

Striking a fair balance: protecting human rights in the fight against terrorism

By Gerard Stoudmann, Director, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

The fight against terrorism has been at the top of the OSCE's agenda since the tragic events of 11 September 2001. Terrorism is a threat to stability, freedom and democracy, and all states therefore have an obligation to combat terrorism in order to protect themselves and their citizens. It is evident that this fight requires specific measures. Yet it is also crucial that the legitimate right of states to combat terrorism be exercised in full accordance with international human rights law. This approach

was explicitly confirmed by all the OSCE participating States with the adoption of the Bucharest Action Plan for Combating Terrorism in December 2001.

The OSCE participating States were right to place such a strong emphasis on the protection of human rights at the most recent Ministerial Council Meeting. Human rights are an integral component of the set of norms and values shared by all the OSCE countries, and represent one of the three pillars of the OSCE's security concept linking the

politico-military, human and economic dimensions.

The importance of human rights, the rule of law and democracy to stability and collective security has been recognized in the OSCE from the very outset, having been affirmed in the 1975 Helsinki Final Act. This reflects the experience that the root causes of conflict and instability can often be found in violations of human rights. It was the deterioration of the human rights situation, in particular the contempt for fun-



The next generation of voters in Kosovo learns the ABCs of elections at an OSCE-sponsored roadshow, September 2001

The OSCE in Kosovo: September 1999 to December 2001, a retrospective look at the work of Czech photographer Lubomir Kotek, was on view at the Segmentgalerie, Hofburg Conference Centre, from mid-April to mid-May. Ambassador Joao de Lima Pimentel of Portugal, the Chairman of the OSCE Permanent Council, opened the travelling exhibition on 11 April. As the official photographer of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, "Lubo" captured poignant moments in the history of the province over 27 months. The 30 pictures that were especially hand-picked for the exhibition also serve as a sensitively recorded overview of the Mission's work in promoting democracy, human rights and the rule of law and its impact on the day-to-day lives of the communities. First shown in Pristina, the pictures will travel to Prague, Berlin, Warsaw, Porto and Paris. To view the exhibit, please access: www.osce.org/photos

damental freedoms and individual rights, that led to conflicts such as the one in Kosovo, and turned Afghanistan into a breeding ground for terrorism, to cite just two recent examples.

Protecting fundamental values

The purpose of anti-terrorism measures is, of course, to guarantee security for all citizens. In the longer term, however, the fight against terrorism is also a fight to protect the fundamental values and freedoms that have been developed painstakingly over the second half of the twentieth century, as well as to defend an international environment based on a mutually agreed set of rules that can be called the “international rule of law”. The objective of the efforts against terrorism certainly cannot be to promote an international order based exclusively on the “law of

the strongest” and the projection of power. The protection of democratic values and human rights, therefore, should be seen as an integral part of the struggle against terrorism, not as an obstacle to it.

Clamping down on legitimate and non-violent dissent, indiscriminate harassment of certain ethnic or religious groups and other similar excessive measures taken in the name of the fight against terrorism are not only contrary to international law; they also play into the hands of extremists exploiting frustration and discontent among those who feel they are victims of intolerance and persecution.

Circumventing established international human rights standards and humanitarian law when adopting legislative and administrative counter-terrorism measures is also highly problematic. To

do so would mean relinquishing the moral high ground and thus the ability to address human rights problems credibly in other countries. Ignoring commonly agreed norms can only lead to an unpredictable and chaotic international legal order. It is therefore the responsibility of all states, and also in their own best interests, to preserve existing achievements when developing new approaches to the fight against terrorism.

How can states ensure that their

responses to the threat of terrorism strike the necessary balance? It is crucial that the democratic process based on the rule of law and a functioning system of checks and balances be maintained, even in troubled times. Strict adherence to international obligations also remains of utmost importance. This is particularly valid in cases where governments decide they must take measures that derogate from certain rights guaranteed under international law. International standards require that any such measures must be of a genuinely exceptional character, and carefully weighted. They must be strictly limited in time and substance, and subject to regular review.

The process of adopting derogations must also be consistent with established national and international procedures and mechanisms. Some rights, including

the right to life and the prohibition of torture, cannot be derogated from. Certain minimum fair trial standards must always be respected under any circumstances. As far as law enforcement is concerned, there is obviously a need for efficient and quick responses to terrorist threats, but extra powers given to law enforcement agencies should always be subject to close judicial oversight.

Promoting appropriate responses

Starting with a public statement issued jointly with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Council of Europe on 29 November 2001, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), within its mandate, has been endeavouring to play an active role during the past

OSCE/Michal Olejarnik



Ambassador Gerard Stoudmann, a Swiss diplomat, has headed the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) since 1997. The ODIHR is also Europe’s leading election observation institution. Located in Warsaw, Poland, the Office employs more than 80 staff from some 30 countries.

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months in promoting appropriate responses to terrorism in line with international standards. The Office is also monitoring and analysing the development and implementation of counter-terrorism legislation and policy measures in participating States in the light of relevant OSCE commitments, and has been offering assistance and advice to participating States on anti-terrorism legislation. Related to this, the ODIHR is involved in drafting the guidelines on human rights and the fight against terrorism that are being prepared by the Council of Europe. The ODIHR is also contributing to international efforts to

eradicate terrorism through a wide range of project activities on the ground. A major theme of the Bucharest Action Plan was the need to strengthen democratic institutions, human rights, tolerance and multiculturalism, as well as the importance of early warning and compliance with international standards. All these issues lie within the core mandate of the ODIHR, and the Office has developed numerous programmes in these areas over the past years.

The ODIHR anti-terrorism “road map” includes projects aimed at promoting religious freedom and tolerance, fostering dialogue between governments

and civil society, reviewing legislation, building functioning democratic institutions, and training members of the judiciary and law enforcement, to name just a few examples.

Each of these projects addresses the root causes of terrorism, and this is where the ODIHR with its experience and expertise can provide real added value. By implementing these programmes, the ODIHR seeks to help participating states to develop democratic societies that would be less vulnerable to political extremism, because their state structures would serve the people – *all* the people, and not just a given ruling class.

OSCE’s agenda to counter and combat terrorism takes shape

Emphasis to be on well-focused, pragmatic measures that can make a difference

Seven months after the terrorist attacks of 11 September in the United States and four months after the foreign ministers of OSCE participating States adopted the Bucharest Plan of Action for Combating Terrorism, the Permanent Council held a meeting on 12 April in Vienna to take stock.

Policing, border monitoring, fighting trafficking in all its forms and suppressing the financing of terrorism were “areas of action where the OSCE could make a difference”, especially in terms of international co-operation, said Jan Troejoborg, Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office (CiO) on terrorism-related issues. “We must establish a clear profile”, he added, urging that co-operation with the European Union be broadened in these “strategic choices”.

Addressing the Permanent Council for the first time since his appointment in January, the former Danish defence minister noted that the OSCE was currently in the process of implementing many of the provisions of the



Portuguese Foreign Minister Antonio Martins da Cruz was appointed new OSCE Chairman-in-Office on 6 April

Bucharest Plan of Action and the Bishkek Programme of Action*, which together served as the framework for the Organization’s terrorism-related activities.

Clearing house

A new anti-terrorism unit within the Secretariat – one of the key elements under the Plan of Action – was now ready to take up its activities, Secretary General Jan Kubis announced at the special meeting. Its role would be to serve as the “OSCE focal point, database and clearing house” in matters that concerned preventing and combating terrorism. Now that the OSCE budget for 2002 had been approved, the recruitment of experts could finally proceed, the Secretary General said.

Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes, Head of the US Delegation to the OSCE, called for an expansion of the Organization’s “already successful activities in the fields of anti-corruption and good governance, law enforcement enhancement and promoting tolerance, to counter the conditions that make it possible for terrorists and their networks to thrive”.

One of the initiatives that he welcomed was the creation of a database in which participating States could register their needs for assistance in implement-

ing counter-terrorism commitments or make known their offers to provide assistance. "We join our Russian colleagues in supporting [this] proposal", he said.

The participating States responded favourably to the presentations by the OSCE institutions and the Secretariat on the implementation of terrorism-related tasks in their respective areas, which included significant contributions from field offices. The plans reflect the Organization's comprehensive approach to security and its economic and environmental, human and politico-military dimensions. The plans also reflect recognition of the United Nations' lead role in combating terrorism and the initiatives of national governments, international organizations, initiatives and groups.

Value added

In his first address to the Permanent

Council on 2 May [as the *OSCE Newsletter* went to press] Portuguese Foreign Minister Antonio Martins da Cruz, the OSCE's new Chairman-in-Office, said he was eagerly awaiting concrete projects in the strategic areas recommended at the Permanent Council's special meeting. The European Union and its associated countries agreed with the CiO that the OSCE could offer added value in the chosen areas of action.

Ambassador Alexander Alekseyev, Head of the Russian Federation Delegation to the OSCE, said: "The fight against terrorism must remain a major aspect of the Chairmanship's work. Good results have been achieved here and they should be developed and strengthened through practical efforts."

Mr. Martins da Cruz, who took up his office on 6 April after the change of Government in Portugal following general

elections in March, said the Chairmanship was working on the development of an OSCE charter on the issue of terrorism. A key event under the Portuguese Chairmanship was a meeting on 12 June in Lisbon in which senior representatives of the United Nations, NATO, the European Union and the European Commission, the Council of Europe and other organizations would discuss joint international and regional efforts and the comprehensive approach to dealing with terrorism.

As a follow-up to this event, Secretary General Kubis has announced his intention to call for a meeting on terrorism-related issues later in 2002. Regional and sub-regional organizations would be invited to participate in the exchange of information, discuss cooperation and harmonize efforts.

**The comprehensive Plan of Action was adopted at the OSCE's Ninth Ministerial Council Meeting in Bucharest, Romania, on 4 December 2001. It was supplemented by the Programme of Action adopted at an international conference in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on 14 December 2001, which focused on Central Asia.*

OSCE adopts new scale of contributions

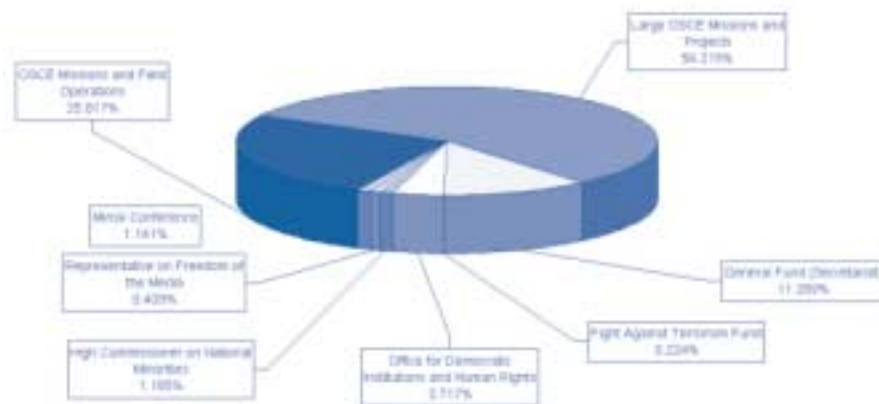
Revision of the scale opens the way for adoption of the Organization's 2002 budget and the budget for the municipal elections in Kosovo

After lengthy discussions and heated debates, the OSCE Permanent Council adopted a revised standard scale of contributions on 12 April. The scale defines, for the coming three years, how much each of the 55 participating States pays annually for the OSCE's activities and its institutions.

Ambassador Joao de Lima Pimentel, the Chairperson of the Permanent Council, hailed the Council's decision as an "important step towards a fairer distribution of the shares carried by the participating States". The revision, he added, was a "major achievement" for the Organization, as the structure of the Helsinki Scale had remained largely unchanged since 1973.

The revised scale does not include voluntary contributions made by partic-

OSCE 2002 Unified Budget
177,500,000 euros



with difficulties, disarmament could open up new opportunities for development, especially when backed by experience in markets and competition. However, conversion could not be left to the marketplace alone, and states should be more involved to ensure its chances of success. The consensus was that it was hard to define and measure peace dividends in economic terms.



OSCE Mission to Moldova

In Moldova, the destruction of heavy weapons started in June 2001 under the supervision of the OSCE

Converting sectors

The second round table reviewed specific economic sectors and industries that were being converted into new sources of activities. Within the Commonwealth of Independent States, the conversion of military industries faced particularly formidable challenges because of the transition from a centrally planned system to a market-driven one. Moreover, the conversion of the military-nuclear complex, especially in Russia, was a precondition for reducing the risks associated with the proliferation of lethal technologies, arms and *matériel*. Some international programmes aimed at supporting conversion in countries in transition had resulted in success stories, especially when funding and other incentives had been directed towards developing small and medium-

sized enterprises in knowledge- and technology-intensive activities.

Managing disarmament

A possible model of international co-operation – the case of the Transdnestrian region of Moldova, where stockpiles were being eliminated to remove the risk to the local population and to neighbouring Ukraine – was examined at the third round table. Speakers acknowledged the political problems that had to be surmounted, but noted that, with financial support from the Netherlands and the United States and other western countries, and using Russian and German equipment, the destruction of explosives might well be completed sat-

isfactorily within a set time frame. Participants stressed the complexity of the process of eliminating huge stocks of chemical weapons inherited from the Soviet period.

Ms. Bujon-Barre emphasized that disarmament and conversion should be seen as a long-term process and that access to adequate technology, the availability of external financial support and attention to the environmental factors were crucial. She warned that, following the events of 11 September 2001, the world

might well be confronted with a disarmament crisis that needed to be addressed. Mr. Weinstein pointed out that the conversion of defence industries remained a major challenge for many countries and that the OSCE had a key role to play in facilitating the process.

The two days of discussions were jointly organized by the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, on behalf of the Portuguese Chairmanship, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France.

Daniel Linotte is Senior Economic Adviser and Stefan Bostina is Assistant, Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities.

The people and the police: Stepping into each other's shoes

Kosovo Police School spins off impact to Azerbaijan

By Leyla Yunus

For the first time ever in Azerbaijan, the police and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) came together to gain a better insight into each other's roles, rights and responsibilities – and their own. They cleared up a myriad of misconceptions and realized that they could work together in the interests of civil society.

A continuing dialogue and mutual understanding are ingredients missing from the relationship between advocates of human rights and law enforcers in many countries around the world, including Azerbaijan. The views of both sides are firmly entrenched and difficult to change: the attitude of the

police towards NGOs is often tinged with wariness and skepticism, even as NGOs remain vigilant in their demand that the police adhere to international standards of justice and human rights.

To turn this vicious circle into a virtuous one, and as part of Azerbaijan's efforts to build a more democratic cul-

ture, four partners launched a year-long project in December 2001 to promote civic education for the police by bringing them closer to NGOs. This novel approach was conceived by a well-known Azerbaijani NGO, the Institute of Peace and Democracy (IPD), which also drew on funding from the German Government to put its concept into practice.

Under the leadership of Bogdan Marczewski, then Acting Head, the OSCE Office in Baku developed the project several steps further. With the Office serving as a bridge, a breakthrough was achieved when the country's Ministry of the Interior agreed to co-operate with the IPD on the project – the first time the Ministry had entered into an arrangement of this kind with a local NGO. The expertise of the OSCE-run police school in Vushtrri/Vucitrn was brought to bear, in a clear sign that the impact of the two-and-half-year-old school is making itself felt beyond Kosovo's borders.

Under the project's first phase, 117 police officers representing different ranks and various districts in Baku went through four training seminars with 52 members of nine NGOs. The groups reflected a cross section of interests, ranging from a committee for the protection of oil workers' rights to a women's crisis centre.

The carefully tailored course, offered from 9 to 16 December, spanned the whole gamut of issues underlying the role, rights and obligations of police officers: enforcing the law and securing the safety and protection of citizens during mass disturbances; complying with laws and procedures when arresting or detaining individuals, and recognizing their rights; conducting negotiations and using physical force and firearms in crisis situations; and maintaining public order, as in patrolling.

As the course progressed, the three groups of facilitators – from the Min-

istry, the IPD and the OSCE – developed a natural partnership: no distinction was made as to who was “running the show”. This put the two facilitators from the Ministry of the Interior increasingly at ease, especially during the role-playing, in contrast to the tense first few days.

Many in the group agreed that it was the participation of the OSCE experts, namely, Hungarian Istvan Lipniczki and Slovenians Stefan Skalar and Robert Bajuk, which allayed the initial tension between the police and the NGOs. Their experience of working in countries that



OSCE Office in Baku

Role-playing leads to a rare dialogue between the police and civic groups

were undergoing a transition to democracy, combined with their expertise as instructors at the Kosovo Police Service School, helped them to identify the most effective way of interacting with the Azerbaijani police officers. They clarified several problem areas stemming from a poor understanding of the role played by NGOs in civil society, the rules guiding picketing and the holding of public meetings, and the legal basis for the detention of suspects.

The impact of the seminars was immediate. The participants learned about the gaps in the current police-related legislation and their own incorrect interpretations of specific provisions under various laws. They realized, for example, that it was a misconception to think that every public demonstration required the special permission of the executive authorities.

In the role-playing, each side had the opportunity to step into the other's shoes and to comment on the other's conduct. The police officers pretended to be civilians who were holding meetings and unauthorized demonstrations, with the NGO representatives acting the part of the police. This exercise sparked a rare discussion between the police and the civic groups, which led them to agree that there were situations in which specific laws did not work and that the laws could sometimes be far removed from day-to-day life.

The seminars were merely the first step towards helping the police catch up with changes in Azerbaijan's political system. Under the project's second phase, the Ministry of the Interior and the IPD will prepare and disseminate a brochure on the rights and obligations of the police officer. In May and June, eight more training seminars will be offered to the police and civilians in other regions.

The first set of participants agreed that the training far exceeded

their expectations. They came out of the four workshops feeling that they had just been through a unique experience. They knew that the path they had embarked on, that of developing a civil society, was going to be a long one. But they seemed determined to travel it.

Dr. Leyla Yunus is the co-ordinator of the project, “Civic Education for Policemen: Co-operation between NGOs and Police”. She is the Director of the Institute of Peace and Democracy in Azerbaijan, established in 1996 to study the problems of conflict resolution, ways of preserving peace in the region, and security and development issues. She and her colleague, legal consultant Isakhan Ashurov, the former head of the police department in the country's Kazakh region, also serve as training facilitators in the workshops.

Radio-Television Serbia: The road to reform

OSCE leads international efforts to satisfy Yugoslavs' demand for professional broadcasts

By Jovan Kovacic and Stella Ronner



Overhauling Radio-Television Serbia will help satisfy Yugoslavs' hunger for reliable information

The OSCE opened its Mission to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in early 2001, immediately taking on the transformation of the country's media landscape as one of its major tasks. An article in the February issue of the OSCE Newsletter described how the Mission lost no time in setting a series of measures into motion, designed to turn the influential Radio-Television Serbia (RTS), the former regime's mouthpiece, into a broadcaster with world-class standards. Since a new, independent Board of Governors and qualified journalists have been in place, the quality and objectivity of news broadcasts have been on the rise, winning the confidence of viewers and listeners. This second instalment looks at what lies ahead.

In February, three OSCE staff members set up a temporary office right in the headquarters of Radio-Television Serbia (RTS) in downtown Belgrade. The initiative had come from the RTS and spoke volumes for its serious

commitment to convert itself into a public broadcasting service with the help of OSCE-led international efforts.

On a given day, the small OSCE office juggles competing priorities: requests for clarification on the new code of conduct for employees, complaints from disgruntled personnel, questions from bewildered trade unionists, not to mention regular consultation sessions with the auditors. The OSCE had found a bloated bureaucracy with 40 office branches and 7,000 employees, many of whom were naturally feeling insecure and wary about looming changes in the status quo.

"Being involved first-hand in transforming the national broadcaster is a most gratifying and challenging experience", says Hugues Marsac, one of the OSCE staff members assigned to RTS. "It is allowing us to have a close-up look at the magnitude of the job."

The check-list of things to do is formidable:

Revamping the news desk

For one thing, despite a promising start in raising the quality of the station's news productions, it will doubtless take some time for RTS to catch up with global standards for solid investigative reporting. For another, specialized training and education in the country need upgrading, so RTS journalists and reporters would have to hone their skills either on-site or abroad. Even if this were made possible, they would not be able to put their polished-up craft into practice due to the lack of technical tools and facilities.

Another constraint to professional reporting is the dearth of archival footage for weaving into reports – a novel concept for RTS journalists. The station's video library, a priceless testimony to the history of the Balkans, also risks being lost forever unless a large infusion of funds is soon forthcoming to format it digitally.

A positive sign of the times is that the news desk, which was driven to out-of-town offices by the NATO air strikes of 1999, has been relocated back to RTS headquarters. In order to revamp the news operations, an investment of some 1.5 million euros is needed for television cameras, audio and lighting equipment and an editing room, and another 500,000 euros for an electronic network.

Stefano Sannino, the Head of the OSCE Mission to the FRY, is especially eager for a rapid injection of funds into overhauling the news desk to satisfy the Yugoslav public's hunger for accurate and well-documented information on the painful but necessary changes in the country.

International audit

"The visible changes since the new RTS management was put in place have been encouraging", says Ambassador Sannino. "But for the RTS to become eco-

nomically viable and highly professional, we badly needed to determine exactly what remedies to apply. We simply had to get a firm grasp of the overall picture.”

For a well thought-out, independent and unbiased analysis of the state of affairs at the RTS, the services of an auditing firm were sought with funds secured from the European Commission and its European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR). The Paris branch of Andersen Consulting emerged in first place after a stringent and transparent bidding process that followed European Union procedures.

“This is the first time in the Balkans that a state-owned media outlet is undergoing an international audit of this magnitude prior to its transformation into a public broadcasting company”, says Ambassador Sannino. The team of auditors, whose 12 members have undertaken similar work in countries that are in transition, are scrutinizing the entire RTS structure, examining its financial assets, carrying out an inventory of its technical and technological facilities, and drawing up a cost-effective operational strategy.

The auditors have just recently submitted their second progress report to the

RTS management, ushering the next phase in the station’s transformation. The study makes wide-ranging recommendations that are intended to introduce modern and efficient features into the station’s organizational structure, operations and services.

Some of the changes – such as restructuring the entire management system – would be substantial and may have to wait until the RTS becomes a public broadcaster. But several changes pertaining to financial operations and other services can be introduced within a few weeks and would not require major funding.

Lobbying political structures

The OSCE Mission to the FRY has launched a major lobbying campaign to elicit the support of potential national and global partners. The OSCE is organizing a meeting of the RTS leadership with Belgrade-based foreign missions. The station’s senior managers are also planning a visit to Vienna to present their case directly to the OSCE’s Permanent Council.

The lobbying efforts are also aimed at securing passage of the draft law on broadcasting, which was approved by the

Serbian Government in April. It was prepared under the aegis of the OSCE, the Council of Europe and the country’s Ministry of Telecommunications, with contributions from the Belgrade Media Centre.

“We hope that the Serbian parliament will pass the law soon without any substantial changes, as it would finally pave the way for the legal transformation of the RTS into a public broadcasting service”, says Ambassador Sannino. “The new law will also set a precedent: for the first time, Serbia will have an independent regulatory body – the Agency for Broadcasting.”

Despite the complicated job of putting this important voice of Serbia in order, the OSCE Mission to the FRY finds the upbeat mood of the General Director of the RTS, Aleksandar Crkvenjakov, nothing short of contagious. “We will be better than ever before,” the respected television journalist says reassuringly, “perhaps the best in the region”.

Jovan Kovacic is the News Programming Adviser, Media Department, OSCE Mission to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Stella Ronner is the Spokesperson for the Mission.

OSCE AGENDA

21 and 22 May, Almaty, Kazakhstan. Follow-up meeting on trafficking in small arms and light weapons in Central Asia. OSCE Centre in Almaty, Conflict Prevention Centre

28 to 31 May, Prague. Tenth meeting of the OSCE Economic Forum. Co-operation for the sustainable use and the protection of quality of water. Portuguese OSCE Chairmanship and Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA)

3 to 11 June, Baku, Azerbaijan; Tbilisi, Georgia; Yerevan, Armenia. Workshops on the code of conduct on politico-military aspects of

security in the Caucasus. Conflict Prevention Centre

4 to 7 June, Dushanbe, Tajikistan. Second regional workshop on the Aarhus Convention for Central Asia. OSCE and other organizations

14 and 15 June, Czech Republic. Observation of parliamentary elections. OSCE/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)

RECENT EVENTS

14 and 15 May, Vienna. Expert meeting on combating terrorism within the OSCE politico-military

dimension. Forum for Security Co-operation

25 April, Dushanbe. Combating extremism and strengthening democratic institutions: problems and prospects. OSCE Mission to Tajikistan, Research Centre Sharq and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung

23 to 25 April, Warsaw. Human dimension seminar on the judicial system and human rights. More than 150 government representatives and international experts participated. OSCE/ODIHR and the OSCE Chairmanship



News from the field

The OSCE currently has Missions or other field activities in Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Kosovo (Yugoslavia), Skopje (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Yugoslavia.

OSCE Office in Yerevan holds dialogue in Gyumri

The Deputy Head, Economic/Environmental Officer and Democratization Officer of the OSCE Office in Yerevan visited Gyumri, the regional centre of Armenia's Shirak Province, on 5 April to brief city officials and representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on the work of the OSCE and to identify potential areas of co-operation. Meetings were held with the Mayor of Gyumri, the *marzpet* (regional governor) and with a broad range of NGOs concerned with human rights, gender, elections and economic as well as environmental matters.

The Office representatives were informed by the city officials about the region's priorities: locating all schools in permanent facilities, upgrading streets and roads, increasing the speed and scope of privatization and building industrial capacity, especially to help ease the high unemployment in the region.

A discussion group with NGOs looked into the difficult flow of information between the centre, Yerevan, and the regions, which was affecting the work of NGOs in Gyumri. A proposal to co-ordinate the exchange of information through the establishment of a resource centre was discussed. In another discussion group with NGOs, which examined economic and environmental issues, the Office was briefed on ongoing cross-border projects with Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey. The focus also turned to the main problems hindering the development of small and medium-sized enterprises in the region. Several administrative barriers and corruption were mentioned as being mainly responsible for inhibiting the process.

Gyumri was once Armenia's second largest city, with a well-developed industrial and agricultural base and educational system, and served as a trade link between Turkey and the Soviet Union.



OSCE Office in Yerevan

Elaine Conkievich, Deputy Head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan (left), briefs an NGO representative in Gyumri

Following the severe earthquake in 1988, the city and its environs are still going through the difficult process of rehabilitation.

Centre in Armenia to promote information on environment

The OSCE Office in Yerevan and the Armenian Ministry of Nature Protection signed a memorandum of understanding on 19 March establishing a Public Environmental Information Centre. The Armenian Aarhus Centre, scheduled to open in May, will facilitate the public's access to information and participation in decision-making on environmental issues as a means of fostering transparency and good governance in the country.

"The Centre is a good example of a successful joint endeavour of the Government, non-governmental organizations and the international community", remarked Roy Reeve, Head of the OSCE Office, at the signing ceremony. Arme-

nia's Minister of Nature Protection, Vardan Aivazyan, said that the Centre would primarily serve the needs of journalists in their search for information on environmental matters. The Centre will provide free access to a specialized library, the Internet and a legal database. It will also serve as a venue for public discussions, NGO meetings and public relations activities of the Ministry of Nature Protection, where the new facilities will be located.

Youth charter launched in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina and the office of the Council of Europe in Sarajevo have launched the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Municipal and Regional Life. The Charter outlines the ways in which young people can participate in public life and urges the authorities to provide the conditions to bring this about. Dr. Sonja Moser-Starrach of the

Council of Europe expressed her hope that “the principles and ideas contained in the Charter will motivate young people, political leaders and administrations to work together on improving the situation of young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina”.

Given this population group’s traditionally low participation in the country’s elections, Dieter Woltmann, Deputy Head of the OSCE Mission, took the opportunity at the Charter’s launching on 28 March to encourage the country’s young people “to become active and responsible citizens, to be a part of the whole democratic process and not to give up their right to vote”. In several European countries, the Charter has served as the basis for legislation aimed at integrating young people into public life.

Serbian and Montenegrin MPs expand knowledge of modern parliamentary systems

Parliamentary delegations to Spain and the United Kingdom were organized by the OSCE Mission to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) at the beginning of March. The visits were part of the OSCE’s efforts in the FRY to enhance the parliamentary dimension in the country and to strengthen the role of institutions that oversee the work of the Government.

The 12 parliamentarians visited the ombudsperson institutions in Madrid and Barcelona to gain first-hand knowledge of the goals and functions of the

ombudsperson as a parliamentary institution, and to study the relationship of the office with parliament. The OSCE Mission also invited the speakers of the Serbian and Montenegrin parliaments, Natasa Micic and Vesna Perovic, to participate in a visit to the British and Scottish parliaments. The trip enabled the MPs to observe the question time of British Prime Minister Tony Blair in parliament in London.

Kosovo journalists assisted in professional development

Special activities were organized by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo (OMiK) in March to enable journalists from different parts of Kosovo to gain a better understanding of the relationship between the media and the political process. More than 40 print and broadcast journalists from all ethnic communities took part in a media seminar on 14 and 15 March, which focused on investigative journalism, news production and the ethics of journalism. “The ability of journalists to report accurately and professionally depends on instilling the required skills and techniques for investigative journalism”, said Jeremy Lidstone, the Director of the Media Affairs Department of OMiK.

On 8 March, the Mission sponsored a four-day visit to Switzerland by six radio journalists – four Kosovo Albanians and two Kosovo Serbs – where they witnessed the working relationship between parliamentarians, political leaders, offi-

cial, institutions and media representatives. They visited parliament and shared their experiences in covering sessions of their own parliament with local German-, French- and Italian-speaking broadcast journalists.

Dangerous fuel transformed into fertilizer in Georgia

An OSCE-supervised pilot project in Georgia entered a new phase when two German experts completed an evaluation of the so-called *mélange* project in March. “*Mélange* is a highly unstable and explosive missile fuel component that urgently requires neutralization. It is a great asset in that it can be converted into fertilizer for the acid soil in western Georgia”, said Ambassador Jean-Michel Lacombe, Head of the OSCE Mission to Georgia, on the occasion of the experts’ visit to the project site in Meria, where 400 tons of *mélange* is concentrated.

The project is supported by the OSCE voluntary fund as part of the activities related to the reduction of Russian military forces and equipment in Georgia. So far, the Governments of Germany, the Netherlands, Turkey and the United Kingdom have contributed to the fund. Germany has, in addition, provided some experts. The project is being implemented by the Institute for Physical and Organic Chemistry of the Georgian Academy of Sciences. Several hundred tons of the missile fuel component have been left behind at a number of former Soviet military bases in Georgia.



IN BRIEF

The **Chairman-in-Office (CiO), Portuguese Foreign Minister Antonio Martins da Cruz**, has expressed “deep concern” about information indicating that the Belarusian authorities saw no grounds to extend the visa and diplomatic accreditation of the Acting Head of the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group in Minsk, Michel Rivollier.

“Consultations are currently under way within the OSCE on the future pro-

gramme of work of the Advisory and Monitoring Group”, the CiO said in a statement from Lisbon on 12 April. “An untimely decision affecting the status of the Acting Head of the Group would undoubtedly have a negative impact on these consultations.” He added that this would also prevent the proper functioning of the Group in Belarus and could lead to a serious deterioration in the co-operation between the OSCE and Belarus and to the adoption of appropriate measures.

As announced in the March issue of the *OSCE Newsletter*, the new Por-

tuguese Foreign Minister, Antonio Martins da Cruz, was appointed as the OSCE Chairman-in-Office on 6 April, replacing the outgoing Foreign Minister Jaime Gama. This development followed parliamentary elections in Portugal, resulting in a change in Government.

At the end of a two-day visit to Moldova on 26 March, **the outgoing OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Portuguese Foreign Minister Jaime Gama**, urged all sides involved in the Transdniestrian conflict to resume talks as soon as possible. During discussions in the country’s capital, Chisinau, and the

Transnistrian capital, Tiraspol, both the Moldovan and Transnistrian sides agreed that it was urgent that they reach an agreement on joint customs posts located at the border with Ukraine, possibly with the participation of third parties.

In a meeting with the Moldovan President, Vladimir Voronin, Mr. Gama was briefed on the recent tensions in the country, which had been aggravated since 9 January, when the deputies of the Christian Democratic Popular Party had started to organize daily demonstrations in Chisinau. "...Internal problems have to be solved only by democratic means and adhering to the rule of law", the CiO said. "In this, the OSCE and its institutions will support Moldova."

In Tiraspol, the CiO was informed by General Boris Sergeev, Commander of the Operative Group of Russian Forces, about the current state of withdrawal of Russian arms and ammunition from Transnistria. Mr. Gama expressed his satisfaction with Russia's timely fulfilment of its CFE treaty obligations but voiced concern about the approaching second deadline – the end of 2002 – stipulated at the OSCE Istanbul Summit.

The **Armenian Foreign Minister, Vartan Oskanian**, has expressed his Government's appreciation for the work the OSCE has done in his country. "In all areas – from combating corruption to reform, to environmental policy or civic participation – the Yerevan Office has been consistent and persistent", he told the OSCE Permanent Council on 21 March. "Recently, its efforts with other missions in the South Caucasus have added a dimension of regional co-operation to its agenda, which we find timely and potentially very fruitful."

He also praised the "enormous contribution" of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the High Commissioner on National Minorities. "They are uniquely

qualified as instruments of democratization and conflict prevention. They are the evidence of this Organization's comparative advantage", he said.

Touching on the conflict being dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Group (Nagorno-Karabakh), Foreign Minister Oskanian expressed his appreciation of the continuing efforts of the OSCE and the Co-Chairmen from France, the Russian Federation and the United States. "The OSCE, its presence, its monitoring, the Chairman's Personal Representative, the Co-Chairs' frequent visits and continuing engagement, as well as the CiO's recent tours of the South Caucasus all contribute to a relative calm", he said.

The **outgoing OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Portugal's Foreign Minister, Jaime Gama**, has welcomed the agreement on the restructuring of relations between Serbia and Montenegro, mediated by the European Union and signed by representatives of Serbia and Montenegro and authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. "This is a major new development that also paves the way for enhanced stability in the region, which has been a major concern of the OSCE over the past decade", he said on 15 March from Lisbon. He also reaffirmed the OSCE's readiness to assist with the reform process.

Richard Murphy, 44, took up his post as **OSCE Spokesperson and Head of Press and Public Information** on April 15. A Northern Irishman, he spent 21 years as a journalist with Reuters news agency, reporting from more than 20 countries throughout the OSCE area. His last assignment was as bureau chief for Reuters in Vienna, responsible for Austria, Albania and Slovenia.

Since moving to Vienna in 1997, he has closely followed the OSCE's activities, covering the Istanbul Summit in 1999 as well as several Ministerial Council meetings and interviewing

senior officials. But his association with the Organization actually goes back to the early 1980s, when he reported on a CSCE conference on confidence- and security-building measures in Stockholm. "This gave me my first insight into international diplomacy and left me with a fascination for the Helsinki Process", Mr. Murphy says.



He was particularly impressed by the OSCE's work in Albania, firstly in the wake of the 1997 crisis and later on during the influx of refugees from Kosovo in 1999. He recalls: "Not only did the OSCE take the initiative in responding to a flood of around half a million refugees. Its border monitors were also the only source of reliable information about what was happening in the north of the country. This was vital for reducing tension at a time when wild rumours about alleged military incidents on the border were flying around."

In his new role, Richard Murphy is keen to boost public awareness of the invaluable work done by OSCE staff in the field, which makes a real difference to the lives of ordinary people in troubled regions. He urges staff working in missions to keep the Press and Public Information Section aware of their activities so they can be made known to a wider audience. "Don't be shy – you have a great story to tell", he says.

OSCE launches news subscription service for journalists

A news subscription service for journalists was launched by the OSCE Press and Public Information Service on 15 April. The state-of-the-art online service is designed especially for media representatives and provides an enhanced access to a wider range of OSCE press and public information products. In just a few simple steps, journalists can create a personalized OSCE media information package.

Journalists can sign up for the new service at: www.osce.org/subscription/media





PRESS PROFILE

Direct excerpts from a selection of articles on the OSCE and its activities in March

ELECTIONS IN UKRAINE

Associated Press, 21 March

[Quoting former Deputy Prime Minister and opposition leader Julia Tymoshenko's open letter to the OSCE] "We are forced to appeal to you for help and ask that you make a real estimation of Ukraine's situation [and] intervene in the process to the extent of your authority [in order] not to allow total unlawfulness during the election campaign."

Los Angeles Times, 1 April

[Quoting former Prime Minister and opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko] We estimate that from 8 to 12% of the vote has been falsified... Democracy is the loser... That is the main defeat of these elections.

Novosti, 1 April

The statement of the mission of OSCE observers... said that the OSCE was of the opinion that the Ukrainian parliamentary elections were conducted "close to international norms and standards, although certain significant mistakes and abuses were preserved".

BELARUS-OSCE RELATIONS

Radio Free Europe, 21 March

[Quoting Special Envoy for Belarus, Ambassador Eberhard Heyken] "There have been very restricted contacts between Minsk and a range of Western European countries. As an OSCE ambassador, I find it one of the primary tasks to overcome this isolation... However, Minsk must demonstrate its interest in this regard and act in accordance with common rules."

Reuters, 28 March

Belarus said on Thursday it would expel the OSCE if the group did not stop interfering in domestic politics, in the latest spat between the ex-Soviet state

and the rights group... "If the group's mandate is not reviewed, we will raise the question of stopping OSCE's activities. How? It's a simple process", [Belarusian Foreign Minister Michail] Khvostov told a news conference.

AFP, 28 March

"It is not acceptable for a state to use threats against a mission representing an international organization of which it is a member itself", said Antonio Capinha, spokesperson of the OSCE Portuguese Chairmanship.

MOLDOVA

Reuters 12 March

Moldova's government, facing protests from nationalists, moved to quell a simmering separatist rebellion on Tuesday by launching a legal case against leaders of a Turkic-speaking minority... Analysts said the government's legal move against leaders of the separatist... Gagauz minority, which makes up about 3.5 per cent of 4.3 million population, was the start of a policy to shore up dissent in Moldova... The OSCE said it was "quite concerned" about events in Moldova, fearing instability on the border of an expanded European Union.

LATVIA

Latvian News Agency, 21 March

Remarks made to several reporters by the Director of the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Gerard Stoudmann, about granting Russian the status of the second [official] language in Latvia, do not comply with OSCE language policy which says that every country is free to choose its state language and preserve its culture, President Vaira Vike-Freiberga, and ex-Prime Minister of Sweden, UN envoy Carl Bildt, said...

Reuters, 25 March

On March 21, Latvian Prime Minister Andris Berzins called for the resignation of an official from the OSCE for suggesting that the country make Russian a second official language. The official later said his "personal reflection on

the issue" had been misinterpreted and that neither he nor the OSCE – a key arbiter of rights standards for NATO and the EU – questioned the status of Latvian as the only state language.

NAGORNO-KARABAKH

Novosti, 7 March

Azerbaijan's President Geidar Aliyev appealed to the OSCE to use all its possibilities to solve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in 2002... Aliyev noted that the Minsk Group has existed for a decade, yet "unfortunately, we have not been able to settle the conflict". The Azerbaijani President said, "We criticize the OSCE fairly often, and I must say we have reasons."

UZBEKISTAN

Voice of America, 7 March

The Uzbek Justice Ministry registered the Independent Human Rights Organization earlier this week... The OSCE said that the registration of the rights group is a positive and encouraging step towards creating basic conditions for the development of civil society in Uzbekistan.

FREEDOM OF THE MEDIA

L'Unita, 14 March

Mr. [Freimut] Duve sent an appeal to Valery Giscard d'Estaing, Chairman of the Convention on the future of the European Union, pointing out that, with the monopoly of the media in [Prime Minister Silvio] Berlusconi's hands, Italy is moving away from the constitutional tradition of Europe and is rejecting the principle of multiple sources of information.

GENERAL OSCE MATTERS

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 7 March

[Quoting former US National Security Adviser] Zbigniew Brzezinski, on NATO-Russia relations] "As a participant in the negotiations between member states, Russia would have the possibility of playing differences against each other before a consensus is reached within NATO. The alliance would thus risk

being degraded to an organization like the OSCE.”

The Guardian, 18 March

[In an article by John Laughland, trustee of the British Helsinki Human Rights Group, which mentions a number of elections monitored by the OSCE] Western election monitoring has become

the political equivalent of an Arthur Andersen audit. This supposedly technical process is now so corrupted by political bias that it would be better to abandon it. Only then will other countries be able to elect their leaders freely.

Der Standard, 18 March

[In an article by former Czech For-

eign Minister Jiri Dienstbier on terrorism and the Balkans] Some states are eagerly trying to listen to the demands of the terrorists. The US representative of the OSCE had talks with politicians and chiefs of terrorists, and not in Skopje or Tetovo, but in Prizren, where they are especially influential.

UPDATE

from the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

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

ODIHR explores continued co-operation with Latvia and Estonia

The Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), Gerard Stoudmann, visited Latvia and Estonia from 19 to 22 March to discuss future co-operation following the closure of the OSCE Missions in both countries. Action to counter trafficking in human beings was identified as one of the areas in which the ODIHR and the Latvian and Estonian authorities could intensify their co-operation.

In Latvia, Ambassador Stoudmann called on the political parties in parliament to bring the country's election legislation into line with international standards by removing the provisions requiring candidates to prove their proficiency in the Latvian language.

He welcomed the broad consensus that appeared to have emerged on the issue, and expressed his hope that the amendments would be adopted soon so that they could come into effect before the next elections.

Expressing concern about the large number of non-citizens in Latvia, he urged the authorities to continue addressing, with the utmost resolve, the “democratic deficit”, which stemmed from the fact that a substantial part of the population was not eligible to participate in elections. He commended the work that the Naturalization Board had accomplished so far in this matter.



Elections in Ukraine reflect progress and shortcomings

The ODIHR observed the elections to the *Verkhovna Rada* (parliament) in Ukraine on 31 March. In a preliminary report, issued jointly by the ODIHR, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly and the European Parliament, the ODIHR stated that the elections indicated progress over the 1998 parliamentary polls, although important flaws persisted. The institutions represented in the International Election Observation Mission announced that they would monitor developments in the electoral process until the results had been certified, and that they would return to the country shortly thereafter for further consultations. Only then would a final conclusion be issued on the extent to which international commitments and standards in democratic elections had been met.

The international observers highlighted several positive developments: the new and improved election law, an efficient central election administration and the broad spectrum of 33 parties and blocs with some 7,000 candidates vying for votes. On the whole, the media had provided greater access to candidates and parties through television debates, free air time and paid advertising. How-

ever, virtually all the media outlets remained heavily biased, with State-funded television giving disproportionate coverage to the pro-presidential candidates.

Several other shortcomings contributed to a general atmosphere of distrust and a low level of public confidence in the election process. These referred to an abuse of administrative resources, interference by local authorities, weaknesses in the implementation of the new election legislation and a campaign marred by the murder of two candidates and isolated incidents of violence as well as allegations of intimidation and harassment of opposition candidates, activists and voters.



Prison personnel in Uzbekistan undergo training

A needs assessment mission travelled to Uzbekistan from 22 to 28 March in the first of a series of activities under a new ODIHR project to train prison personnel in the country. With the active assistance of the Uzbek authorities, ODIHR experts visited several different types of detention institutions throughout Uzbekistan. The number and range of detention facilities to which the OSCE was allowed access was unprecedented. Building on

the information gathered, the team and the Uzbek authorities agreed on a custom-tailored training plan to be carried out in the course of the year.

Alternative sentencing is promoted in Uzbekistan

A seminar examining alternatives to pre-trial detention and prison sentences was organized by the ODIHR with the Constitutional and Legal Policy Institute (COLPI) and the Academy of the Uzbek

inar served as a forum for an exchange of experiences and good practices relating to non-custodial punishment measures among local and international officials, experts and activists.

Workshop held with inmates of women's prison in Baku

The ODIHR held a workshop on 7 and 8 March with the inmates and personnel of a women's prison in Baku, Azerbaijan, to discuss the practical appli-

visit of Azerbaijani officials to Poland last year. The expert discussed the training centre's curriculum and methodology with his Azerbaijani counterparts. In view of the country's recent accession to the Council of Europe, the discussions focused on training in the practical application of European prison rules and of recommendations that had been developed by the Committee for the Prevention of Torture.

ODIHR supports Georgian public defender's anti-torture programme

The ODIHR provided support to the Public Defender's Office (Ombudsman) in Georgia in its efforts to combat police abuse of persons in custody. With ODIHR assistance, the Public Defender established a "rapid reaction programme", which will enable the Office to monitor police stations permanently. A Bulgarian expert on long-term police monitoring assessed the current approach and methodology and provided in-depth advice on international standards concerning ill-treatment and police conduct.

Preventing and combating violence against women is focus of meeting

Violence against women is a common phenomenon in the countries in the OSCE area. A Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting, held in Vienna on 18 and 19 March, provided some 200 government representatives and international experts with an opportunity to discuss ways of preventing and combating violence against women in all its forms.

Hina Jilani, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Human Rights Defenders, highlighted the need to address the attitudes that encourage gender discrimination. States should recognize that perpetrators of violence were often part of the victims' households, she said; honour killings and forced marriages were among the most pernicious examples. Ms. Jilani added that human rights should prevail over religious precepts and cultural norms and that states should put an end to impunity.

In a working group on domestic violence, participants emphasized that the police should assume a positive role in



The ODIHR's democratization activities have been focusing heavily on Central Asia. Above, a human rights seminar in Uzbekistan

Ministry of the Interior. The ODIHR supports non-custodial measures as part of overall reforms in criminal justice, especially in the pre-trial phase and in the case of petty crimes. Disproportionate punishment policies, along with overcrowded prisons and poor prison conditions, add urgency to the need for the effective implementation of non-custodial punishment in Central Asia.

The participants in the seminar drew up a set of recommendations for putting the existing legal provisions on alternative sentencing into practice. The recommendations will be submitted to the Council of Ministers and other legislative bodies that are working towards the liberalization of Uzbek criminal law. They also agreed on an action plan for the training of prosecutors, judges, lawyers and probation officers. The sem-

ination of international prison standards.

Participants openly discussed recent reforms in the country's penitentiary system and the relevance of international prison norms and human rights standards to the realities of prison life. The discussions upheld the principle that prisoners in a democratic society continued to be citizens whose rights must be guaranteed through the transparency of the penitentiary system and other safeguards.

Training for Azerbaijani penitentiary personnel strengthened

Continuing its assistance to the penitentiary service of Azerbaijan, the ODIHR organized the visit of a Polish training specialist to the Azerbaijani prison personnel training academy in March. This was a follow-up to the study

dealing with these cases, that the judiciary should be made more aware of the issue, and that centres specializing in health and social services should increase their involvement in the problem. The second working group, on community violence, focused on the costs and repercussions of sexual harassment in the work place and on ways to prevent it. Post-conflict situations were the subject of a third group, with Julia Baly from the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia describing the means of protecting the identity of women who have been the

victims of rape and other war crimes.

The final report of the Meeting can be accessed from www.osce.org/odihr



ROMA & SINTI

Contact Point facilitates consultations on European Roma assembly

The Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues has played a crucial role in brokering a preliminary agreement on a pan-European assembly of Roma organizations. The exploratory group on the

creation of the assembly held its third meeting from 10 to 12 March in Helsinki. Comprising representatives of Roma organizations, the ODIHR Contact Point and the Council of Europe, the group was established to discuss the “Halonen initiative”, named after the Finnish President, Tarja Halonen, who had proposed setting up a pan-European Roma representative body with consultative functions.

The meeting resulted in a consensus on a representation model for Roma organizations in the consultative assembly, which now seems to be within reach.

ODIHR launches public online project database

The ODIHR has launched an online project database, facilitating public access to a wide range of project-related information and increasing the transparency of the ODIHR’s project activities.

The database devotes one page to each of the ODIHR’s almost 100 projects, featuring background information, photographs and links to articles in the *OSCE Newsletter* and to feature stories, news releases and other project-related documents.

The database can be accessed from the ODIHR web site or directly at: www.osce.org/odihr/projects

NEWS

from the High Commissioner on National Minorities

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

Language and naturalization are priority issues in Latvia

The High Commissioner on National Minorities, Rolf Ekeus, visited Latvia twice in March, starting with high-level meetings on 4 and 5 March with President Vaira-Vike Freiberga, Prime Minister Andris Berzins, and with several senior ministers, parliamentarians and representatives of institutions concerned with language and naturalization.

The visits were aimed at discussing the amendment of the election laws by removing the language requirements for persons contesting a seat in parliament – a process which had been made complicated by the political decision to link it with the desired goal of strengthening the constitutional guarantees for the Latvian language.

The High Commissioner was briefed on the latest developments in the efforts to facilitate the naturalization process and to improve the proficiency of non-native speakers in the Latvian language.

Mr. Ekeus took up the same issues in his speech at a conference on the OSCE and Latvia in Riga on 20 March. He encouraged the Latvian Government to continue promoting the naturalization process and outlined his views on the use of language in education, amendment of the election law, administration of the State Language Law and the importance of social integration.

For the full text of the High Commissioner’s speech, please refer to:

www.osce.org/hcnm

Ekeus stresses support for social integration in Estonia

The High Commissioner held talks in Estonia on 27 and 28 March with the newly elected President, Arnold Ruutel, and other senior officials in the new Government of Estonia, focusing on issues and policies dealing with national minorities. Prime Minister Siim Kallas and Foreign Minister Kristiina Ojuland and other officials emphasized their intention to continue the State Integration Programme. The naturalization process, minority education and language certificates also came up for discussion. The High Commissioner affirmed his continued support for the Government of Estonia in its efforts to strengthen social integration and inter-ethnic cohesion.

REPORT from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

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

Parliamentarians monitor elections in Ukraine

“We are encouraged by the progress made, but the final conclusion on whether these elections have brought Ukraine closer to international standards will depend on the role of the election administration and the judiciary in the post-election phase”, said Bruce George, MP (UK). He headed the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (PA) delegation to the parliamentary elections in Ukraine on 31 March and was also Special Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office. The election observation mission com-

Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in Kiev. Mr. George, who is also Vice-President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, met with the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, Nina Karpachova, who invited him to join her in observing the voting at three polling stations at the Kiev Detention Centre.

PA President Severin visits Algeria and Morocco

PA President Severin paid official visits to Morocco and Algeria from 16 to 23 March at the invitation of their parliaments. It was the first time an OSCE PA President had ever visited any of the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation.

In Morocco, he discussed the importance of the participation of Moroccan MPs in the meetings and activities of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly with the speakers of both chambers of the parliament, Abdelwahed Radi and Mustapha Oukach. He held meetings with the Secretary General of the Foreign Ministry, Mohamed Rachad Bouhlal, and the Minister of Employment, Abbas El Fassi, and other

Government representatives.

In Marrakech, Mr. Severin addressed the 107th Inter-Parliamentary Conference on 18 March. He stressed that globalization should recognize and consolidate two main rights: the right to diversity and the right to solidarity. He also called for a more intensive North-South dialogue.

In Algeria, Mr. Severin was received by the speakers of both chambers of the parliament, Mohamed Cherif Messaadia

and Abdelkader Bensalah. He held meetings with the Chairman of the Defence Committee of the National Council, Abdelhamid Latreche, as well as with officials from the office of the Prime Minister and the Foreign Ministry. In all his meetings, Mr. Severin stressed the importance of security in the Mediterranean area for the OSCE region. He announced that the PA would organize a conference on this subject in Madrid in early October.

Inter-Parliamentary Forum on Terrorism adopts declaration

Nearly 30 members of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly from 11 OSCE participating States took part in the Inter-Parliamentary Forum on Combating Terrorism in St. Petersburg from 25 to 28 March, which concluded with the adoption of a Final Declaration on Combating Terrorism.

Mr. Severin, who headed the delegation, addressed the opening session. Leading parliamentarians from the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Council of Europe, the OSCE and the European Parliament addressed the Forum and special round table discussions on the fight against terrorism.

Mr. Severin also met with the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Council, Najma Heptulla.

OSCE PA reiterates commitment to south-eastern Europe

PA President Adrian Severin participated in the Third Conference of Speakers of Parliaments of South-Eastern European Countries, in Tirana, Albania, on 5 March. In his address, he stressed the commitment of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to work towards democracy, peace, stability, security and prosperity in the region. By way of example, he cited the Parliamentary Assembly's involvement in the long-term assistance

OSCE/Parliamentary Assembly



Bruce George, Vice-President of the OSCE PA, and the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, Nina Karpachova, on their way to observe voting at polling stations in Kiev

prised more than 50 parliamentarians from the OSCE PA and other members of the Council of Europe PA and the European Parliament.

Prior to election day, the OSCE PA delegation held a series of meetings with the Chairman of the Central Election Commission, Mykhailo Ryabets, as well as with representatives of the media, local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and political parties, and with the core staff of the

project, “Modernizing the Capacity of the Assembly of the Republic of Albania”, which had been prepared by the OSCE Presence in Albania.

Mr. Severin announced that the Stability Pact would hold a conference in Bucharest on 5 and 6 June, on the cultural, economic and political aspects of security. The OSCE PA currently heads the parliamentary troika of the Stability Pact.

In Tirana, Mr. Severin held meetings with the Albanian Foreign Minister, Arta Dade, and with the Speaker of the Albanian Parliament, Namik Dokle. At the offices of the OSCE Presence in Albania, he was briefed by its Head, Geert-Hinrich Ahrens, and senior staff members. He was accompanied by Deputy Secretary General Pentti Vaananen.

OSCE PA joins Council on Democratic Elections

The OSCE PA, represented by Giovanni Kessler, MP (Italy) and Deputy Secretary General Pentti Vaananen, took part in the first meeting of the Council on Democratic Elections in Venice, Italy, on 7 March. The Council, administered by the Venice Commission, was established at the initiative of the Council of Europe PA to codify and analyze all European electoral systems and national legislation and to define a code of good conduct in electoral matters.

Also taking part in the meeting were the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, the Venice Commission, the Council of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and the

OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting

Tina Schoen, Programme Officer of the International Secretariat of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, participated in the OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women, held in Vienna on 18 and 19 March. The meeting, attended by representatives of the OSCE participating States and several NGOs, focused on women and their experience of violence during times of peace and conflict, and the problems they face in seeking legal, material and psychological support.

NEWS

from the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

The Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media is located at Kärtner Ring 5-7, A-1010 Vienna, Austria. Tel.: (+43-1) 512 21 45-0, fax: (+43-1) 512 21 45-9, e-mail: pm-fom@osce.org

Freimut Duve sounds alarm on situation of media in Kazakhstan

In Kazakhstan recently, several newspapers – *Vremya Po*, *Respublika-Delovoye Obozreniye* and *SolDat* – could not find publishers willing to print them. A political talk show on Channel 31 was taken off the air, while another channel, Tan, had its licence suspended in March. In a letter to the Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan, Kasymzhomart Tokayev, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Freimut Duve, wrote: “These cases present alarming signals about the state of the media in Kazakhstan”, warning that recent developments call into question the prospects for free media in the country.

Adherence to European Constitution underlined

Special attention should be paid to the freedom and independence of the media in the discussions on a European Constitution, Freimut Duve wrote on 11 March in an appeal to Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, Chairman of the Convention on the

future of the European Union (EU). The Representative pointed out that in Italy, a founding member of the EU, the political leadership was not following the constitutional tradition of Europe. The pluralism of the broadcasting media was particularly in jeopardy because the situation regarding ownership was such that the Government’s executive branch was able to control both the public and the private broadcasting media.

Mr. Duve highlighted the preamble of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, which “reaffirms ... the rights as they result, in particular, from the constitutional traditions and international obligations common to the Member States...” In Article 11, the Charter confirms the right of every individual to freedom of expression. He appealed to the parties to the Convention to ensure the binding force of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. He was convinced that a strong Charter would be regarded as a code of conduct by EU Member States and as an important beacon for the OSCE participating States, some of

which still had executive branches that controlled the media.

The OSCE Representative said he would very much regret it if Italy were to be the first case to be subject to the procedures set forth in the new Article 7 of the Treaty of Nice, which, once the Treaty went into effect, might even allow the suspension of voting rights of a Member State. Article 7 of the Treaty of Nice deals with clear risks of a serious breach by an EU Member State of principles mentioned in Article 6 of the Treaty on European Union, which states: “The Union is founded on the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law, principles which are common to the Member States.” (EU treaties can be consulted on the web site of the EU Commission: www.europa.eu.int)

Journalists killed in Russia and Ramallah

In March, Natalya Skryl, a reporter for the Russian regional newspaper,

Nashe Vremya, was killed in Taganrog in southern Russia. In Ramallah, on the West Bank, Italian photographer Raffaele Cirello was also killed. Freimut Duve sent his condolences to the families and friends of the deceased through their Ministries of Foreign Affairs.

Novaya Gazeta under pressure

In a letter addressed to Russian For-

eign Minister Igor Ivanov, the Representative raised his concern about two cases of libel against the Moscow newspaper, *Novaya Gazeta*, and about the assassination attempt on its journalist, Sergei Solovkin, and his wife in Sochi, southern Russia, on 11 March. A Moscow court has ordered *Novaya Gazeta* to pay some 1.6 million euros in damages to a judge in Krasnodar and to a bank. Mr.

Duve's Office had been in contact with the Editor-in-Chief of *Novaya Gazeta*, Dmitriy Muratov, who was worried about what he considered a pattern of harassment of his newspaper. "Such a high sum may bankrupt this critical voice and does not help in promoting freedom of expression in Russia", Mr. Duve wrote.

REPORT from the OSCE Secretary General and the Secretariat

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Iceland-OSCE co-operation discussed

The Secretary General and the Permanent Secretary of State of Iceland, Sverrir Haukur Gunnlaugsson, met in Vienna on 5 March. During his visit, the Permanent Secretary handed over a letter from Halldor Asgrims-son, Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade of Iceland, with information on the country's efforts to increase its participation in peacekeeping operations, including the establishment of an Iceland Crisis Response Unit. A register of 100 civilian experts is also available to the OSCE and can significantly contribute to the Organization's activities, missions and operations through its Rapid Expert Assistance Co-operation Team (REACT) system. The Secretary General expressed his appreciation for the information and for the kind offer of Iceland to expand its co-operation with the OSCE.

Consultations held in Copenhagen

The Secretary General visited Copenhagen on 6 March, where he met the staff, researchers and interns of the International Secretariat of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (PA) and held



Dr. Jovan Patrnogic, President of the International Institute of Humanitarian Law, presents OSCE Secretary General Jan Kubis with a plaque of appreciation for his contribution to the promotion of human rights in Europe

consultations with Secretary General Spencer Oliver and his Deputies, Pentti Vaananen and Vitaly Evseyev. The discussions were held in the spirit of the successful first winter meeting of the PA in Vienna and the retreat that followed in Salzburg. They explored ways to structure co-operation through such mechanisms as the OSCE PA liaison office in Vienna, which will open soon.

President of International Institute of Humanitarian Law visits OSCE

The Secretary General met Dr. Jovan Patrnogic, President of the International

Institute of Humanitarian Law, on 8 March. They discussed areas in which the Institute could co-operate with the OSCE: training for peacekeeping operations, training of police officers and other activities related to the fight against terrorism. Based in San Remo, Italy, the Institute maintains close working relationships with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and bilateral donors.

OSCE and UN/ECE seek closer ties

The Secretary General met the newly appointed Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE), Brigita Schmognerova, on 9 March. They discussed measures to improve co-operation between the OSCE and the UN/ECE. Ambassador Kubis invited Ms. Schmognerova to attend the Tenth Meeting of the OSCE Economic Forum at the end of May. The Secretary General was scheduled to deliver a keynote statement to the fifty-seventh session of the ECE in early May.



OSCE lessons shared with ASEAN Forum

At the invitation of the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the Secretary General attended the ASEAN Regional Forum Peacekeeping Seminar: Best Practices and Lessons Learned, in New Delhi on 20 and 21 March.

He made a statement on the OSCE’s experience in implementing its comprehensive concept of security and in recruiting non-military personnel, using the REACT system. He also met with

Omar Abdullah, India’s Minister of State for External Affairs.

Secretary General addresses Interparliamentary Forum

At the invitation of the Interparliamentary Assembly of Member Nations of the Commonwealth of Independent States (IPA CIS), the Secretary General delivered a statement at the Interparliamentary Forum on Combating Terrorism, in St. Petersburg, on 27 March. The Forum was co-sponsored by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of

Europe (PACE). Mr. Kubis had separate meetings with Gennadiy Seleznev, Chairman of the State Duma of the Russian Federation and Vice-President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly; Sergey Mironov, Chairman of the Federation Council of the Russian Federation and Chairman of the IPA CIS Council; Nino Bujanadze, Chairperson of the Parliament of Georgia and Vice President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly; and Makhmadsaid Ubaidulloev, Chairman of the *Majlisi Milli* (upper chamber of parliament) of the Republic of Tajikistan.

“The OSCE in Kosovo: September 1999 to December 2001”



OSCE/Lubomir Korek

Life goes on in post-conflict northern Mitrovica, 1999



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