambassador Walker: "Whatever the standard established in October, both sides are totally out of compliance with even the minimum. The ceasefire is a bit of a joke. Both sides are going out of their way to engage the other side and that then invites a comeback. People are moving around, especially on the government forces side, without telling us why they're out and about and where they're going, what they're doing. That is not supposed to happen under the agreement. It's almost easier to list places where they are in compliance. It's a short list."

Concerned about the deteriorating security situation, the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, Norwegian Foreign Minister Knut Vollebæk, traveled to Belgrade and Priština on 1 and 2 March to meet with President Milošević and other members of the FRY leadership. Mr. Vollebæk described his meetings in Belgrade as "disappointing", pointing to a clear rejection of an international military presence in Kosovo. Signalling a

hardening of their position towards the Rambouillet draft agreement, the FRY leadership told Mr. Vollebæk they “cannot discuss implementation of a non-existing agreement.” At his meetings with members of the Kosovo Albanian negotiation team on 2 March in Priština, the Chairman-in-Office emerged optimistic that the Albanian side would sign the Rambouillet draft agreement. At a press conference later that day, Mr. Vollebæk repeated his view that an international military presence was essential for the implementation of a peace agreement.

Meanwhile, the situation in Kosovo remained tense. Neither of the parties demonstrated any willingness to de-escalate their military posture, and localized clashes between the KLA and the Serb security forces continued. In Paris, the talks that had resumed on 14 March on the Rambouillet accords were showing no signs of progress. Although the Albanian side signed the agreement, the FRY delegation showed no signs of softening their opposition to a foreign military presence in Kosovo.

On 17 March, the Head of the EU Forensic Expert team, Dr. Helena Ranta, released her report on the Račak killings. In a statement issued from Oslo, the Chairman-in-Office expressed his appreciation for the highly professional approach of the team. In her report, he noted, Dr. Ranta concluded that at least 40 unarmed civilians had been killed at approximately the same time in Račak and that there was no evidence of post-mortem tampering with the bodies or fabrication of evidence. Mr. Vollebæk noted Dr. Ranta’s conclusion that there was no indication of the victims being anything other than unarmed civilians. He reiterated his statement of 16 January in which he condemned the Račak

atrocities against innocent civilians. He called for a “thorough criminal investigation of this atrocity and prosecution of those responsible.”

On 19 March, talks broke down in Paris and the Chairman-in-Office instructed the Head of KVM, Ambassador Walker, to evacuate the Mission.

#### **Smooth Evacuation from Kosovo**

At 5:00 a.m. on Saturday, 20 March, 423 OSCE vehicles carrying 1239 KVM personnel departed from Kosovo according to a well-rehearsed and detailed evacuation plan. The entire evacuation took less than seven hours. Mission members were prepared to leave Kosovo with 15 kilo bags, and computer and communications equipment was packed into trunks.

FRY border officials did not hinder the Mission’s departure, holding cars up only to cancel visas in Mission members’ passports.

Deeply regretting having to leave Kosovo, KVM Head of Mission William Walker vowed that the Mission would actively continue to keep an eye on events: “We’ll be there monitoring events as closely as we can from a distance and maintaining our readiness and ability to return as soon as the situation clarifies itself,” he told reporters. “The fact that we pull out does not mean there are not eyes and ears telling the world what is happening.”

Immediately following the evacuation, the Mission consolidated itself in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, principally with KVM Headquarters in Skopje and Regional Centres in Ohrid. On 24 March, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office issued a statement in

which he strongly urged Yugoslav authorities to seize the opportunity to find a peaceful solution to the Kosovo conflict. In a telephone conversation that day, the Chairman-in-Office appealed to President Slobodan Milošević to accept the Rambouillet Agreement and to put an immediate end to the excessive use of force by Yugoslav and Serbian forces in Kosovo. President Milošević, however, showed no willingness to back down.

On 26 March, the Chairman-in-Office called an extraordinary meeting of the Ministerial Troika in Vienna. The Troika decided to reduce the size of the Mission from approximately 1,400 to a core group of 250, which would remain in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia until further notice. The main purpose of the Mission would be to continue reporting on the situation in Kosovo and to work on planning and preparing for future tasks and to facilitate a quick return of the Mission to Kosovo as soon as conditions allow. In the last week of March, about 1,000 verifiers returned to their home countries, ready to be recalled at short notice.

#### **Redirecting Tasks to Assist Humanitarian Efforts**

On 1 April, the Chairman-in-Office issued a statement expressing his concern about the mounting humanitarian catastrophe in the region. He stressed that the OSCE must do its utmost to support humanitarian relief efforts, which is part of the mandate of KVM. To this end, he decided to use personnel and equipment from the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission to alleviate the situation for refugees who have fled from Kosovo.

Following consultations with the UNHCR, the OSCE immediately transferred more than 70 personnel, 20–25 vehicles as well as communications equipment to Albania to support the international humanitarian relief effort in that country. Around 75 personnel were also allocated to assist the UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

In the face of an ever increasing flow of refugees and the resulting humanitarian disaster, Mr. Vollebæk issued a statement on 1 April expressing his “profound outrage that Yugoslav and Serbian forces have in recent days blatantly perpetrated, and continue to perpetrate, crimes against the Albanian population of Kosovo that amount to grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, violations of the laws and customs of war, and crimes against humanity.”

The statement noted that over 150,000 Kosovo Albanians had been subjected to mass expulsion across Yugoslavia’s international and internal borders. Even larger numbers are believed to be internally displaced within Kosovo, and may yet seek refuge outside the province. The expulsions have been achieved through systematic terror and coercion

by Yugoslav and Serbian forces. The statement indicated that there were credible reports describing the main towns of Kosovo being emptied, in some instances by highly organized deportations. Within the towns, large-scale destruction and looting of property has been reported. Moreover, there has been a dramatic escalation in the wanton and evidently systematic razing of rural communities, the statement said.

The Chairman-in-Office stated he was also gravely concerned about the fate of a number of Kosovo Albanians who worked for, or were otherwise associated with, the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission (see separate story).

With the uprooting of Kosovo’s Albanian population, the statement continued, the very integrity of the Kosovo Albanian people is threatened. Conditions must be created for the safe and voluntary return of the Kosovo Albanians to their homes. For as long as it is not safe for them to return, the international community must do all in its power to ensure the urgent care and protection of refugees and the internally displaced.

All persons who planned, instigated, ordered, committed or otherwise aided

and abetted the planning, preparation or execution of these serious violations of international humanitarian law against the Kosovo Albanians should be brought to account, the Chairman-in-Office said.

### **Planning for the Future:**

At the outset of the Rambouillet negotiations, the OSCE Secretariat and the KVM began immediate planning for a future OSCE Mission in Kosovo on the basis of the Rambouillet draft agreement. Under the agreement, the OSCE would take responsibility for the civilian implementation of the agreement. The detailed planning includes provisions for police affairs, supervision and monitoring of law enforcement activities; democratization, political party development, media development, civil society and NGO development and institution building; rule of law, institution building, training, human rights and an ombudsman institution; election supervision and monitoring; economic coordination, coordinating aid for reconstruction and humanitarian assistance as well as support for public finance.

Meanwhile, contingency planning is ongoing to adapt planning to new requirements for the OSCE pending a final peace agreement for Kosovo.

## **Sad Goodbye to Local Staff**

Following the announcement by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office that the international staff of the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission were to leave Kosovo as soon as possible, Ambassador William G. Walker, Head of the KVM, made the following address to the locally employed staff of the Mission: “This is a very painful moment that I wish had not come. The Mission was making a difference to the situation in Kosovo but this has been increasingly difficult to maintain. Not just the verification of agreements, but offering

security; working between the parties to alleviate violence, suffering and most important, buying time for the peace process.

Unfortunately, the time bought, and the unarmed approach had its limits and success eluded us. What comes next could be that the situation gets worse before it gets better. And this is something that will fall on your shoulders, a sad reality for me and all the international staff. Throughout the

Mission local and international staff joined to bring peace and security, but what is faced now is greater violence.

I want to explain why it is essential that we leave, for a while at least. The situation with regard to peace talks is stagnant. There is no way through the impasse other than a dramatically different approach demonstrated, if necessary by force, that both sides to the conflict must sign the draft agreement.

We who leave understand your fear of what lies immediately ahead. We know that some might feel abandoned. But let me tell you my feelings. You have been, and are, a wonderful collection of people. Serbs, Albanians and others

have all worked together for a common aim without reference to each other's ethnicity. Our collective effort must not be allowed to end. We must continue to work for the well being of Kosovo. The overwhelming majority of the population wants only peace, safety and jobs – goals for all without reference to ethnicity.

I have been extremely proud of what we have accomplished, international and local staff collectively, working under extremely difficult circumstances. But we have much more to accomplish together. I want to be part of that effort. I am sure that all internationals share my feelings. The Mission will be back, hopefully within days..."

## The OSCE Chairman-in-Office Urges Constructive Dialogue in Belarus

There has been continuous concern about the political situation in Belarus, where a dispute between the political opposition and the Government has been deepening during recent weeks. The background to the present situation is the announcement by the 13th Supreme Soviet (parliament) that presidential elections in Belarus will be held on 16 May 1999, and the refusal by the Government to acknowledge the legality of such elections. The 13th Supreme Soviet was dissolved by a presidential decree; the members of the 13th Supreme Soviet, however, still consider themselves to be the legal parliamentary assembly of the country.

On 1 March, the chairman of the parliamentary Elections Committee, Mr. Victor Gonchar, was arrested and jailed. The Head of the OSCE Advisory and

Monitoring Group (AMG) in Belarus was denied access to Mr. Gonchar, who was allegedly mistreated by prison guards and force-fed when he attempted a hunger strike. After ten days, Mr. Gonchar was released in a poor state of health. The manner in which he was released was humiliating and degrading. On two occasions the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, Knut Vollebæk, expressed his concern about the detention of Mr. Gonchar and the humiliating way in which he was treated.

At the same time, the Head of the OSCE AMG continued his efforts to achieve a political dialogue between the opposition and the Government. In several meetings with opposition leaders and Government officials, the Head of the AMG appealed for a constructive dialogue on constitutional and other politically con-

troversial issues. Regrettably, these efforts have met with little success so far.

The situation even took a turn for the worse with the arrest on 30 March of Mr. Mikhail Chegir, a former Prime Minister and one of the candidates for the presidential elections announced by the 13th Supreme Soviet. Reacting to this development, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office called the arrest of Mr. Chegir unjustified, reminding the Government of Belarus of its obligation as an OSCE participating State to respect democratic principles. He called for the immediate release of Mr. Chegir and stressed the importance of resolving the current serious constitutional conflict without resorting to confrontational and undemocratic practices.



## High-Level Delegation Visits Croatia

A joint visit to Croatia by senior officials of the OSCE, the Council of Europe and the United Nations took place on 8 and 9 February upon the initiative of the OSCE Mission to Croatia. The purpose of the visit was to hold discussions with the Government of Croatia on the country's fulfilment of international obligations related to human rights, democratization, the electoral framework, minority rights and freedom of the press, and to express unified international concern.

The visiting delegation was led by Mr. Are Jostein Norheim, representing the OSCE Chairman-in-Office. The delegation included Mr. Hans-Peter Furrer, Director of Political Affairs at the Council of Europe; Mr. Jiří Dienstbier, Unit-

ed Nations Special Rapporteur for the former Yugoslavia; Mr. Max van der Stoel, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities; Ambassador Gérard Stoudmann, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR); Mr. Freimut Duve, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media; and Ambassador Tim Guldemann, Head of the OSCE Mission to Croatia.

The delegation met the President of Croatia, Franjo Tuđman, and discussed a variety of key issues. These issues were later elaborated in a meeting with members of the Government.

The international representatives gave clear messages and conveyed specific

concerns regarding human rights and democratization issues, and made reference to the Progress Report issued by the Mission to Croatia on 26 January 1999, which identifies a general stagnation in Croatia's fulfilment of international commitments. The delegation emphasized the process of returning refugees, the reform of electoral legislation and the freedom of the media as three areas in particular need of improvement.

The delegation also maintained that progress is the responsibility of the Croatian authorities, but that the OSCE Mission will contribute by giving advice and assistance.

## Article II Review Conference Takes Place in Vienna

From 15 to 19 March, the second review conference of the Agreement on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Article II, Annex 1-B of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina) took place in Vienna. The Agreement, concluded in Vienna on 26 January 1996, between the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska provides for a comprehensive set of measures to enhance mutual confidence and reduce the risk of conflict. These measures include an exchange of military information, notification as well as observation and constraints on certain military activities,

restrictions on military deployments and exercises in certain geographic areas, withdrawal of forces and heavy weapons to cantonments or designated emplacements. The basis for the review is the annual implementation assessment report by the Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office for Article II, General Carlo Jean of Italy.

The first review conference was held in February 1998. Since then, there has been a marked improvement in the overall implementation of the Agreement. Revised protocols have improved the accuracy and completeness of the information exchanged and strengthened the verification regime. Military liaison

missions, initially a very difficult issue, are now being permanently deployed and are functioning. Such missions have been established by the Joint Command of the Army of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina within the Headquarters of the Army of Republika Srpska and vice versa. Furthermore, the military activities of the Parties have been kept to a minimum.

During this second review conference, the Parties undertook several new initiatives aimed at improving the implementation of the Agreement. The Parties agreed, *inter alia*, on a format for exchanging information on defence-related matters, including all foreign military

support provided to the Parties and budget outlays. The Parties also adopted a new notification format for transfers in conventional armaments and equipment. The new format will cover all armaments and equipment. Agreement was also reached on the definition of important terms (e.g. Object of Inspection), which will greatly enhance the inspection regime by reducing the possi-

bility of misinterpretation and misunderstanding.

The Parties also decided to enhance voluntary measures regarding military contacts and co-operation at all levels of the two defence forces within Bosnia and Herzegovina and agreed that each Party will provide the other with an assessment of their annual information exchange.

Previously, only the Personal Representative has provided such assessments.

The successful implementation of the Agreement continues to represent a significant contribution by the OSCE to the overall efforts to promote peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

## OSCE Centre in Kyrgyzstan Starts Mandate Implementation

Pursuant to Permanent Council Decision No. 245 of 23 July 1998, an OSCE Centre in Kyrgyzstan was opened in January 1999. The Head of Centre, Ambassador Jerzy Więclaw, and three international staff are responsible, respectively, for political and security matters, economic/environmental issues and human dimension questions. They have now started the implementation of the Centre's mandate, which provides for facilitating contacts and promoting information exchange with the CiO, other OSCE institutions and the participating States in Central Asia, as well as cooperation with international organizations and institutions; establishing and maintaining contacts with local authorities, universities, research institutions and NGOs; assisting in arranging regional events, etc.

Over the past three months, the Centre in Kyrgyzstan has established close contacts with governmental officials and NGO representatives, universities and academic institutions, as well as international organizations present on the ground.

President Akaev's visit to Vienna and his address to the Permanent Council in January 1999 served, *inter alia*, as an excellent opportunity to emphasize the role of the OSCE in connection with Kyrgyzstan's foreign and domestic policies.

The Centre's members have contributed to seminars and round tables on various aspects of political and economic/environmental issues and civil society building in Kyrgyzstan. Implementation of ODIHR projects, aimed at strengthening OSCE human dimension values, is another important aspect of the Centre's activities. The Centre will soon conduct round tables on election observation and gender issues with the participation of representatives of Kyrgyz authorities and NGOs.

During a relatively brief period of time the Centre has been able to identify some new projects in all its main fields of activity. Special emphasis will be put on activities related to the electoral process with a view to the forthcoming par-

liamentary and presidential elections in 2000.

Dissemination work is well on track. Thanks to TV and press interviews by the Head of Centre, members' lectures on the OSCE's activities and its involvement in Central Asia, distribution of OSCE-related materials, the Centre has become more visible.

The Centre has been instrumental in arranging high level visits by the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Ms. Helle Degn, HCNM Mr. Max van der Stoel, and the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Mr. Freimut Duve.

Notwithstanding certain logistical difficulties, typical for the initial period of any operation in the field, the Centre in Kyrgyzstan is implementing its mandate, well aware of the necessity for spreading knowledge about OSCE values and reinforcing links with the Central Asian region.

## IN BRIEF



On 3 February, an **OSCE Heads of Mission meeting** took place in Oslo, organized by the Chairman-in-Office. The discussions were focused on three key issues: co-operation between the OSCE institutions and the OSCE missions and field operations; regional co-operation among OSCE missions and field operations; and co-operation, including co-ordination of activities, with other international organizations and NGOs. The meeting was attended by the heads of OSCE institutions: the director of the ODIHR, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Secretary General and the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media. Participants agreed that the discussions were constructive and commended the Norwegian Chairmanship for organizing the meeting. Subsequent meetings have been scheduled for June and October 1999.

On 18 February, the **United States Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, Mr. Harold Hongju Koh**, addressed the Permanent Council. In his speech, he highlighted issues such as human rights, freedom of the press, preventive diplomacy and crisis management. Mr. Koh paid particular attention to Kosovo and the negotiations in Rambouillet.

On 22 and 23 February the OSCE, together with the Government of Malta, held a seminar on **“Regional Environmental Problems and Co-operative Approaches to Solving Them - The Case of the Mediterranean Region”** in Valetta. The seminar was the third of four subregional seminars designed to help prepare for this year’s Economic Forum to be held on 25-28 May in Prague. Representative of four Mediterranean Partners for co-operation and 20 OSCE participating States as well as many international organizations and NGOs from throughout the Mediterranean region took part.

The **Sub-Regional Consultative Commission (SRCC)**, the body responsible for the review of implementation and consultations on the Agreement on Sub-Regional Arms Control (Article IV agreement), met in Vienna on 24 and 25 February. The main achievement of the meeting was the

hand-over of the chairmanship of the SRCC to the parties to the agreement (Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Croatia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina). The chairmanship will rotate annually, beginning with Bosnia and Herzegovina. Up till now the meetings of the Commission have been chaired by the Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office, General Carlo Jean. The parties agreed on standard operating procedures for the SRCC and approved the 1999 inspection schedule. The next meeting of the Commission is scheduled for 16 and 17 June.

**Mr. Ioannis Kasoulides, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus** addressed the Permanent Council on 18 March. In his statement he outlined the challenges facing the OSCE and Europe in general, and emphasized the need for addressing these issues in an overall framework. He said that Cyprus was ready to contribute positively to the commitment undertaken by the OSCE participating States to elaborate a comprehensive and politically binding Document-Charter, and emphasized the need to vest the OSCE with the ability to implement the principles that participating States adhere to.

On 30 March, **Mr. Kassymzhomart Tokayev, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan** delivered an address to the Permanent Council. He outlined the importance of the Document-Charter on European Security and the need for the Eurasian factor to be fully taken into account in the document. He stressed the openness of the leadership of Kazakhstan to dialogue and co-operation with the various institutions of the OSCE, and described the process of political reform in Kazakhstan. He mentioned the economic and ecological dimensions as obviously important to countries in transition and welcomed the appointment of a Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office to elaborate a co-ordinated approach for OSCE activities in Central Asia.

The Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy in Hamburg, Germany, reports that it is preparing to found a **Centre for OSCE Studies**. The opening of the Centre is planned for the Autumn of 1999.



## PRESS PROFILE



The following excerpts from international press are representative of the press coverage of the OSCE in February and March.

### **Whatever Rambouillet's results, OSCE did its job**

Priština, Yugoslavia, 22 February (Reuters) — Whatever the outcome of Kosovo peace talks in France, the hundreds of international monitors who deployed across the Serbian province in recent months will have done their job by giving diplomacy a chance.

Unarmed and patrolling in fluorescent orange vehicles, monitors of the Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM) have helped prevent clashes between Serbian security forces and the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) spilling over into open warfare.

“The KVM effort has been expensive and at times clumsy, but it has made the difference between war and peace in Kosovo as the world tried to mediate a settlement,” said a Western diplomat in Kosovo who asked not to be named.

“There was no shortage of doubters when KVM began to deploy but you have only to go into the countryside to see how many people are reassured by their presence. If KVM has to evacuate in the next few days it will cause a bit of a panic.”

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) KVM mission now has more than 1,200 monitors on the ground in Kosovo following an October agreement between Yugoslav President Slobodan Milošević and U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke.

Drawn from 38 countries and operating out of local offices spread across Kosovo, the monitors by their mere presence have limited the level of contact between armed units, even though they have been unable to halt the overnight murders and kidnappings that are a terrifying feature of this conflict.

Some monitors have been shot at and a few have been hit, but not many have flinched from their job of buying time for negotiations by keeping antagonists from each other's throats.

### ***Neue Zürcher Zeitung 22.3.***

The peace mission of the OSCE has ended abruptly, at least temporarily. Its most immediate task, to stop new clashes from erupting, has obviously not been achieved. Its presence however had a pacifying influence. Its liaison officers had regular contacts with Serbian and Albanian commanders and were able to bring about a restrained, unprovocative behaviour by the fighters at least at the local level. This gave the civilian population an – albeit restricted – sense of security.

### ***Süddeutsche Zeitung 22.3.***

With the withdrawal of the OSCE the international community has left Kosovo for the time being. Of course it was by no means the case that the observers that were sent there in October would have been able to stop the fighting. The world had only sent an unarmed scouting party, not the least in order to calm its conscience. It was not able to stop any clashes, attacks or massacres. However, at the very least what happened around Priština was taken note of and reported on. And perhaps the observers in the orange coloured vehicles were even able to give the victims of aggression and expulsion the feeling that somebody outside Kosovo still was interested in their fate.

### ***The New York Times 30.3.***

The verifiers agreed that the cease-fire they were sent to monitor never really took hold. As one British Army officer described it: “There never was a cease-fire. We were fighting to keep the lid on, to stop the pot boiling over, while the politicians fiddled around.” But the four months after the cease-fire agreement was reached may have been the calmest months Kosovo had enjoyed in more than a year, despite constant violations of the truce.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

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FR			X
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SO			

### Seventh Economic Forum

The Seventh Economic Forum will take place in Prague from 25 to 28 May 1999. The overall theme is the interaction between security and environmental problems, and the working groups will focus on issues identified in the series of subregional seminars designed to help participating states prepare themselves for the Forum. The first day of the Forum is an implementation review meeting in which participation is limited to official delegations; the rest of the Forum is open to any non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and representatives of the private sector that have registered in advance.

For further information, please contact the Office of the Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities by mail (5-7 Kärntner Ring, A-1010 Vienna), fax (+43-1) 514 36 96, or e-mail [pm-ceea@osce.org](mailto:pm-ceea@osce.org)

### OSCE Seminar on Co-operation among International Organizations and Institutions: Experience and Prospects in South-Eastern Europe, Sofia, 17-19 May 1999

The OSCE Secretariat, in co-operation with the Government of Bulgaria, is organizing a seminar on Co-operation among International Organizations and Institutions: Experience and Prospects in South-Eastern Europe, in Sofia, from 17 to 19 May 1999. High-level participation of representatives from interested participating States, representatives from OSCE institutions, representatives from international organizations, NGO representatives and Secretariat staff is foreseen.

The sessions of the seminar will address lessons learned in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the role of international organizations in post-conflict rehabilitation in Albania and Croatia, and crisis management through the OSCE – the case of Kosovo. In addition, two panel discussions will concentrate on the role of the rule of law, economic development and civil society for building a region of stability and development in South-Eastern Europe, and on interlocking institutions and the role of the OSCE.

For more information please contact Aldona Szymanski fax: + 43-1 514 36 96.

### Editorial Note

Dr. Walter Kemp, the previous editor of the OSCE Newsletter, has left the OSCE Secretariat, to take up the position of Senior Adviser to the High Commissioner on National Minorities in the Hague. Dr. Kemp, who served as Public Information Officer in the Press and Public Information Section, edited the OSCE Newsletter from 1996.



## News from the Field

*The OSCE currently has Missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Estonia, Georgia, Kosovo (FRY), Latvia, Skopje (FYROM), Moldova, Tajikistan and Ukraine as well as an Assistance Group to Chechnya, a Presence in Albania and an Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus. The following are highlights from the work of some of the field operations during the past month.*

### **Assistance Group to Chechnya Continues Work**

In view of the highly volatile security situation in the region, the OSCE Assistance Group to Chechnya (AG) is continuing to work from premises in the Norwegian Embassy in Moscow. Following a decision by the OSCE Troika, a part of the AG, including the new Acting Head, Ambassador Odd Gunnar Skagestad, visited Grozny from 30 January to 4 February. The presence of the AG in Grozny included the implementation of the formal take-over by its new Acting Head, as well as introductory meetings with the Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov and several high-ranking Chechen officials. First-hand impressions and updated information on the internal political process, security situation and other relevant factors with regard to the AG were obtained.

An important part of the AG's activity remains humanitarian assistance. The AG is trying to find the best ways of implementing ongoing humanitarian programmes and identifying and starting new ones.

### **Developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Throughout February and March, the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina continued its work in the fields of democratization, media development, elections and regional stabilization. In

the field of democratization, activities involved measures to promote the return of refugees and displaced persons, including the implementation of laws regarding property claims, and seminars and meetings for displaced persons. In Trebinje and Kakanj the Mission arranged visits between displaced persons, local NGOs and city officials. The Mission also continued to facilitate graveyard visits throughout the country and held a "Roundtable on Reconstruction and Returns" in Travnik, which was attended by most international organizations and NGOs present in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Another aspect of democratization activities focused on women's issues. Activities included a television series on "Women in Politics", symposia and roundtables.

Work is in progress on the drafting of the Permanent Election Law (PEL), which is intended to replace the current provisional rules and regulations. At meetings with political party representatives and intellectuals from throughout the country, the Head of Mission presented plans for informing the public and facilitating public discussion about the PEL. Polls were conducted to assess voter attitudes towards electoral reform, and the Permanent Election Law Information Campaign (PELIC) web page was launched on the Mission's website.

In the field of media development, the Mission is engaged in several projects. Under the Inter-Entity Press Distribu-

tion Programme, the Mission is working to distribute local papers across the Inter-Ethnic Boundary Line. The Mission is also continuing its efforts to seek support for independent radio stations, and has set up a small grants programme to support media development and professionalism. In mid-March, the OSCE Head of Mission hosted a round-table on the role of the media in post-war reconstruction, with special guest Thomas Keenan, a noted international expert on media.

On February 8 to 14 a joint think-tank was organized by the OSCE Mission, the Stabilization Force and the Office of the High Representative to discuss strategies for shaping the armed forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Mission also assisted in preparing inspection visits under the Agreement on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Mission continued to monitor developments on the political scene in Republika Srpska, particularly following the dismissal of President Poplašen and the announcement of the Brčko Arbitration Decision on March 5. The decision awards the pre-war Brčko municipality to both Republika Srpska and the Federation, creating "the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina" under the exclusive sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Following the withdrawal of the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission and the

commencement of NATO actions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the international staff of the Mission has been temporarily withdrawn from Republika Srpska.

### **More Positive Developments regarding the Georgian – South Ossetian Conflict**

At a meeting with the Head of the OSCE Mission to Georgia, Ambassador Jean-Michel Lacombe, Minister of State Lordkipanidze confirmed that the Georgian side was ready to adhere to the agreements reached with the South Ossetian leadership in January. Mr. Lordkipanidze commended the role of the OSCE in the settlement of the conflict. On 16 and 17 February the first meeting of the expert group on a comprehensive settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict took place in Vladikavkaz. The aim of the group is to prepare an "Intermediary Document" outlining the possible status of South Ossetia. In their introductory statements, the participants praised the role of the OSCE in the settlement of the conflict. The next meeting is to take place in April 1999.

On 31 March, the Mission participated in meeting of the Joint Control Commission, the quadripartite body established to direct and control the Joint Peacekeeping Forces in Georgia, which met for the first time in one and a half years. At the meeting issues relating to economic rehabilitation, refugees and internally displaced persons were discussed both in working groups and in a plenary session.

### **Update from Latvia**

The OSCE Mission in Latvia is continuing its work on citizenship issues in the country. On 17 and 18 February, Mis-

sion members paid a fifth visit to Daugavpils, the town with the highest multi-ethnic diversity in Latvia. Mission members met with officials and received visitors during office hours. Compared to the Mission's last visit, the situation in Daugavpils in regard to the non-citizen population had developed in what appears to be a positive direction. The rate of issuance of non-citizen passports reached 60 per cent, and in the view of local officials it will reach 85 per cent by the end of the year.

The Mission also reports that it is to cooperate with the Human Rights Institute of the University of Latvia in the preparation and publication of the first book in the Latvian language devoted to international human rights law. Publication of the book is expected early in the year 2000.

### **OSCE Mission to Moldova Monitors Withdrawal of Russian Military Equipment from the Country**

On 21 March military mission members of the OSCE Mission to Moldova observed the shipment of Russian military equipment that was withdrawn from Moldova in accordance with the bilateral Russian-Moldovan Agreement on the withdrawal of Russian military from the territory of Moldova signed on 21 October 1994. The last such shipment occurred over a year ago. This was the first time that the Mission was invited to observe such a procedure.

### **OSCE and Ukraine Look at Continued Co-operation**

The OSCE Mission to Ukraine reports that Ambassador Oyvind Nordsletten, the Chairman-in-Office's Personal Representative, visited Kyiv on 15 and 16 February and held very constructive

meetings with Minister of Foreign Affairs Boris Tarasyuk and with the deputy head of the presidential administration department of external political relations, Mr. Andriy Fialko. The discussions centred on the issue of how best to advance continued co-operation between the OSCE and Ukraine, and the forms that such co-operation could take, following the expiry of the OSCE Mission's mandate on 30 April and taking into account positive achievements in the implementation of the mandate.

Foreign Minister Tarasyuk invited Ambassador Nordsletten to continue dialogue on this issue, an invitation which Ambassador Nordsletten accepted. By the end of March, Ambassador Nordsletten will prepare a report on the results of his consultations, which will be submitted to the Permanent Council. The Permanent Council will then decide before 30 April how best to advance continued co-operation between Ukraine and the OSCE institutions, including the establishments of new forms of such co-operation in Ukraine.

In the meantime, the Mission continues to follow a range of issues including the naturalization of formerly deported peoples, the situation of the mass media and the situation of the Crimean Tartars.

### **Central Asia Liaison Office Outlines Strategy for 1999**

In March the OSCE Central Asia Liaison Office (CALO) outlined its strategy for 1999. The opening of the OSCE Centres in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan gives the Office the opportunity to focus on projects for Uzbekistan. The principal activities of the CALO will be: programmes aimed at democratization, including strengthening local NGOs and encouraging respect

for the rule of law; human rights monitoring and reporting; economic and environmental support projects; and activities aimed at strengthening national and regional security. The CALO plans to continue co-ordinating its activities with other international organizations, and in instances where the OSCE has a capacity to do so, the CALO will take a leading role in co-ordination. An important aspect of the Office's activities will be pre-election programmes aimed at assisting the Government of Uzbekistan in preparing the parliamentary elections scheduled for December.

### **OSCE International Conference in Tajikistan**

The OSCE Mission to Tajikistan continues to monitor the situation in the coun-

try and to engage in activities aimed at democratization. In co-operation with local NGOs and partner international organizations, the Mission organized meetings on children's rights and initiated a country-wide series of seminars on gender issues, aimed at providing women with information on political, social and economic rights, health issues, family planning, and election-related issues. The first two seminars were organized in Shahrituz and Dusti by field offices of the Mission, and several more are planned.

On 9 March, the OSCE Mission to Tajikistan organized in Dushanbe an international conference "OSCE – a Strategic Partner of Tajikistan on the Way to Peace, Democracy and Development". At the conference the Presi-

dent of Tajikistan E. Rakhmonov and other high-ranking officials expressed gratitude to the OSCE for its contribution to the advance of the peace process and democratic reforms in the country. The Conference was addressed by several speakers, including the Chairman of the Permanent Council, Ambassador Kai Eide, who travelled to the region on that occasion.

The Head of the Mission, Ambassador Marin Buhoara, continued meetings with government officials and representatives of the Tajik political class. The topics discussed included security arrangements in view of the forthcoming election, human rights cases and the licensing of independent electronic media.

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

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### **Expert meeting on "Lund Recommendations"**

On 5 and 6 February a group of experts met in the Hague to begin drafting a document on the effective participation of national minorities in public life. The meeting was the first in a series of expert consultations which should conclude with a meeting in Lund, Sweden in May. At the Lund meeting it is expected that a set of general recommendations will be presented on forms of effective participation by national minorities in the governance of democratic states.

The Lund recommendations follow the Oslo recommendation regarding the linguistic rights of national minorities (concluded in February 1998) and the Hague recommendation regarding the education rights of national minorities (concluded in October 1996).

### **Croatia**

From 7 to 10 February the High Commissioner visited Croatia. The main purpose of the visit was to participate in the meetings of the OSCE delegation with President Tudjman and the Govern-

ment. During his visit, the High Commissioner appraised himself of the situation regarding the return of Serb citizens to Croatia, particularly in Eastern Slavonia. He remains concerned about the slow progress in this area.

In Eastern Slavonia the High Commissioner met with the Serb Joint Municipal Council and with the leader of the SDSS Mr. V. Stanimirović. Among the subjects discussed with the Council was progress made on a capacity-building program which is being implemented with the assistance of the Foundation on Inter-Ethnic Relations. He also ac-



quainted himself with the appointment of a Serb Assistant Minister to the Ministry of the Interior of the Croatian Government.

#### **Other visits**

On 2 and 3 February the High Commissioner visited Oslo to participate in a meeting organized by the Chairman-in-Office with the Heads of Missions.

On 12 February, on behalf of HCNM, his personal adviser attended a tripartite meeting in Strasbourg between the OSCE, the Council of Europe and the UN.

#### **Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**

On 2 to 4 March the High Commissioner paid a visit to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). The purpose of the High Commissioner's visit was to discuss the current state of inter-ethnic relations in the country and possible ways of implementing the recommendations that he made in November 1998, particularly those relating to Albanian language higher education. Regional developments, particularly those in neighbouring Kosovo, were also discussed. In Skopje the High Commissioner met with President Kiro Gligorov, Prime Minister Ljubco Georgijevski, Minister of Foreign Affairs Aleksandar Dimitrov, a number of ministers, party leaders, as well as United States Ambassador Christopher Hill and ambassadors of European Union countries.

Among the issues discussed were the status of the university in Tetovo and its future, the Law on Amnesty, the effects of the rapidly worsening situation in Kosovo on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, as well as inter-ethnic

relations and their effect on political and economic developments.

#### **Slovak Republic**

On 15 and 16 March the High Commissioner visited the Slovak Republic. The main purpose of the trip was to monitor progress on the drafting of a minority language law and to focus on the situation of the Roma.

The High Commissioner met a number of government ministers responsible for minorities, legislation and education including Deputy Prime Minister Pal Csaky, who is Minister of Human and Minority Rights and Regional Development, Deputy Prime Minister Fogas, who is also Minister responsible for legislation and the Minister of Education, Mr. Milan Ftacnik. The High Commissioner was informed about the current state of the draft law on minority languages. With all of his interlocutors, the High Commissioner stressed the importance of introducing legislation on minority languages in the spring session of parliament.

During his visit to the Slovak Republic the High Commissioner was informed about a number of initiatives, particularly in the media and cultural fields, which are designed to promote better inter-ethnic awareness and understanding.

The High Commissioner also visited Roma settlements in the East of the country. On 16 March he participated in a seminar on Roma issues in Samorin. He said that he was struck by the complexity of the problem and that his visit to the Roma settlements had reinforced his impression that the roots of the Roma predicament were not solely based on ethnic intolerance but also

stemmed from a number of factors including housing, unemployment, education and discrimination. He also noted that the Roma issue is not unique to any one country and that there is a need for the international community to pay much more attention to this issue. He noted the importance of openness on all sides and stressed that efforts to address Roma issues required effective Roma participation. The High Commissioner explained that his office would submit a report on the Roma in the coming months and that he hoped it would generate further discussion on possible solutions to the problem.

To conclude his trip, the High Commissioner paid a visit to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs where he was met by Foreign Minister Eduard Kukan. The main topics of debate were again the Roma and the minority language law.

#### **Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan**

From 25 to 28 March, the High Commissioner visited Kyrgyzstan upon the invitation of the President of Kyrgyzstan and the Assembly of the People of Kyrgyzstan, to take part in the fifth anniversary of the assembly.

During the visit the High Commissioner was received by President Askar Akaev. During the meeting it was agreed that Kyrgyzstan would initiate the process of establishing a new independent national institution for the protection and promotion of human rights, including rights of persons belonging to national minorities. The working title of the institution is "ombudsperson".

It was also agreed that the High Commissioner will provide the necessary assistance to create special courses on the management of inter-ethnic rela-

tions within the academy for management and administration. The courses will be aimed at training various governmental and local administration officials, as well as representatives of ethnic minorities.

The High Commissioner also visited the Osh and Djalalabad regions in the south

of the country where he acquainted himself with the current trends and situations in the area.

During a short trip to Kazakhstan on 29 and 30 March, the High Commissioner also raised the question of the creation of an Ombudsman for human and ethnic rights. This idea will be pursued further.

The High Commissioner studied the monitoring system which his office, in co-operation with the Foundation on Inter-Ethnic Relations, has established regarding inter-ethnic relations. The High Commissioner was satisfied that this system is working effectively.

## **REPORT** of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

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### **Concern with Freedom of the Media in Croatia**

Freimut Duve, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, spoke at the OSCE Permanent Council on 11 February where he discussed the current media situation in Croatia. The statement was made after the meeting that the OSCE Heads of Institutions had on 9 February with the Croatian Government led by Prime Minister Zlatko Mateša. In his statement, Mr. Duve stressed the need for the authorities to reconsider the Law on Croatian Radio and Television (HRT). This Law as amended last year did not take into consideration some of the suggestions made by the Council of Europe and the OSCE Mission. The recommendations made by the international community should be taken on board by the Government, noted Duve.

Mr. Duve was also concerned with the rebroadcasting of HRT into Bosnia and Herzegovina. Among a number of issues, Mr. Duve pointed out that in Bosnia and Herzegovina HRT favoured one specific political party putting all

the other political players at a disadvantage. In December 1998, the Independent Media Council in Bosnia and Herzegovina ruled that HRT's activities must be put on a proper legal footing. Until that was done rebroadcasting in Bosnia and Herzegovina must cease, stressed Duve. He raised a number of others points that concerned him regarding freedom of the media in Croatia.

Mr. Duve noted that the Croatian Prime Minister Mateša had appealed to his office to help his country in developing freedom of the media and had stressed that his Government was willing to cooperate fully with the Office.

### **Duve Visits Baku**

Mr. Duve, accompanied by Adviser Stanley Schrager, visited Baku, Azerbaijan, from 22 to 25 February, following an earlier invitation from the Government. Mr. Duve believed that the situation in Azerbaijan was more complex than it might be assumed. Censorship was officially abolished six months ago. The hunger strike of editors late last

year, in which the then Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, Minister Geremek, and Mr. Duve intervened, was settled peacefully.

During his visit to Baku, Mr. Duve asked a class of aspiring journalists at Baku State University: "Is there media freedom in Azerbaijan?" One third said "yes"; one third said "no", and one third said "yes and no." This, in Duve's view, emphasized the complexities in an emerging democracy coming to grips with the idea of freedom of the media. Even the fact that one third of the journalists were willing to declare publicly that there was, in their opinion, no media freedom, was enlightening.

During a meeting between the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and Azerbaijan President Aliyev, the later stated that he was deeply committed to freedom of the media and that the media had total freedom to express their opinions; it was not easy, however, according to the President, to implement this process.

Mr. Duve encouraged the Government to take steps to change the libel laws which were still used to punish critical journalists and to transform the state television into a public broadcasting station. These issues would be part of the continued co-operation between the Government of Azerbaijan and the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media. During the visit, Mr. Duve also met with parliamentarians, journalists and NGOs. Mr. Duve believed that the Azeri Government had established an effective dialogue with his Office.

### **Harassment of Media in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY)**

Mr. Duve continued to focus on the onslaught on freedom of expression by the Belgrade authorities that ignored calls from the international community to guarantee a free and open debate on issues of concern to its citizens.

Leading opposition newspapers, its editors and journalists, were singled out for regular harassment at the hands of the authorities. Using the Serbian Law on Public Information, widely condemned by journalists, experts and international organisations, independent publications were heavily fined and only recently the owner and two journalists from the daily *Dnevni Telegraph* received five-month prison terms. Mr. Duve raised their case in a letter to FRY Foreign Minister Živadin Jovanović. The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media focused extensively on the situation in FRY in his regular address to the OSCE Permanent Council on 25 March.

### **Duve Holds Meetings in Belarus**

From 15 to 17 March, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media vis-

ited Minsk where he addressed the seminar on information society organised by the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group. Mr. Duve also had two meetings with Government officials, with the Deputy Head of the presidential administration, Mr. Pashkievitch, and with Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr. Petrov. During the meetings he raised with them the practice of admonitions by the State Committee for the Press against independent newspapers. These admonitions are based on Article 5 of the Law on Press which entitles the State Committee – an executive body – to check newspapers for information causing intolerance or offending the dignity of citizens and officials and for violations of numerous other regulations. In Duve's view this practice of checking and warning newspapers, was nothing but a form of censorship after publication which was not in conformity with Belarussian constitutional standards, nor with OSCE and other international standards. The admonitions can lead to the loss of a newspaper's license and eventually to its closure. Mr. Duve urged the Government to reconsider this practice and to revoke recent admonitions against six independent newspapers.

Mr. Duve also believed that the Law on Press, and in particular Article 5, as such needed to be amended. In addition, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the media urged the Government to undertake steps in order to transform the state TV and radio into public broadcasters.

### **Concerns in Russia and Uzbekistan**

In his address to the Permanent Council, Mr. Duve raised a number of issues of concern among them the approval by the Russian parliament of a bill that cre-

ated so-called "high councils" to protect moral standards in broadcasting. Duve also mentioned recent efforts of the Uzbek Government to take control over providing Internet service to the public. Under the new system the only legitimate provider would be a State agency. In Duve's view this would be a violation of the principle of free flow of information.

### **Advisers Visit Ukraine**

In early March, Beate Meader-Metcalf and Alexander Ivanko, advisers to the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, visited Kyiv in preparation for the visit to Ukraine by Mr. Duve. The advisers met with government officials, editors, parliamentarians and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's). During the trip they focused on one of the main problem regarding media that needed to be solved as soon as possible: high libel fees issued by courts against journalists and publications.

In his speech to the Permanent Council Mr. Duve noted his concern with the overall situation regarding freedom of expression in Ukraine prior to the October presidential elections. While there may be no overt censorship in Ukraine, the Representative on Freedom of the Media received an alarmingly high number of reports of harassment of journalists, usually by over-zealous local officials. Mr. Duve believed that the government was capable in ensuring a free media landscape at every level and urged it to do so before the pre-election campaign period started.

### **1998/99 Yearbook**

#### **'Freedom and Responsibility'**

In March the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media presented his

1998/9 Yearbook 'Freedom and Responsibility'. The Yearbook contains contributions from prominent writers and experts on different aspects of free-

dom of expression, provides readers with extensive information on the activities of the OSCE Representative and his staff, on numerous NGO's that deal

with freedom of expression. The Yearbook was presented to the OSCE Permanent Council on 25 March.

## **UPDATE** from the ODIHR

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### **MEETINGS**

#### **Freedom of Religion Supplementary Implementation Meeting**

The first Supplementary Human Dimension Implementation Meeting took place in Vienna on 22 March on freedom of religion. The meeting, organized by the Norwegian Chairman-in-Office, with assistance from the ODIHR, brought together a wide variety of non-governmental organizations, government representatives and religious groups to discuss religious dialogue and conflict prevention, and religious pluralism and limitations on freedom of religion. The ODIHR Advisory Panel on Freedom of Religion also reported on its activities and presented proposals for further activities.

Participants at the meeting reiterated the importance of the issue of freedom of religion for the OSCE. Issues highlighted at the meeting were fed directly into the discussion of the OSCE Expert Panel on Freedom of Religion, which subsequently further developed ideas for projects and ongoing support by the Panel for the work of the ODIHR in 1999. The meeting also provided useful lessons on future improvement of the

format of the supplementary human dimension meetings, which should be implemented in time for the next such meeting, on 6 June 1999, on gender issues.

#### **Human Dimension Seminar on Human Rights: the Role of Field Missions**

Preparations are underway for the next Human Dimension Seminar, to be held in Warsaw from 27 to 30 April 1999. The meeting will be on "Human Rights: the Role of Field Missions" and will have two working groups, one on the role of human rights and field missions in conflict and crisis situations, and one on the role of field missions in promoting and protecting human rights. A full agenda and registration form are available on the ODIHR website at: <http://www.osce.odhr.org>.

### **HIGH-LEVEL CONTACTS**

#### **ODIHR meets European Union Commission**

On 15 March an ODIHR delegation, led by the Head of the ODIHR, Ambassador Stoudmann, visited the European Commission in Brussels. The purpose

of the visit was to discuss plans for future co-operation, to exchange views on the situation in various regions of the OSCE area and to mark the beginning of the implementation of the Covenant signed between the two institutions on 30 December 1998.

The delegation was received by Mr. Gunter Burghardt, Director-General of Directorate General 1A, and held substantive discussions with a number of EC representatives. The European Commission expressed its strong interest in joint assistance programmes for Belarus, the Caucasus and Central Asia, to be conducted in co-operation with the ODIHR and OSCE missions and field offices.

The ODIHR delegation also met non-governmental organizations, such as Human Rights Watch, International Crisis Group, Open Society Institute and Human Rights Without Frontiers, during the Brussels visit.

#### **Visit of a Delegation from the Republic of Kazakhstan**

A delegation from the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan visited the

ODIHR on 10 March to discuss future co-operation. The Kazakh delegation was led by Ms. Zagip Balieva, Chairperson of the Central Election Commission, and included the Chairman of the Committee on Judiciary and Legal Reforms and the Head of the Kazakh delegation to the OSCE.

Discussion focused on elections and the Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Kazakhstan and the ODIHR, with the ODIHR offering continuing assistance in all election and democratization-related fields.

It was agreed that the Kazakh side would provide the ODIHR with a draft of the new election law, which will be crucial to the implementation of the forthcoming parliamentary election, for the ODIHR to provide comments. The Kazakh delegation also expressed willingness to implement the ODIHR's recommendations issued after the 10 January presidential election.

### **ELECTIONS** Election Assistance Strategy Meeting on Central Asia and the Caucasus

The OSCE/ODIHR hosted a two-day meeting on electoral assistance strategy for countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus on 24 and 25 February 1999. The meeting brought together 30 representatives of international organizations and agencies involved in election-related activities in Central Asia and the Caucasus, in preparation for the elections scheduled for later in the year and as follow-up to a similar meeting held in February 1998.

The objectives of the meeting were to exchange experience gained from previous election assistance projects, to



*Meeting on electoral assistance strategy for countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus*

assess their results, and to agree on a system of evaluation for such projects. Also on the agenda were a comparative analysis of the election situation in countries of the two regions, identification of the specific needs of each region and the further development and streamlining of joint projects and co-operation in the area of electoral assistance in Central Asia and the Caucasus.

Participants included the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and heads of OSCE missions and field activities in Central Asia and the Caucasus, and representatives from the European Commission, the United Nations Development Programme, the United States Agency for International Development, the United Nations Mission of Observers to Tajikistan and a number of election organizations, such as Electoral Reform International Services, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, the National Democratic Institute and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

The meeting provided a useful forum for information-sharing and for shaping a co-ordinated strategy for future election assistance initiatives. The participants welcomed the ODIHR's initiative to hold such meetings on a regular basis, and suggested that the OSCE and other international commitments relating to elections and democratization be disseminated as widely as possible in the regions. It was also suggested that a set of criteria should be developed to measure the effectiveness of election assistance and observation programmes and that the existing mechanism for co-ordinating activities in the field currently employed in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan should be expanded to other Central Asian and Caucasus countries, through the OSCE Missions and other organizations. A clear definition of responsibilities and specific election-related activities of each organization in the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus was also produced, along with recommendations.



## **Albania**

The final report on the Constitutional Referendum held in Albania on 22 November is now available on the ODIHR website at:

<http://www.osce.odihhr.org>.

## **Armenia election**

The ODIHR has begun preparations for the forthcoming parliamentary election in Armenia, to be held on 30 May. On 22 March, technical assistance to the Central Election Commission began with a training programme for officials of the Regional Election Commissions.

A needs assessment mission, headed by ODIHR adviser, Mr. Nikolai Vulchanov, will be travelling to Yerevan on 5 April to appraise the administrative preparations for the election, to hold meetings with political parties and to make the necessary arrangements to prepare for the establishment of the election observation mission, scheduled to start the week commencing 13 April.

## **Belarus**

The OSCE/ODIHR will not observe the election for local council deputies, to be held in Belarus on 4 April, because it considers that the election process, under the current legal framework, cannot be in conformity with OSCE commitments. However, an ODIHR expert was dispatched to Belarus to assist the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group (AMG) in organizing a limited assessment of the local election. The ODIHR also supported the AMG in organizing training for domestic election observers, beginning December 1998 and continuing until the end of March 1999. The

training was conducted at regional and national levels, for representatives from non-governmental organizations, political parties and the administration, and took place in all six regions of the country.

## **Caucasus Fact-Finding Mission**

The ODIHR conducted a fact-finding mission in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia from 18 to 28 January. The purpose was to inform the main political parties about the election-related projects contained in the Memoranda of Understanding signed by the ODIHR and the three Governments in November 1998, and to discuss with the authorities a tentative time-frame for the implementation of these projects. The mission had a number of fruitful meetings and a framework for co-operation was established in all three countries with the appropriate authorities.

## **Estonia Election**

An ODIHR election observation mission observed the 7 March election to the Riigikogu (Parliament) of Estonia. The Mission, headed by Ambassador Wygant (USA) found the election was held in accordance with Estonia's OSCE commitments and Estonian law.

The election was conducted in a transparent manner, with the confidence of political parties and the public, and the media, in general, gave full and balanced coverage to the election campaign and the competing political parties. The ODIHR mission also announced that election day proceedings were well organized and polling was carried out efficiently and in accordance with electoral provisions.

## **DEMOCRATIZATION**

### **Target-Oriented Meeting on the Judicial System**

The ODIHR participated in a Target-Oriented Meeting on the Judicial System at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. The meeting focused on the situation of the judiciary in Georgia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and participants included members of the OSCE Missions to the two countries and representatives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (Bosnia), the Office of the High Representative (Bosnia), the Council of Europe and the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association.

The meeting identified a number of problems in the two countries. In particular limited access to the courts, corruption and failure to enforce judgements were of concern in both countries. In Bosnia and Herzegovina inter-ethnic and political problems still prevail and are blamed, among other things, for causing a lack of co-operation between the courts of Republika Srpska and the Federation.

### **Community Policing in Moldova**

The ODIHR participated in an assessment mission to Moldova from 23 to 26 February to explore possible reform of the police force. The Mission was organized by the Constitutional and Legal Policy Institute, and also included representatives from the Soros Foundation in Moldova, the Association for European Law Enforcement Co-operation and the OSCE Mission to Moldova.

The mission's purpose was to assess the ways in which the police could be

reformed and improved, to try to improve its public image and to support it in fighting crime. In particular, the need for an improvement in relations, interaction and co-operation between the police and the public was emphasized. The participants concluded that the Moldovan authorities showed considerable interest in a police reform programme and that joint project preparation could go ahead.

### **Needs Assessment Mission in Tajikistan**

An ODIHR delegation visited Tajikistan, from 2 to 5 March, to conduct an assessment of the situation and of the need for democratization and election assistance in the country. The delegation, headed by the ODIHR Deputy Director, Peter Eicher, was joined by representatives of the UNDP, the European Commission and the OSCE Mission to Tajikistan.

The delegation met senior officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Justice and Interior, the Presidential Executive, the Commission on National Reconciliation and the Central Election Commission, as well as numerous non-governmental organizations, media representatives, international organizations and diplomatic representatives.

As a follow-up to this needs assessment mission, the ODIHR will develop a number of specific project proposals for inclusion in a Memorandum of Understanding to be signed with the Government of Tajikistan later in 1999.

### **Azerbaijan Workshop on Law and Journalism**

The BBC World Service organized a workshop for journalists in Baku, Azer-

baijan, from 2 to 5 March. The event was attended by representatives from the ODIHR and the OSCE's Representative on Freedom of the Media. Conducted by experts from the BBC's World Service's Caucasus Division, it focused on issues of libel and slander, journalists' legal rights and responsibilities and the role of the media. The workshop brought together more than 60 representatives of television, radio and press from different political platforms, and the initiative was welcomed by all involved.

### **Kazakhstan Freedom of Religion**

An ODIHR expert on freedom of religion attended a round table in Kazakhstan on 13 March. The round table, organized by the Almaty Helsinki Committee and the presidential Human Rights Commission, was convened in response to concerns about a new proposed bill on freedom of religious confession and religious organizations. At the meeting, the government announced its intention to withdraw and rework the controversial draft law and to engage in improved dialogue with religious communities and non-governmental organizations.

### **Uzbekistan NGO Law**

The ODIHR has sent comments on a draft Uzbek law on NGOs, which have been submitted to the Parliament of Uzbekistan. The law will go to a second reading in Parliament in mid April.

### **Public Awareness of Human Rights in Armenia**

In the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding between the ODIHR and Armenia, filming is underway on two television programmes on the rights

of vulnerable groups in Armenia. The two programmes, on the rights of detainees and the rights of the disabled, are being produced by local television crews and are part of a series of six programmes.

### **Prison Service Assistance**

An ODIHR expert visited Croatia from 14 to 19 March, as part of the ongoing assistance to Croatia's initiative to establish a training college for prison personnel. The expert provided advice on the curriculum for the training college and the training of the college trainers. The expert also visited Albania during February to advise the authorities on a 1999 training programme for prison personnel, the further development of a horticulture/agricultural project for prisons and the partnership of Albanian prisons with prisons in the UK. In addition, the expert took part in a conference on health care organized by the Council of Europe and also took part in the Council of Europe Steering Group Meeting. He is due to visit both countries again in April.

### **Albania Law School**

The ODIHR has launched, with the support of the OSCE Presence in Albania, an assistance programme for the law faculty of the University of Shkoder in the North of Albania. An international expert arrived at the law faculty on 7 March and will be staying for several months to teach a course on international human rights law and develop course material. The ODIHR is also providing material support in the form of publications and computers. The programme aims to establish human rights law on the curriculum and to develop local teaching capacities. It is envisaged that the faculty will

develop contacts with foreign law-schools and that continued support will be given for the development of the library.

#### **New ODIHR Faces**

The ODIHR has appointed a new Head of the Democratisation Section, Mr.

Randolf Oberschmidt, previously Deputy Head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova, who will begin work in April. In early March, Mr. Ian Gorvin joined the ODIHR as the new Human Rights Adviser. Mr. Nicolae Gheorghe has been appointed as the first ODIHR Adviser on Roma and Sinti Issues and will begin work in early May.

#### **Interns**

The ODIHR has played host to interns from Armenia and Romania during February and March and will welcome interns from Georgia and Azerbaijan over the next few months.

## **REPORT** from the Parliamentary Assembly

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### **PRESIDENTIAL VISITS**

#### **United States of America**

From 1 to 4 February 1999, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (PA) President Helle Degn visited the USA to discuss recent OSCE developments and challenges facing the Organization, with particular attention being paid to the co-operation between the OSCE and other Euro-Atlantic institutions. During her conversations with high-ranking officials from the State Department and the Pentagon, President Degn expressed satisfaction with the enhanced profile of the OSCE in United States Euro-Atlantic policies including the concept of the OSCE-NATO-EU Triple Crown of Summitry. Ms. Degn again advocated a modified version of the OSCE decision-making consensus regime (approximate consensus), and drew attention to the need to further incorporate the parliamentary dimension of the OSCE in its activities. In the course of her visit to Washington D.C., Mrs. Degn also had extensive talks

on Capitol Hill, where she had bilateral meetings with 13 members of the House of Representatives, including: the Speaker, Mr. Dennis Hastert; the Chairman of the International Affairs Committee, Congressman Ben Gilman; and the Chairman of the Congressional OSCE Commission, Congressman Chris Smith. Ms. Degn was hosted on Capitol Hill by Congressman Steny Hoyer, Vice-Presi-



*OSCE PA President Helle Degn with Speaker of the House of Representatives Dennis Hastert*

dent of the OSCE PA. Ms. Degn also addressed the Congressional Women's Caucus.

#### **Central Asia, Ukraine and Moldova**

From 12 to 20 February 1999, PA President Degn successively visited Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Ms. Degn's visit to Central Asia was one of a number of visits by the President of the OSCE PA to observe and support the work of OSCE Offices, Centres and Missions, to meet new OSCE officials in the field, to meet high-ranking government and parliamentary officials and finally to draw attention to the role the OSCE plays in the region. During her Central Asia visit, President Degn met with Presidents Nazarbaev, Akaev and Niyazov, along with the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister in each country. The Assembly President discussed the work of the OSCE and stressed the importance of the newly established OSCE Centres as resources for their host countries. With elections sched-

uled for later this year in most of the Central Asian States, Ms. Degn also emphasized the potential role the new OSCE Centres could play in providing assistance and in relaying specific requests for electoral assistance.

Immediately after Central Asia, President Degn visited Ukraine (22-23 February 1999) and Moldova (24-26 February 1999). In both countries she pursued the same general objectives as in Central Asia. In Ukraine, President Degn met with a number of high-ranking officials, including President Leonid Kuchma. During her meetings, she emphasized the success of the OSCE Mission in helping to resolve the problems in the Crimea, as well as the importance of maintaining an OSCE presence in the country.

In Moldova, President Degn met with President Petru Lucinschi, as well as the Commander of the Military Operational Group of the Russian Federation in the Trans-Dniestrian Region. At each of her meetings, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President stressed the importance of the OSCE's work and successes in Moldova. In particular she emphasized these issues during her visits to the OSCE Mission's new office in Tiraspol and at her meetings with Trans-Dniestrian representatives.

#### **Statement by PA President on Öcalan Trial**

On 24 February 1999, PA President Degn appealed to the Turkish authori-

ties to guarantee a fair trial for the arrested leader of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan.

"As a member of the OSCE, and other European institutions, Turkey has committed itself to observe the highest human rights standards, including those of the European Convention on Human Rights. The right to a fair trial must be respected by all members of the OSCE. Mr. Öcalan's rights must also be protected during his detention. He must have access to legal representation." President Helle Degn emphasized the importance of an open legal process. "It is in the interest of justice, and also in the vital interests of the Turkish state, that the entire process, the forthcoming trial in particular, will be transparent. In this respect the presence of international observers at the trial will be important. Any doubt which may be cast over the fairness of the process would be harmful



*President Helle Degn and Secretary-General Spencer Oliver meeting President Kuchma in Ukraine*

for the entire European family of nations, to which Turkey belongs." President Degn also appealed to the supporters of the PKK and Mr. Öcalan who reside in Western Europe to respect the law. "In a democracy any person has the right to peaceful demonstration. But a demo-

cratic state cannot tolerate the use of violence, including the occupation of diplomatic missions and the taking of hostages. Perpetrators of these criminal acts must be brought to justice in the countries where such acts are committed."

#### **Future Visits of the President**

As part of her travelling programme President Degn is scheduled to pay official visits to Sweden (12-14 April 1999) and France (3-5 May 1999), as well as to attend the forthcoming OSCE Troika Ministerial Meeting in Vienna. She is also scheduled to address the Permanent Council on 20 May in Vienna.

#### **OSCE PA to Create Democracy Team on Moldova**

In Moldova President Degn addressed the Parliament of Moldova. She met with President Lucinschi, the Speaker of Parliament and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. She also met with the Commander of the military presence in Trans-Dniestria and the Administration of Trans-Dniestria.

During the visit of President Degn to Chisinau, and the talks with the Speaker of the Moldovan Parliament, Dumitri Diacov, she offered the possibility of the Parliamen-

tary Assembly creating a "Democracy Team" of legislators from different countries to assist in the Trans-Dniestrian settlement process. The Parliamentary Assembly was then invited to participate in a multilateral conference of parliamentarians from Russia, Ukraine,



and Moldova, including Trans-Dniestria, to be held in Odessa on 28 and 29 May. Talks between Chisinau and Tiraspol have been stalled for several months, so new initiatives were welcomed.

### **OSCE and Council of Europe Parliamentarians Discuss Co-operation**

Delegations from the Bureau of the OSCE and Council of Europe Parliamentary Assemblies met in Paris on 5 March 1999. This was the first meeting of its kind and was co-chaired by Ms. Helle Degn (Denmark), President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (PA), and Lord Russell Johnston (UK), President of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly. The OSCE PA was also represented by its Vice-Presidents from Canada, France, Italy, Poland and Turkey, as well as by the Treasurer of the OSCE PA. The Council of Europe PA Delegation included the leaders of their various political groups.

It was recognized in the meeting that there is a need for increased co-operation on a number of issues and a co-ordination of activities in order to strengthen the overall role of parliamentarians and to avoid duplication of work.

The representatives of the two Bureaus also discussed a number of areas where co-operation already exists, such as election monitoring in Kosovo. They agreed on a number of future meetings in order to secure the flow of information and co-ordination of activities.

These will include regular meetings of the Presidents of the two organizations. The Secretary Generals will also meet frequently.

The meetings of the Delegations of the Bureau will be an annual event, the next meeting being in Copenhagen in spring 2000.

### **Parliamentary Programme to Observe Finnish Elections**

Six individuals from Belarus were invited to observe the Finnish parliamentary elections on 21 March, as part of the efforts of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Working Group on Belarus to build a dialogue on elections between government and opposition groups in Minsk. Chosen from various institutions and organizations, the Belarusian observer group represented a broad diversity of political opinions. During their programme in Finland, the observers witnessed political campaigning, met with press officials and representatives from different parties, observed voting and polling procedures, as well as the final vote tabulation.

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Working Group on Belarus Member and Vice Chair of the Assembly's First Committee, Mr. Kimmo Kiljunen (MP, Finland), acted as a co-host for the Belarusian delegation. The observer programme in Finland was organized by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Working Group on Belarus, in co-ordination with the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group

in Belarus, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, the Parliament of Finland and the United Nations Development Programme.

### **OSCE PA Expanded Bureau will Meet in Copenhagen**

Preparations for a meeting of the Expanded Bureau of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly are under way. The main purpose of the meeting, which will be held from 22 to 23 April 1999 in the Danish Folketing in Copenhagen, is to consider draft reports and resolutions that will be presented for discussion to the Assembly Members at the Annual Session in St. Petersburg from 6 to 10 July. Ambassador Kim Traavik, Head of the OSCE Co-ordination Unit and Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office is expected to address the meeting.

Meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Election Monitoring and of the Committee for the OSCE Prize for Journalism and Democracy will be also held in conjunction with the Expanded Bureau.

### **OSCE Parliamentarians Monitor Elections in Armenia**

The OSCE PA is presently preparing for a short-term election observation mission to the parliamentary elections in Armenia, scheduled for 30 May 1999. The PA will monitor these elections in conjunction with the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.



The logo for the OSCE Newsletter. It features the letters 'OSCE' in a bold, white, sans-serif font, each letter contained within a dark blue square. Below this, the word 'NEWSLETTER' is written in a smaller, bold, black, sans-serif font.

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