

Check Against Delivery

TALKING POINTS
SECRETARY GENERAL R. SPENCER OLIVER
Permanent Council Meeting
March 19, 2009

- I commend Ambassador Lenarcic and the ODIHR for their work in the field of human rights and humanitarian concerns. This has, after all, been ODIHR's main mandate since the closure of the Office of Free Elections in 1992.
- The 1997 Agreement is a Co-operation Agreement, not a partnership agreement. It clearly defines a division of labor between the two OSCE Institutions, including the designation of a political representative of the Parliamentary Assembly in a leadership role to deliver the post-election statement on behalf of the OSCE Chairmanship and all OSCE observers.
- During the first five years of the existence of this Agreement, the co-operation between the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the ODIHR worked well. It was during this period that the OSCE became the acknowledged leader in this field. In recent years, however, it has not worked well. In fact, it has caused serious divisions and disruptions within the OSCE family.
- As the Parliamentary Assembly leadership has stated on many occasions, we believe that the problems that have come up are due to the fact that the Parliamentary Assembly has faithfully observed the Agreement while the ODIHR has not.
- We appreciate the efforts of the Greek Chairmanship to address the existing problems, including through the convening of the meeting in Athens last week. Although some progress was made, many problems remain.

- Unfortunately, the progress that was made, as stated in the News From Copenhagen last week, was simply an agreement to observe provisions that are already contained in the 1997 Co-operation Agreement, but which have not been observed by the ODIHR in recent years.
- The 1997 Co-operation Agreement clearly calls for OSCE parliamentarians to play the leading role in OSCE election observation. The leadership of parliamentarians in this field is also recognized in the practice of other European institutions, including the Council of Europe, NATO, and the European Union.
- The 1997 Agreement does not define the Parliamentary Assembly and the ODIHR as “equal partners.” As professional diplomats will understand, being practitioners of protocol, elected officials are normally not considered on the same level as civil servants.
- As President Soares has pointed out on several occasions, elected members of parliaments in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly cannot accept that they are on the same level as the staff or part-time consultants of the ODIHR. While the Parliamentary Assembly wants to work together and co-operate with the ODIHR, the leadership role, as defined in the 1997 Co-operation Agreement, is clearly assigned to the Parliamentary Assembly.
- We cannot understand the criticism directed at the Parliamentary Assembly by the European Union’s PC Statement last week, which somehow implies that the Parliamentary Assembly does not have the right to appoint the leadership of its own delegations. It is obviously the prerogative of the President of the Parliamentary Assembly to make such appointments, as the President does and has done consistently and regularly as called for the Assembly’s Rules of Procedure.
- We look forward to our co-operation with the Greek Chairmanship and thank them for their initiative and their efforts to help resolve the problems we have encountered in OSCE election observation. We also look forward to co-operation with the ODIHR on the basis of the 1997 Agreement as called for in the 2006 OSCE Ministerial Council document.