

Special Representative

To:

PA President

and

PA Secretary General

Permanent Council Brief Weeks 37/38, 2006

This week, meetings of the Permanent Council, a Special Permanent Council, the Mediterranean Contact Group, the Preparatory Committee, the Advisory Committee for Management and Finance (ACMF), and the Economic Subcommittee, as well as in a briefing by ODIHR Director Amb. Strohal for the participating States on election-related activities took place.

The meetings of the Permanent Council were rather brief. NATO SACEUR General James Jones briefed the Permanent Council on NATO's activities in Afghanistan, the Head of the OSCE Office in Minsk, Amb. Ake Peterson, and the Commissioner on Latvian -Russian Pensioners, Lt. Col. Napiontek, gave their regular reports. Under Current Issues, on the upcoming elections in Latvia, Russian Ambassador Borodavkin criticized ODIHR's decision not to send out a full scale Election Observation Mission. Other issues were the death of an imprisoned "Human Rights' Activist," the Transdniestrian Referendum, Georgia, the declaration of a nuclear free-zone in Central Asia, the outcome of the Montenegrin elections, and others.

Amb. Strohal's briefing on his upcoming report to the Brussels MC lasted several hours, with over 20 speakers. I had provided the Chairmanship with a letter in which I complained that neither the Parliamentary Assembly Leadership had been invited nor had I been given the right to speak, and requested the letter to be circulated, which the Chairmanship did not. Instead, I put a related statement on the racks.

The Russian statement, which was largely held in a constructive tone and did not contain some of the most controversial issues, deplored that the Parliamentary Assembly, which was described as a necessary and integral part of Election Monitoring, did not get an opportunity to play an active role in the discussions. Finland and Austria called for a good cooperation. Austria stated that the existing divergences could be solved by a better definition of the respective roles. It also called for a better "coordination" of the statements in the Post Election Press Conference. The U.S., delegation thought that the preliminary Post Election Statement should be a report only, without journalistic value, and the conclusion should be the last paragraph. Italy went much further, asking for the Head of the Long Term Election Team to take the lead in the Press Conference and speak first. According to the delegation, the "real experts", the Long Term observers, did not have sufficient input into the statement, allegedly it is the Parliamentarians "who fly in the day before the elections" who instead impose too much on them. Norway contributed that one should look into the relationship between ODIHR and the Parliamentary Assembly. In this context, the farthest-reaching proposal was put forward the Netherlands. The delegation said that the Head of the International Election Mission should be chosen from a panel of experienced politicians, and the Cooperation Agreement with the Parliamentary Assembly should be amended accordingly, adding that there should be "one Election Observation Mission only, led by ODIHR". This can only be understood as meaning that the position of the Special Coordinator who the Chairman-in-Office has appointed upon proposal by the Parliamentary Assembly President should be abolished, and that the role of the Parliamentary Assembly in the process be reduced to that of a minor contributor.

With only four ambassadors and a maximum one third of the delegations of participating States present, the meeting of the Mediterranean Contact Group once again gave evidence of the lack of interest in this forum for the dialogue with the partners. In the absence of the representative of the Holy See, the Moroccan ambassador, indirectly relating to the Pope's speech about violence and religion, warned the OSCE against once more – like during the "cartoon crisis" – reacting too late.



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Ambassador
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