

Special Representative

To:

PA President

and

PA Secretary General

Permanent Council Brief Week 29, 2006

This week, meetings of the Reinforced Permanent Council (with staff from the capitals), the Permanent Council, the Mediterranean Contact Group, the Preparatory Committee, the Advisory Committee for Management and Finance (ACMF), and the Economic Subcommittee, took place.

The Special Permanent Council hosted the address by the Montenegrin Foreign Minister. Under "Current Issues", I did a short briefing on the outcome of our Brussels Annual Session. Delegations did not comment on it. Other issues were – in particular – the situation in Georgia after the detention of a Russian member of the JCC, a high-ranking diplomat, who had entered the country with a visa in order to participate in a meeting, and the developments in Nagorno-Karabakh after shots had been fired on OSCE monitors. The debate on both points was conducted in a heated atmosphere. Russia accused the Chairman-in-Office of having applied double-standards, because he had not condemned the assault on the diplomat, contrary to what he usually does when the other side creates an incident. The Chair established a link between this incident and the closing down of the border that had been discussed the week before. Georgia argued that Russia had not officially announced the visit within the timeframe that Georgia had proscribed in Spring. US Ambassador Finley spoke about the informal briefing that Belarus had held the week before about its perception of the Belarusian elections. One Belarusian delegate, namely the Chairman of the Central Election Commission, had been denied a visa for this occasion. Austria said that the country always asked for an exception to be made from EU travel bans for meetings of the OSCE. The reason for denying the visa had been that the OSCE had not requested to treat this as a visit to an OSCE event. The EU and the US also raised the issue of the condemnation of opposition leader Kozulin.

The Reinforced Permanent Council gave an opportunity to take stock of the debates on issues that are supposed to be put on the agenda of the December Ministerial Council Meeting in Brussels. It also took the decision to recommend the abolition of the Senior Council. The discussion circled around three main issues, reform, transport, and organized crime. Most of the day was devoted to reform. The Chairmanship had distributed a paper that described what the Permanent Council had done so far and what is the status of the discussion. From this paper, it becomes very clear that not much progress has been achieved on most items of the already limited reform agenda.

The U.S. and the UK once again made it clear that they do not see a real need for reform. Russia repeated its well-known positions and also included the issue of ODIHR's election related performance. In this context, the representative quoted from the Parliamentary Assembly Secretariat's analysis of electoral standards and said that the OSCE and the Parliamentary Assembly had never observed elections in 23 of the participating States. He stated that Russia expected the Latvian elections to be observed. Nobody mentioned the Washington Colloquium (only very few made references to the Panel of Eminent Persons either) or other contributions from the Parliamentary Assembly to the reform discussion. I referred to the main points of the Colloquium, expressed our regret that none of the more innovative proposals had been considered, and said that under this aspect the status of the discussion as described in the Chairman's paper was disappointing. I also said that we should cooperate in a spirit of mutual respect, and that this spirit could be shown by inviting the Parliamentary Assembly to actively contribute to the briefing on September 22. Nobody commented openly on my statement.



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Ambassador
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