

Special Representative

OSCE's parlamentariske Forsamling
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Offentligt

To:

PA President

and

PA Secretary General

Permanent Council Brief Week 51, 2005

This week, meetings of the Permanent Council, the Preparatory Committee, and the Advisory Committee on Management and Finance, took place. On Tuesday, the Permanent Council finally approved the Draft Unified Budget proposal for 2006. This is the first time in five years that the Permanent Council has managed to approve the budget before the expiry of the deadline. The budget amounts to 168.2 million Euro, another slight overall decrease, which is due to decreases for the missions in the Western Balkans and the end of the Border Monitoring Mission in Georgia. Central Asia, Eastern Europe, ODIHR and the Secretariat have received increases. The Permanent Council also extended the mandate of the OSCE Center in Tashkent and the Training Assistance Program for Georgian border guards.

The main point on Thursday was the address by the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Professor Manfred Nowak (Austria). He spoke about what he sees as an absolute prohibition of degrading treatment in international law, about the practice of diplomatic guarantees for suspects delivered to countries which allegedly practice torture, and about intended fact finding missions to several places, including Guantanamo, saying that he had declined the US invitation, because for him as UN Rapporteur a visit without guaranteed interaction with inmates was not a proper fact finding mission. He also reported that Russia has responded positively to his wish to visit the country, including Chechnya.

Under "Current Issues" figured Uzbekistan (denial of accreditation for Radio Free Europe, harassment of opposition), Armenia (alleged destruction of Armenian cultural heritage in Azerbaijan), FYROM (granting of EU candidate status), incidents in South Ossetia, Georgia, Uzbek asylum seekers in Kazakhstan, developments in Tajikistan, developments in Moldova, the constitutional reform process in Kyrgyzstan, the upcoming referendum on Montenegro's future, amendments to the criminal code of Belarus (Belarus comparing US, French, Polish, Romanian and Turkish legal provisions of a similar type with its own legislation), on a UN resolution on tolerance, and on human rights violations in the U.S. through observation activities by U.S. intelligence services (raised by Belarus).

All in all, the Slovenian Chairmanship managed to accomplish its term in a situation of general relief about the atmospherical improvements that have been achieved this year. This makes the start of the Belgian Chairmanship both easier than the Slovenian on one side and at the same time more difficult. Belgium is in a better position than its predecessor because the OSCE has a solid basis in the budget. What makes it difficult is that the numerous tasks the Ljubljana Ministerial Council has assigned to it have raised high expectations. Considering that the decision-making process of the OSCE as well as the controversies between East and West about what should be the organization's priorities persist, it will be rather difficult in practice to live up to these expectations. The first challenge will be the extension of the mandate of ODIHR's Director. The controversy about this issue shows that in particular Russia, Belarus and Armenia continue to be very dissatisfied with what they consider to be an illegitimate amount of autonomy ODIHR is assuming in its election observation activities.



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