



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe  
**PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY**

Report on the  
5<sup>th</sup> Annual  
Winter Meeting

Vienna  
23-24 February 2006





Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe  
**PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY**

**PROGRAMME OF THE FIFTH WINTER MEETING  
OF THE OSCE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY  
*Vienna, 23-24 February 2006***

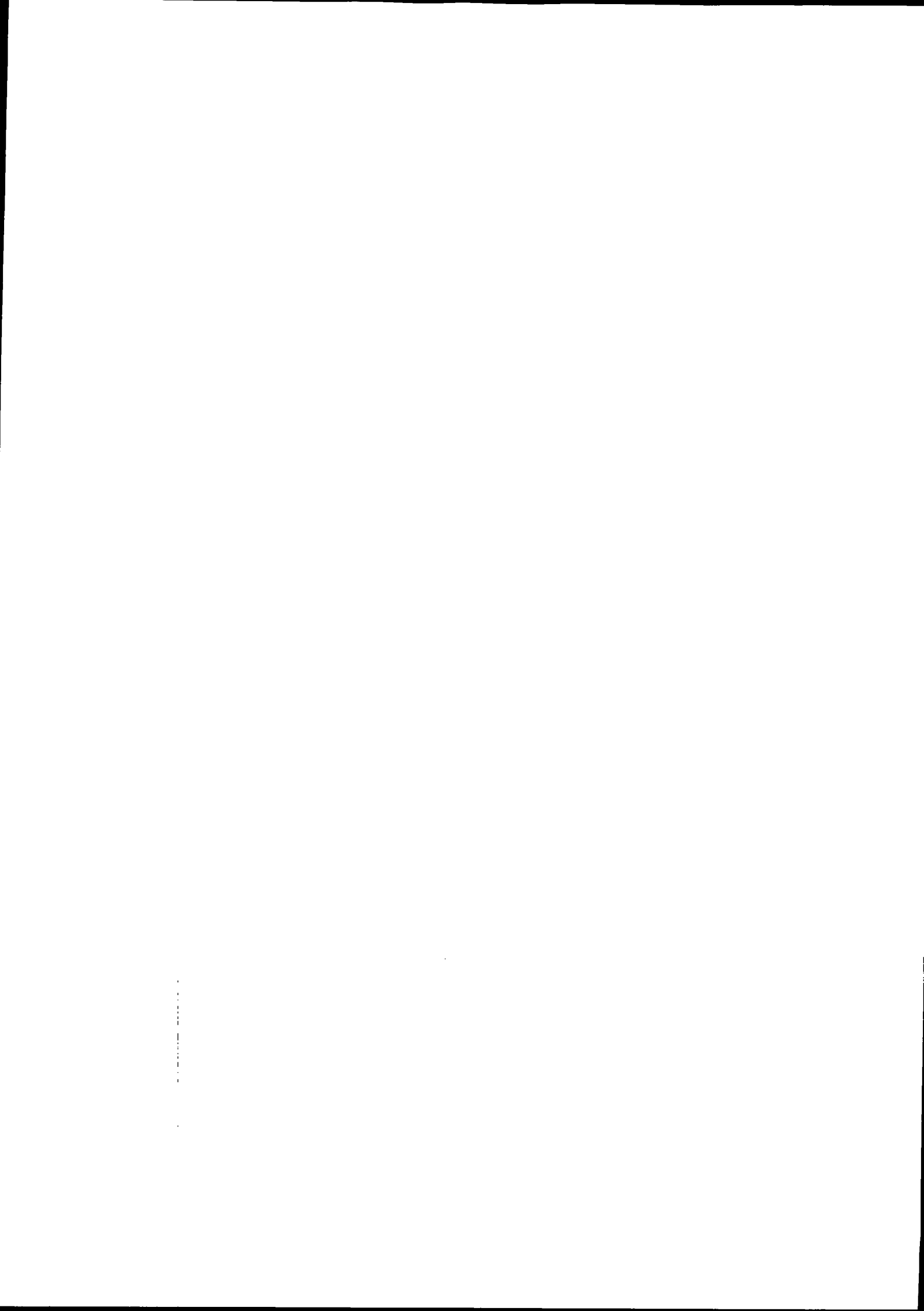
Congress Center Hofburg, Vienna

**Thursday, 23 February**

- 08.30-11.30           **Standing Committee** (Rat Saal on 5<sup>th</sup> floor)
- 11.45-13.30           **Joint Session of the three General Committees:** (Neuer Saal 2<sup>nd</sup> floor)
- Call to order;
  - Opening remarks by the President of the OSCE PA;
  - Address by the President of Austria;
  - Address of the OSCE Chair-in-Office followed by a question/answer session;
- 13.30-15.00           **Lunch break**
- 15.00-18.00           **General Committee on Political Affairs and Security:** (Neuer Saal 2<sup>nd</sup> floor)
- 15.00-18.00           **General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment:**  
(Rat Saal 5<sup>th</sup> floor)
- 18.30                   **Reception offered by the Austrian Parliament**

**Friday, 24 February**

- 09.00-10.30           **General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions:**  
(Neuer Saal 2<sup>nd</sup> floor)
- 10.30-11.00           **Coffee break**
- 11.00-13.00           **Special Debate: "The Present World Crisis Regarding Freedom of Expression and Respect  
for Religious Beliefs":** (Neuer Saal 2<sup>nd</sup> floor)
- 13.00-14.30           **Lunch break**
- Closing Joint Session of the three General Committees:** (Neuer Saal 2<sup>nd</sup> floor)
- Call to order;
  - Report by the OSCE PA Special Representative on the gender issue followed by a debate;
  - Address by the OSCE Secretary General followed by a question/answer session;
  - Reports by the Chairs of the three General Committees;
  - Concluding statement by the OSCE PA President



## Introduction



From 23-24 February, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly held its fifth annual Winter Meeting, in Vienna. Attended by over 200 parliamentarians from across the OSCE region and from partner States, the Winter Meeting provided an opportunity for Members to engage with officials from OSCE governmental institutions, and to exchange views with parliamentary colleagues from other countries on current issues.

The Winter Meeting consisted of two joint sessions of the Assembly's three General Committees, as well as separate meetings of the Committees, and a special debate.

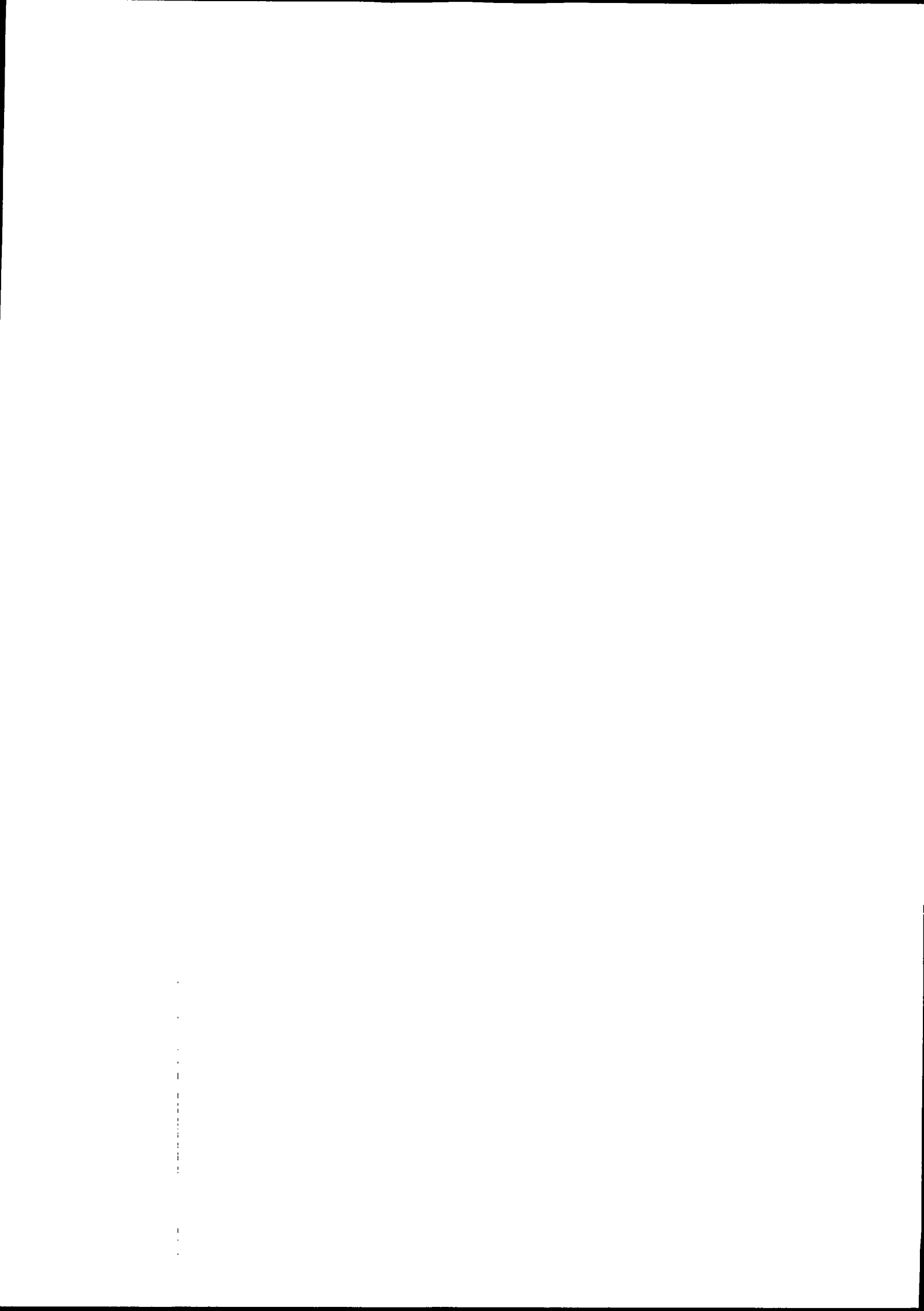
OSCE PA President Alcee L. Hastings opened the Winter Meeting at the first joint session, which was addressed by Austrian President Dr. Heinz Fischer and by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Belgian Foreign Minister Karel De Gucht.

Following the first joint session, the three General Committees met individually to follow-up on previous work, and to prepare for the Assembly's next Annual Session in Brussels, in July 2006. The Committees were addressed by OSCE officials with responsibilities related to the work of each of the three Committees, and heard reports by the Rapporteurs of each Committee, who informed Members about their ideas and intentions for their upcoming reports.

The Committee work was followed by a closing joint session, which was addressed by the Assembly's Special Representative on Gender Issues and by the Secretary General of the OSCE.

Prior to the closing session, the Assembly met for an extraordinary debate on '*The World Crisis on Freedom of Expression and Respect for Religious Beliefs*'. President Hastings had called for this special debate following the controversy and violent reactions to the publication of politically-sensitive cartoons in some newspapers in the months prior to the Winter Meeting.

The Winter Meeting is the second-largest event on the Parliamentary Assembly's calendar, and serves as an opportunity for Members of the Assembly to be briefed on current OSCE developments by senior OSCE officials, who also answer questions from the parliamentarians.



## Standing Committee Meeting



The Standing Committee of Heads of OSCE PA Delegations met prior to the official opening of the Winter Meeting. The Heads of Delegations were welcomed by the President of the Austrian Nationalrat, Dr. Andreas Khol, who encouraged the idea for the OSCE PA to have a special parliamentary debate on

the issue of freedom of expression following the recent publication of politically sensitive cartoons in some newspapers. He called upon all participating States to continue to uphold the freedom of expression, which must be linked with due respect for religious symbols.

OSCE PA President Alcee L. Hastings presented a summary of his activities undertaken since the previous meeting of the Standing Committee in Sveti Stefan in October 2005. He emphasized the important upcoming election observation missions in Belarus and Ukraine, and stressed the role that parliamentarians play in adding visibility and political leadership to these missions.

The Assembly's Treasurer, Senator Jerry Grafstein of Canada, reported that the Parliamentary Assembly continues to operate well within budget and to maintain the highest standards of transparency, accountabil-

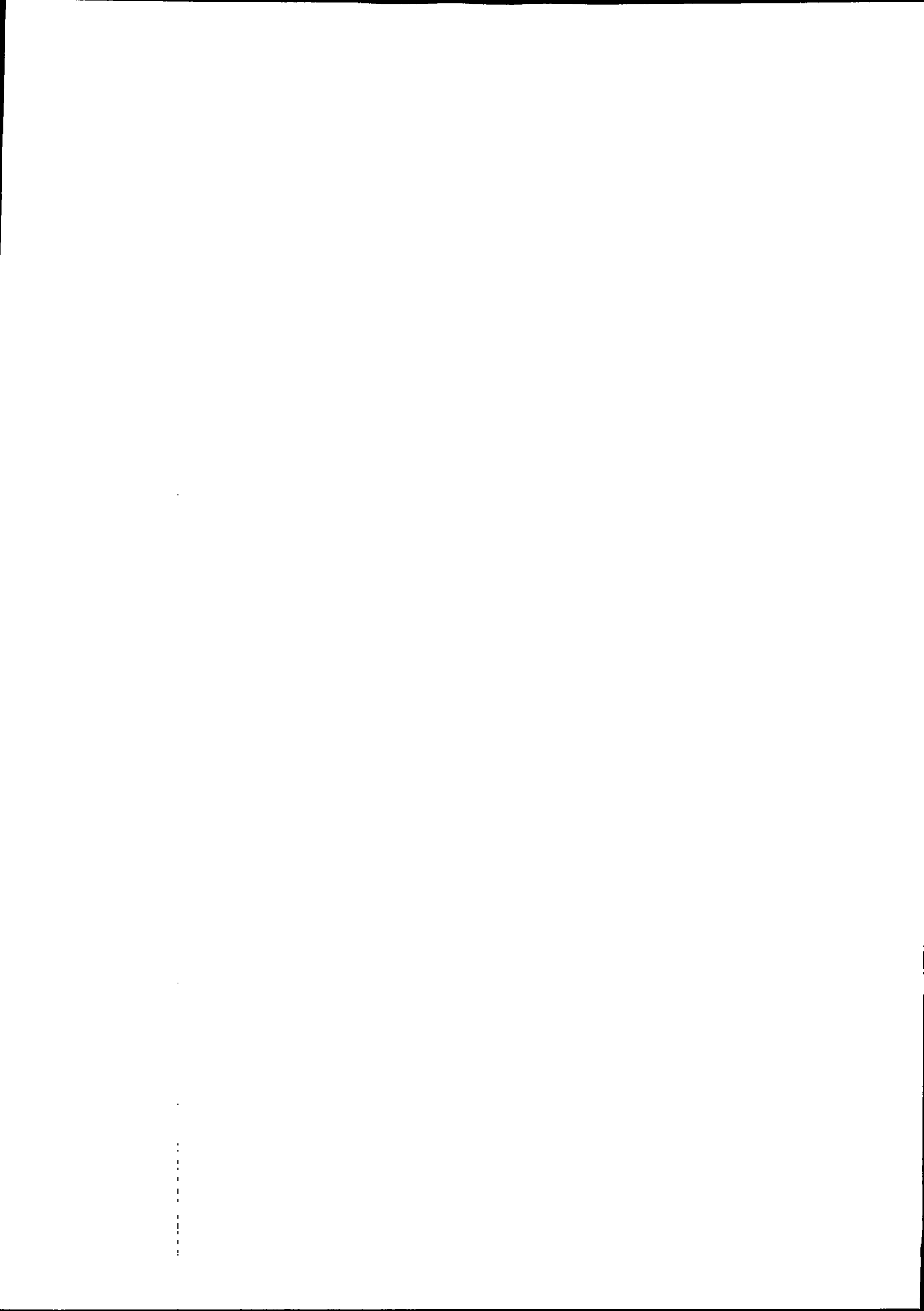


ity and efficiency. He reported that the external auditors again fully approved of the Assembly's financial running in their audit report of this year. After the fiscal year 2004/2005 the Assembly has a surplus of approximately seventy-eight thousand Euros, including annual

reserve allocations, he reported. OSCE PA Secretary General Spencer Oliver summarized the activities of the Assembly's International Secretariat during the past six months. He highlighted the Assembly's bulletin *News from Copenhagen*, which provides a good overall picture of the Assembly's activities, and of the efforts of the many Members of the PA who regularly contribute to the work of the Assembly. The Secretary General also welcomed new Programme Officer Anna Chernova to the staff. After these reports, the Standing Committee reviewed the results of the December 2005 OSCE Ministerial Council in Ljubljana.

Members of the Standing Committee heard reports on the Assembly's recent election observation missions to Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. President Hastings, who served as the OSCE Chairman-in-Office's Special Rep-









representative for the mission in Azerbaijan, reported that despite improvements made in some respects during the pre-election period, the elections did not meet a number of OSCE commitments. President Emeritus Bruce George, who headed the mission in Kazakhstan, reported that despite some improvements in the admin-

istration of this election in the pre-election period, the presidential election also did not meet a number of OSCE commitments. Mr. George stressed the importance of the work of the OSCE in election observation and emphasized the need of having Parliamentarians appointed to lead such Delegations in order to add credibility, visibility and political experience. In the ensuing debate Members agreed on the need to continue the current election observation programme and even strengthen the role of the Assembly in this regard. Members also discussed establishing a set of objective criteria of elections standards and the need for all participating States to allow international observation of their elections.

The Committee was also briefed on the work of the Assembly's Ad Hoc Committees and Special Representatives. Presenting the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on Abkhazia (Georgia), Vice-President Tone Tingsgård (Sweden) provided an overview of the situation in Abkhazia and expressed her regret that no progress has been made with regard to finding a solution. She also reported on her visit to Georgia of October 2005 and explained that she had been in contact with the UN Observer Mission in Georgia as well as the OSCE Mission to Georgia and the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities to gather information about OSCE activities. Mrs. Tingsgård explained that she had recently written a letter to the *de facto* Speaker of Parliament in Abkhazia suggesting a visit of the Committee to the region.

Göran Lennmarker (Sweden), Special Representative on the Nagorno Karabakh Conflict repeated his view that this conflict should not be referred to as a 'frozen conflict' given that several people are killed on the line of contact every year and refugees and IDPs still suffer the consequences of the war. He also stressed the existence of a golden opportunity to find a solution to the conflict through the OSCE-led negotiations. Finally, Mr. Lennmarker emphasized that parliamentarians have an important role to play in resolution of the conflict, and expressed his willingness to continue to promote a parliamentary dimension to contribute to these efforts.

The Special Representative on Trafficking in Human Beings, US Congressman Christopher Smith reported on legislation passed by the US Congress to help protect victims of trafficking. He also reported that research shows that sports events often attract traffickers, who send in more women for sexual services. Congressman Smith urged Members to examine their national legislation to ensure that organized criminal networks do not misuse asylum laws for trafficking purposes. He also encouraged Members of the Standing Committee to exchange information about best practices in fighting trafficking.

Pieter De Crem (Belgium), Chair of the Sub-Committee on the Rules of Procedure, reported on the work of the Sub-Committee, and the Heads of Delegations discussed proposed changes to the Assembly's Rules.

Considering future work, the Standing Committee heard reports on preparations for upcoming events, including the Expanded Bureau meeting in Copenhagen, April 24, the Fifteenth Annual Session in Brussels, July 3-7, the Fall Meetings, which will take place in Malta, as well as the Sub-regional Economic Conference which will be hosted by Andorra in 2007.





## First Joint Session of the General Committees



### Opening remarks by the President of the OSCE PA, Alcee L. Hastings

President Hastings welcomed all participants to the fifth OSCE PA Winter Meeting, and recalled the primary objectives of this gathering: interaction with the OSCE governmental dimension, follow-up to previous PA work, and furthering inter-parliamentary dialogue.

Congressman Hastings spoke strongly in favour of increasing the Assembly's role in intercultural dialogue. Enhancing communication and breaking down stereotypes form an important part of conflict prevention and resolution, he noted. In reference to the ongoing political cartoons crisis, President Hastings underlined that it was important for freedom of the press to be exercised in a responsible and dignified manner, but stressed that nothing justifies the use of violence to express discontent with what had been printed.

The President stressed the importance of international co-operation in the field of energy security. With the advent of a truly globalised world, he noted, the knock-on effects of energy cuts are particularly damaging and complex. President Hastings also expressed his deep concern over Iran's continued pursuit of a nuclear programme, and stressed the unity of the international community in opposing Iranian nuclear ambitions.

Congressman Hastings also called for action by all Members to combat poverty and illiteracy, noting the interdependence of stability and security.

### Address by the President of Austria, Heinz Fischer

President Fischer welcomed the OSCE parliamentarians to Vienna, underlining his high regard for the work of the organization. He reminded Members of the reform plans established by the OSCE during the 2005 Ministerial Council meeting, which would have to be pursued with commitment and creativity in the coming year. He stressed the importance of all participating States co-operating in a constructive manner to achieve this goal.

The President applauded the forward-looking approach of the OSCE, and noted that the Organization has useful tools for dealing with the security challenges of the twenty-first century. He noted the Organization's success in developing confidence and security-building measures, and in maintaining political dialogue amongst States. The Parliamentary Assembly has an important role to play in this effort, particularly through increasing awareness of the work of the OSCE, he said.

President Fischer also took the opportunity to address the issue of the political cartoons that had caused controversy in previous weeks. He stressed that respect for other cultures was becoming even more important in today's 'smaller' world in which modern technology brings people closer together. Fundamental rights, such as the freedom of opinion and artistic expression, have inherent limits based on the rights of other people,



.....



he noted. Nonetheless, violence is not an acceptable option for expressing one's opinions, said the President. Mr. Fischer informed the Members of Austria's efforts in contributing to dialogue among civilizations, and applauded OSCE work on this issue.

**Address by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office,  
Karel De Gucht**

The Chairman-in-Office began by reaffirming the Chairmanship's desire to co-operate closely with the PA, noting that the Assembly represents an important source of inspiration and support for the OSCE.

Minister De Gucht outlined the Belgian Chairmanship's main priorities, which he noted are in harmony with the Assembly's 2005 Washington Declaration. He stressed the need to implement the decisions reached during the 2005 Ministerial Council in Ljubljana, and highlighted a number of activities which are being addressed, including reform, transport security, organized crime, tolerance and freedom of expression.

The Minister highlighted the need to re-establish greater balance in the Organization's activities, and noted that the OSCE's security dimension has not received sufficient attention in recent years. The cred-



ibility of the Organization, he stressed, hinges on its ability to resolve frozen conflicts in the OSCE area. The Minister advocated a close association of the OSCE in negotiations on the final status of Kosovo, given that the Organization will likely play an important role in the implementation of any agreement.

The Chairman-in-Office also noted the critical role of election observation for both assessing the credibility of democracies in the OSCE area, and for the credibility of the Organization itself. He remarked on the reforms that are being discussed regarding OSCE election observation, and announced that he would be deploying 'monitors of the monitors' to oversee current practice in the field. On OSCE reform, the Minister stressed that reform must be addressed at the political level, and that adapting the Organization for future challenges required common political vision, and not simply institutional changes.

Finally, Minister De Gucht highlighted the importance of dialogue on issues of tolerance and applauded President Hastings' decision to place this question on the agenda of the Assembly's Winter Meeting.



**Discussion**

Following the address by the Chairman-in-Office, Members engaged Minister De Gucht on a number of OSCE and related international issues. There was discussion on the issues of trafficking, particularly the re-trafficking of victims, and ways of curbing this practice in all countries. Concern was also raised regarding the Iranian nuclear programme, particularly the programme's long-concealed nature. The importance of independence by OSCE election monitors was also stressed, and there was consideration of ways to improve the Organization's work in this regard. There was also discussion on the OSCE reform process, including the Parliamentary Assembly's role in this. Finally, efforts to find a resolution to conflicts in Georgia were discussed.



## First General Committee on Political Affairs and Security



The First General Committee met under the Chairmanship of Göran Lennmarker (Sweden), who welcomed the guest speakers and Members to the First Committee. Mr. Lennmarker introduced the topics to be addressed in the meeting.

### **OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Rolf Ekeus**

Ambassador Ekeus addressed the gathered parliamentarians, explained his mandate, and briefed the Members on a number of the projects his office is engaged with in the field of conflict prevention. In this regard, Ambassador Ekeus stressed that Members of Parliament have an important role to play in fostering

dialogue for a positive political climate.

The High Commissioner also briefed the Committee on his initiative to commission a study on 'new minorities' and different integration policies being applied within this context. This project is in response to recommendations by the OSCE PA to address this issue, he noted. Ambassador Ekeus expects to be able to present his report at the OSCE PA's Annual Session in Brussels in July 2006. In the ensuing debate, Members discussed the situation regarding 'classical' minorities and the so-called 'new' minorities. Many Members expressed support for the work of the High Commissioner and applauded him for his important work and highlighted the importance of the study that he has commissioned.



### **Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, Werner Wnendt**

Ambassador Wnendt briefed the Committee on the situation in Kosovo and stressed the role that the OSCE is currently playing and will continue to play in the future, in co-operation with other international organizations. Ambassador Wnendt also discussed the ongoing status negotiations and the current political and security situation in Kosovo. Furthermore, he stressed the important role that parliamentarians, particularly the OSCE PA, can play in promoting dialogue throughout the region of the Balkans.







### Presentation by the Rapporteur of the First Committee, Wolfgang Grossruck

Ambassador Wnendt's report followed the presentation of Committee Rapporteur, Wolfgang Grossruck (Austria). Mr. Grossruck explained his intention to analyze the situation in the Balkan region in his upcoming report and resolution for the Annual Session in Brussels, in July. Mr. Grossruck informed Members that he intended to put particular emphasis on the role of the OSCE Field Missions in this region.

In discussing the Rapporteur's ideas, Members provided their input, particularly with regard to the importance of focusing on security in the region, war crimes and including a gender perspective.

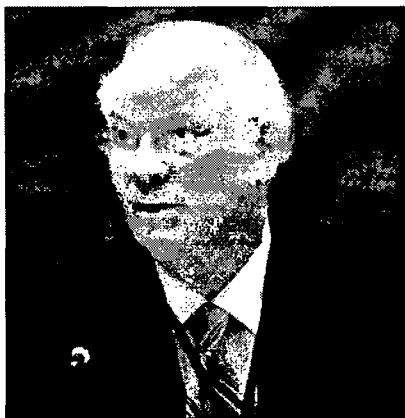
### The Peace-Plan for South Ossetia

Following the presentations by the guest speakers and the Rapporteur, OSCE PA Vice-President Nino Burjanadze (Georgia) presented parliamentarians with the Peace-Plan for South Ossetia, which was initially proposed by the Prime Minister of Georgia. Mrs. Burjanadze provided an outline of the steps called for in the peace-plan and called on all OSCE participating States to support the proposed plan.





## Second General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and the Environment



The Chairman of the PA's Second General Committee, Benjamin Cardin (USA), opened the meeting by expressing the need to intensify and strengthen the economic and environmental dimensions of the OSCE. In this context, he referred to the OSCE Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension, the

first major elaboration of OSCE economic goals and activities since the 1990 Bonn Document. Furthermore, Mr. Cardin encouraged the OSCE to strengthen the role of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities so that he can initiate activities in participating States to strengthen economic and environmental initiatives, and learn from best practices in other states.

### Presentation by the Rapporteur of the Second Committee, Roland Blum

Roland Blum (France), Rapporteur of the Committee, made a comprehensive presentation on the subjects to be considered at the Annual Session in Brussels. He explained his intention to focus primarily on issues of



economic integration at the regional and sub-regional levels. Mr. Blum noted the need for particular focus on such integration in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Within this context, the Rapporteur intends to consider the potential for the OSCE to contribute to economic integration developments.

### OSCE Co-ordinator on Economic and Environmental Activities, Bernard Snoy



Mr. Snoy thanked the Members for the opportunity to address the Assembly, and briefed the Committee on the OSCE's work within the fields of economic and environmental affairs, particularly on developments since the Assembly's Annual Session in Washington in July 2005. He noted that the OSCE works closely with other organizations, such as the UN Office of Drugs and Crime and NATO. Mr. Snoy also informed Members about his office's flagship activity in the environmental field, the Environment and Security initiative (ENVSEC), intended to stimulate regional co-operation through dealing with cross-border environmental threats. Also, in the field of transport facilitation, the Co-ordinator explained a number of initiatives that are under consideration by his office, including projects focused particularly on landlocked countries. Mr. Snoy also briefed Members on his Office's efforts on combating corruption and promoting entrepreneurship among women-owned and minority-owned small businesses.





**Head of the United Nations Global Programme Against Corruption, Stuart Gilman**

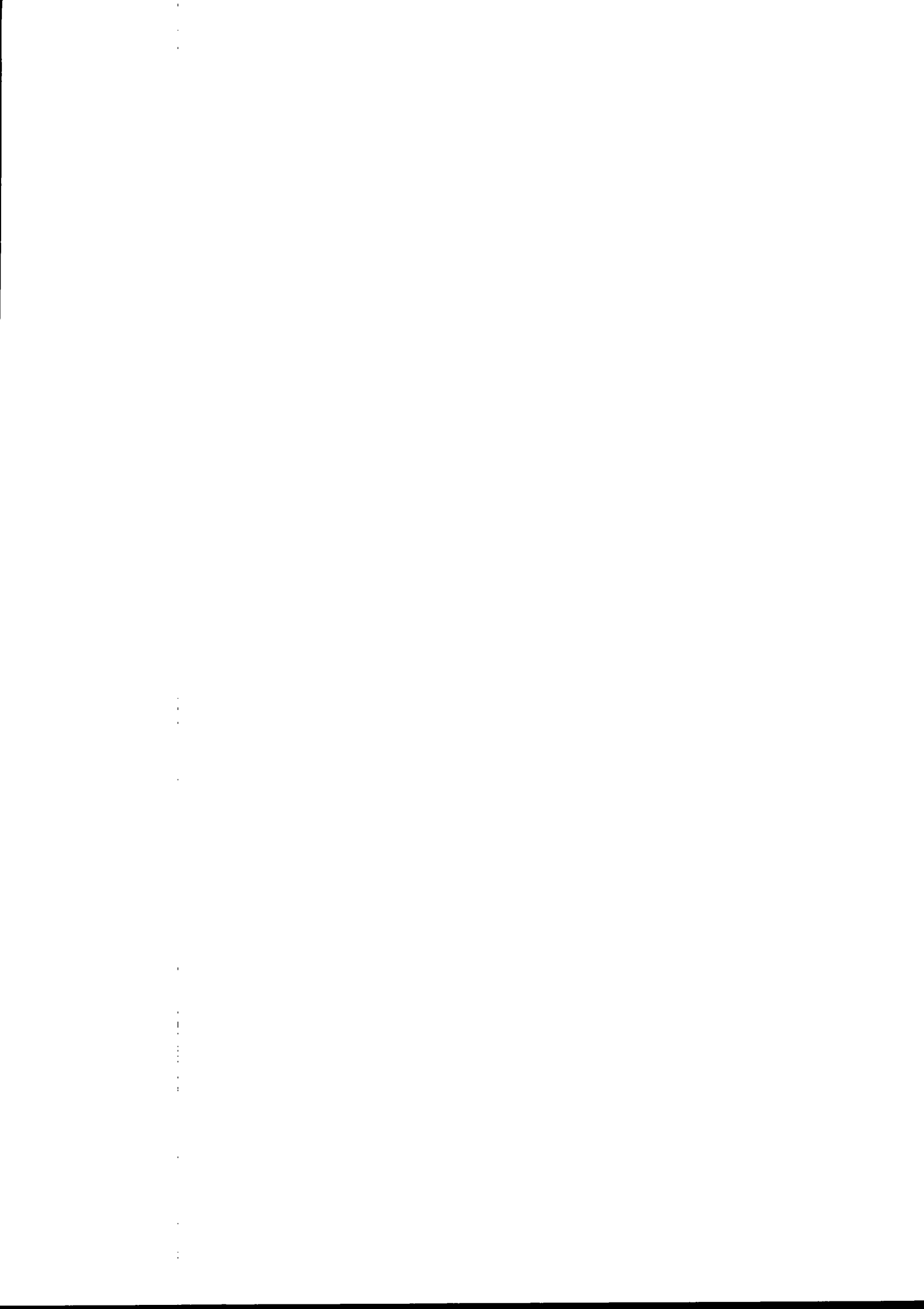
Mr. Gilman, who is also the Head of the Anticorruption Unit of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, focused his remarks on efforts to combat corruption. He discussed the importance of the Convention Against Corruption, and explained the underpinnings of the document, which is based on four pillars: prevention, criminalization, international co-operation, and asset recovery. He further briefed Members on the ratification process of the Convention, as well as technical assistance available in helping countries implement the procedures called for, and opportunities for UN / OSCE co-ordination in this regard.



**Diplomatic Advisor to the International Committee of the Red Cross, Syméon Antoulas**

As follow-up to the Second Committee's discussion on natural disasters, and particularly the 2004 Tsunami, Mr. Antoulas was invited to provide an update on work by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in this field. Mr. Antoulas primarily focused his remarks on the lessons learned by the ICRC following its assistance to Tsunami victims. He explained that much had also been learned following the recovery efforts extended to victims of the India/Pakistan earthquake, and the response to Hurricane Katrina in the United States.





## Third General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions



The OSCE PA's Third Committee was chaired by Cecilia Wigström (Sweden). She introduced the topic of election observation, which had been selected as the primary topic for discussion. Mrs. Wigström stressed the importance of free elections that genuinely reflect the will of the people, and

particularly stressed the importance of thorough oversight of these elections by independent monitors.

### Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Christian Strohal

Ambassador Strohal opened his address on election observation by stressing the natural partnership in this field between the OSCE PA and the ODIHR, and welcomed the PA's past resolutions on election-related activities. He detailed the background to the ODIHR's work on elections, noting that in the mid-1990s, the Office developed a methodology that it has been applied since that time. The ODIHR's data and statistic-based work complements the OSCE PA's political input, he noted. Mr. Strohal discussed the OSCE Observer Code of Conduct, which all observers must abide by, and

informed Members about the 'best practices' the OSCE adheres to, including full transparency, and open communications.

The Director welcomed discussion by the PA on election observation and on the ODIHR's methodology. He also discussed the outcome of a conference that the ODIHR had held in Moscow on election monitoring, which had enabled an exchange of views between organizations on the issue.

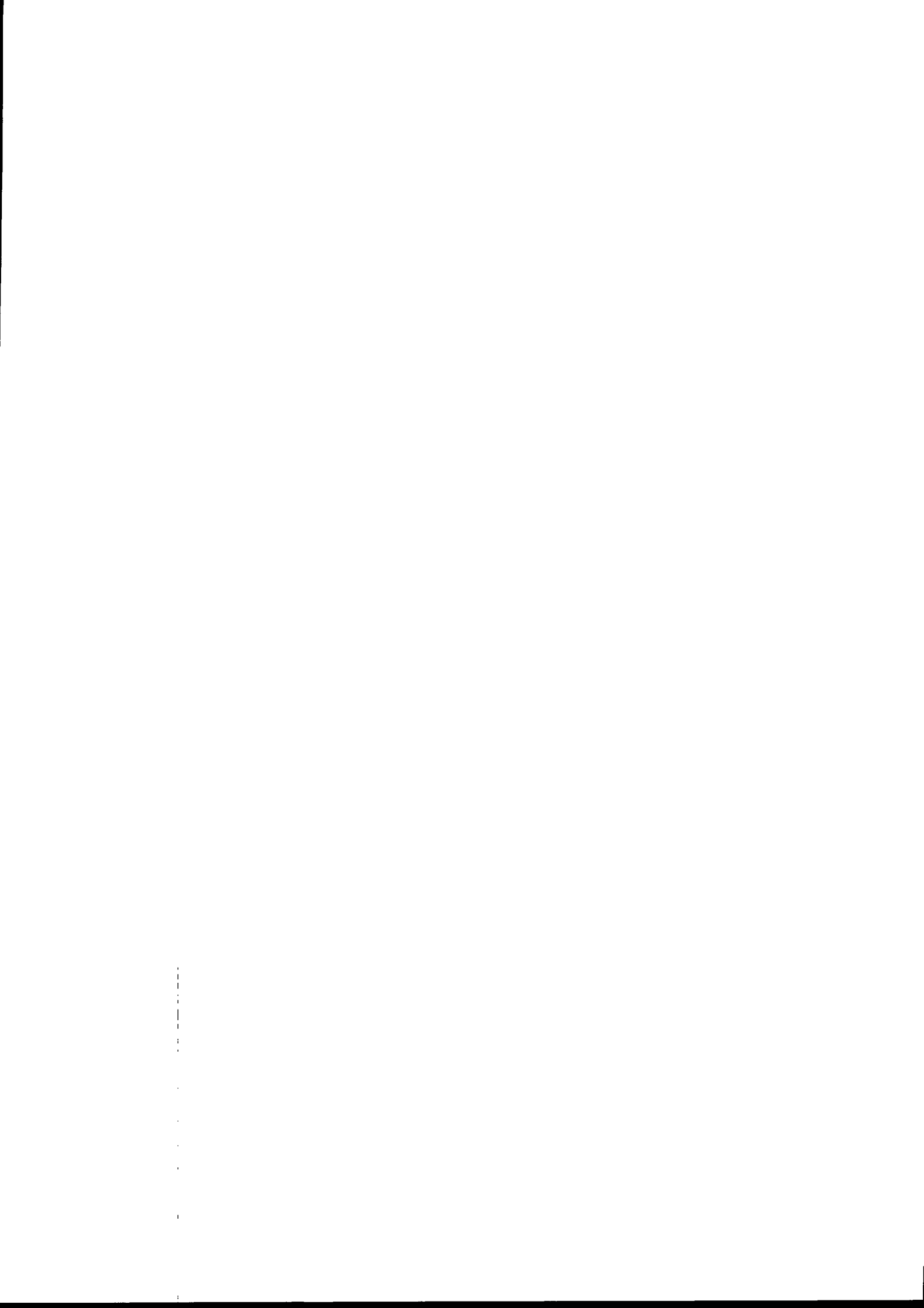
Ambassador Strohal also noted concerning trends which the ODIHR had noted in recent years indicating an increase in cases of deregistration of candidates, pressure on electorates, and biased election commissions in the OSCE area.

### OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Miklós Haraszti

Mr. Haraszti gave a presentation focused primarily on work by his office which relates to elections and election-related commitments. Primarily, he contributes to the OSCE's election-related work by presenting comments on structural media issues in election environments, which can then be put to use in assessments by observation teams, taking into account the context of the campaign.

The Representative also gave an overview of what he considered to be a media environment which is favourable for election periods. He noted that modern technologies, such as the internet and mobile phones,









had added to the level of pluralism of information, which he considered to be the most important aspect. The transformation of state-run television to public television had ameliorated the situation in many countries, but remains a difficult process. Finally, Mr. Haraszti noted the difficulties of media representatives in adhering to domestic campaign laws as a result of the nebulous nature of what exactly constitutes an ‘act of campaign,’ which must be regulated.

and intelligence structures, ‘honour killing’, freedom of religion and the rights of ethnic minorities. The report will also consider follow-up measures taken by participating States in regard to the conduct of international peacekeeping forces, addressed by the Assembly in the Washington Declaration of 2005.

**Presentation by the Rapporteur of the Third General Committee, Anne-Marie Lizin**

Anne-Marie Lizin (Belgium) gave a brief overview of her intentions for her report and resolution to be presented at the Annual Session in July. She stressed that her report would both follow-up on work started by the OSCE PA in the past, and introduce new themes into the work of the Assembly. In particular, Mrs. Lizin plans to address issues related to observation of elections, and how OSCE observation mission can be improved. Senator Lizin will also address issues of parliamentary oversight of police

**Discussion**

Following the presentations, parliamentarians raised a number of points on the issues addressed by the speakers, particular focused on the topic of election observation. It was noted that the OSCE must be willing to clearly speak out when an election does not meet OSCE commitments. Another speaker questioned the transparency of the ODIHR’s work and urged more comparative analysis among OSCE States on election legislation. There was also some discussion regarding the methodology for monitoring media during elections, as well as on steps that should be taken when international organizations reach different conclusions when observing the same election.





## Special Debate: World Crisis on Freedom of Expression and Respect for Religious Beliefs



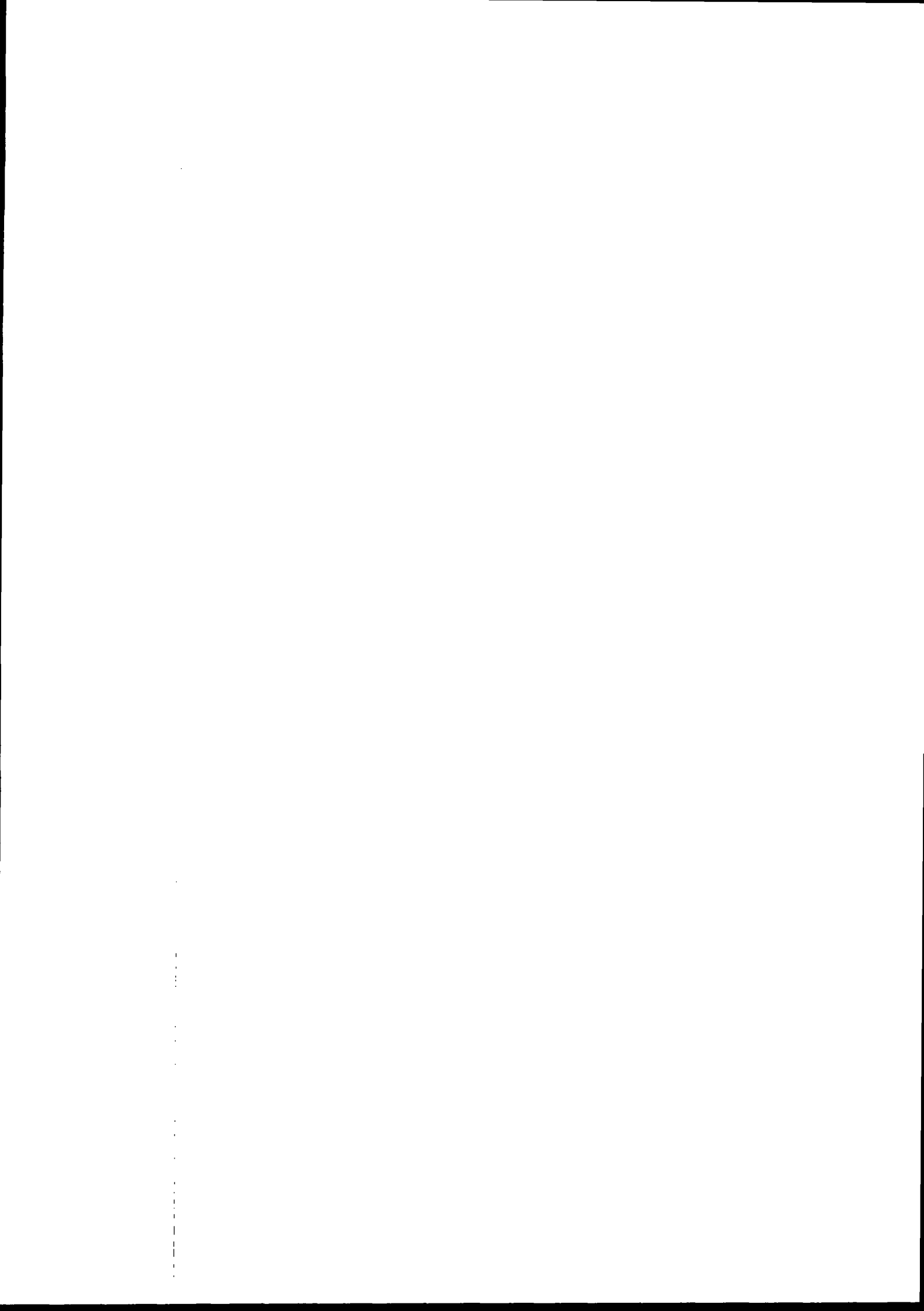
On February 24 prior to closing the Winter Meeting, the Assembly held a Special Debate on the world crisis over freedom of expression and respect for religious beliefs. This extraordinary debate was called for by OSCE PA President Alcee L. Hastings to further political dialogue on the crisis, which had developed following the publication of politically sensitive cartoons and violent reactions to them. Open dialogue was seen as a critical step in finding common ground to overcome the difficulties.

Opening the debate, President Hastings reiterated

his calls for freedom of the press to be exercised in a dignified manner, and for journalists to exercise responsibility in carrying out their important work. The President also strongly condemned the violent reactions by extremists, stressing that violence is never an acceptable way of expressing discontent.

The Special Debate continued with introductory remarks by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Miklos Haraszti, who asserted that it is an editor's right to deliberate about what is responsible and respectful, and called for freedom of the press to be





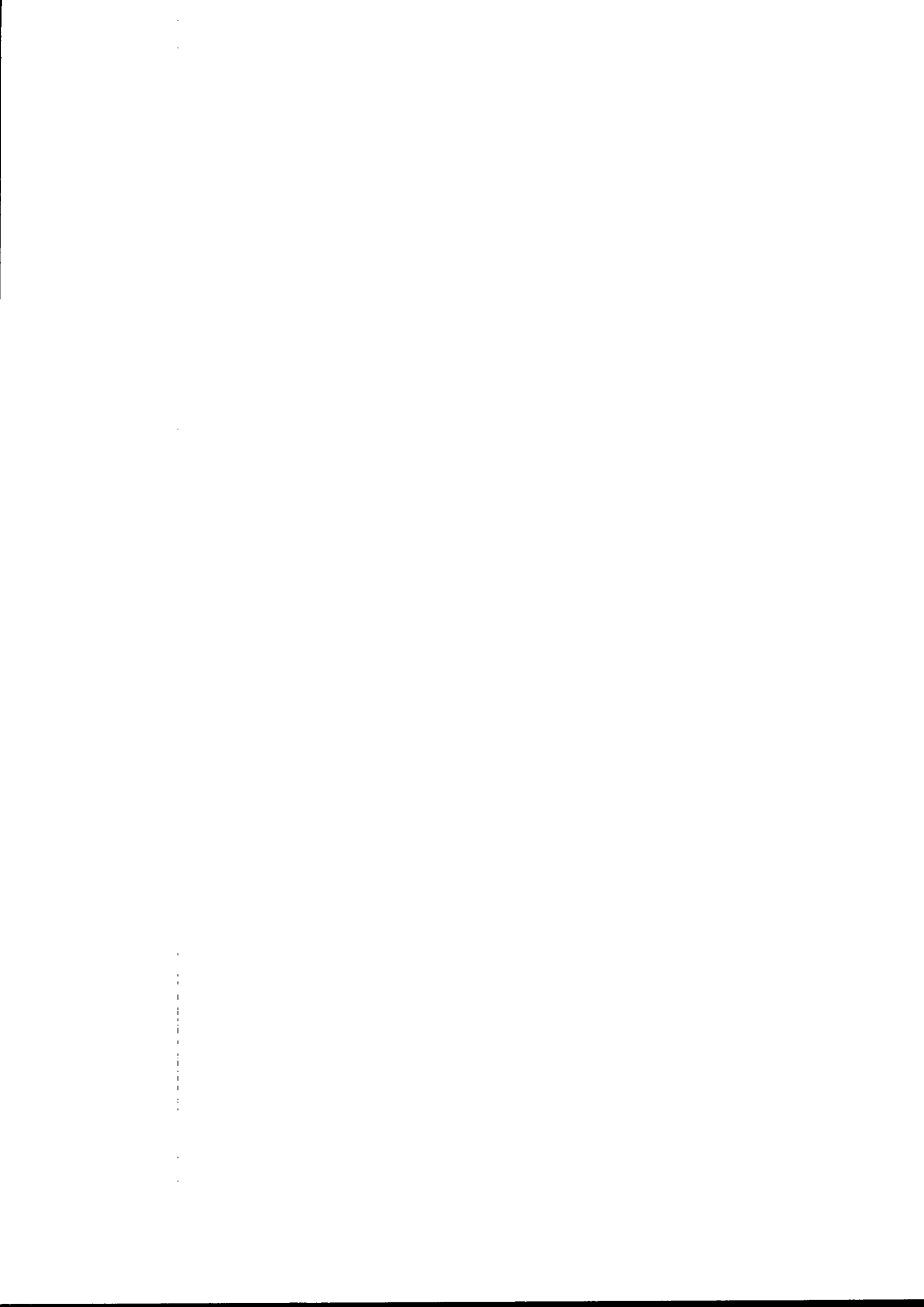


preserved and utilized for enhancing cultural responsiveness.

During the debate, parliamentarians from many delegations across the OSCE, as well as from Mediterranean partner States, took the floor to exchange views. Delegates roundly condemned the unjustifiable violent reactions to the publication of the cartoons, stressing that violence is never an appropriate way of expressing discontent. Many Members also called for exercising freedom of expression with a sense of responsibility.

Other issues, such as the role of the press in democratic societies and the principle of secularism were raised by a number of Members. There was also consideration of blasphemy laws in OSCE States, and Members stressed the importance of improved education on tolerance. Members further underlined the usefulness of debates such as this one focused on inter-religious dialogue, and encouraged further efforts in this regard.





## Closing Joint Session of the Three General Committees



### Report by the Special Representative on Gender Issues, Tone Tingsgård

The Closing Joint Session met under the Chairmanship of President Hastings, and started with a report by OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues, Tone Tingsgård (Sweden). She thanked Hastings for his strong support on gender issues and further thanked US Congressman Christopher Smith for his work as Special Representative on Human Trafficking Issues, particularly for acknowledging the connection between trafficking, prostitution, and lack of gender balance. Mrs. Tingsgård expressed her concern over the transporting of prostitutes, many of them victims of trafficking into Germany for the 2006 football World Cup.

The Special Representative also addressed the issue of female representation within the OSCE and on OSCE PA delegations, calling for more positive action by all those concerned. In addition, Mrs. Tingsgård announced that she and a group of female parliamentarians from the OSCE PA would participate in the UN meetings commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Commission

of the Status of Women. The Special Representative's report was followed by questions from delegations.

### Report by the OSCE Secretary General, Marc Perrin de Brichambaut

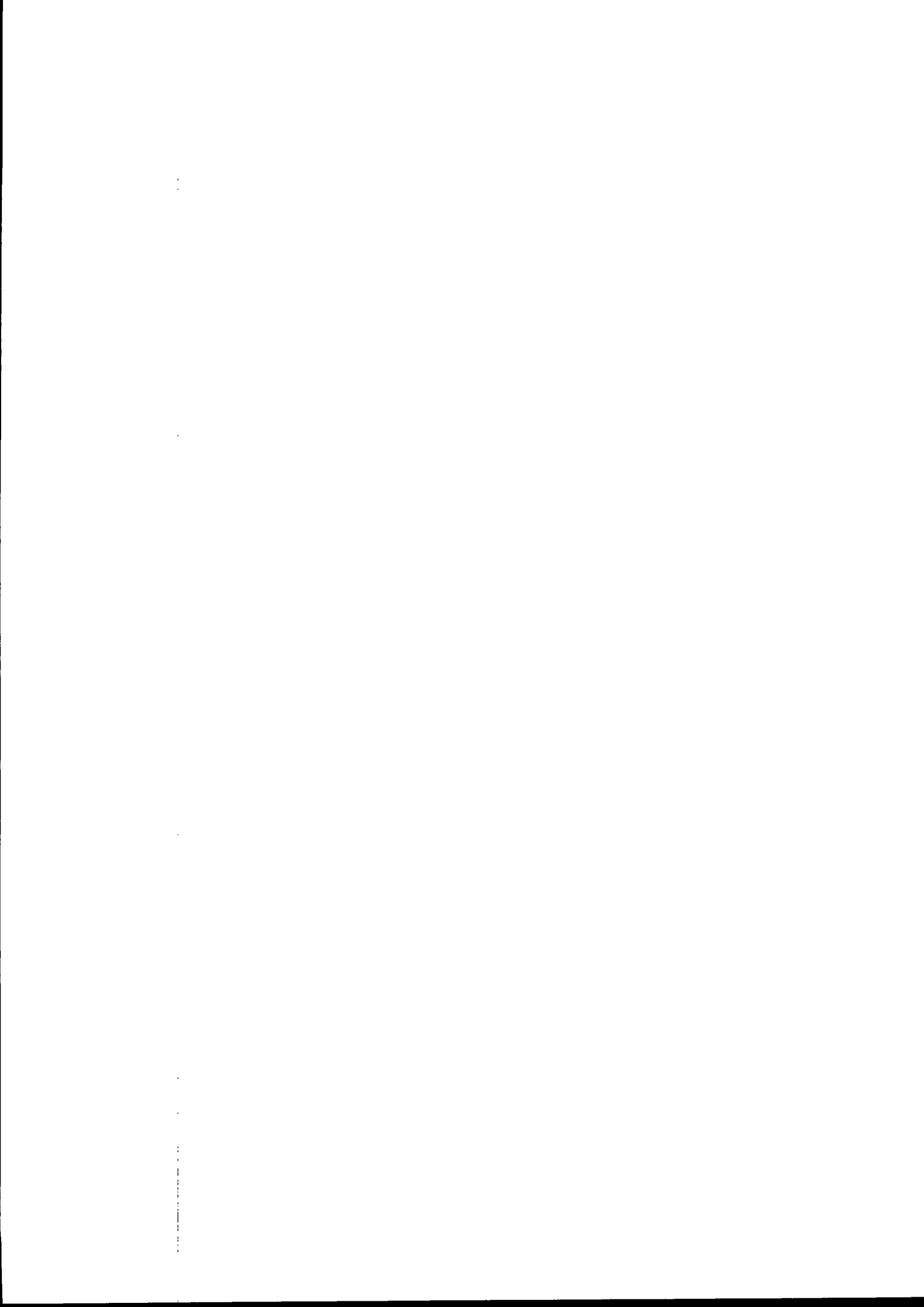
The OSCE Secretary General presented a report on the current situation and projects of the OSCE to the gathered parliamentarians. He informed Members that the OSCE was in better shape than the previous year, after having approved the budget in a timely manner. He noted that the Secretariat was now undertaking concrete steps towards assisting in the reform of the Organization. Regarding gender issues, the Secretary General presented the recently adopted Implementation Plan for the Gender Action Plan, which contains specific measures to be implemented by all Departments of the OSCE Secretariat. He also talked about the OSCE's response to the cartoons crisis, stating that the OSCE will provide input to the UN initiative of the Alliance of Civilizations. In addition, the Secretary General responded to questions regarding the PA's contribution on the reform process and the seven year limitation for OSCE positions.

Following the intervention of the Secretary General, parliamentarians were briefed on the outcome of the meetings of the three General Committees by the respective Chairs, Mr. Goran Lenmarker (Sweden), Mr. Benjamin Cardin (USA), and Mrs. Cecilia Wigstrom (Sweden). Finally, President Hastings congratulated the Assembly for the excellent turnout of the fifth Winter Meeting and called on the parliamentarians to continue the constructive dialogue achieved during the meetings.

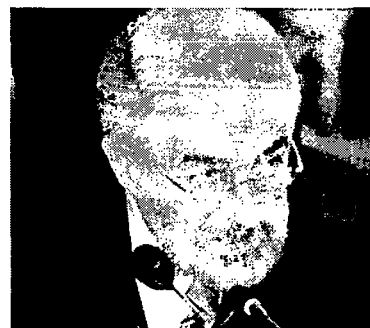


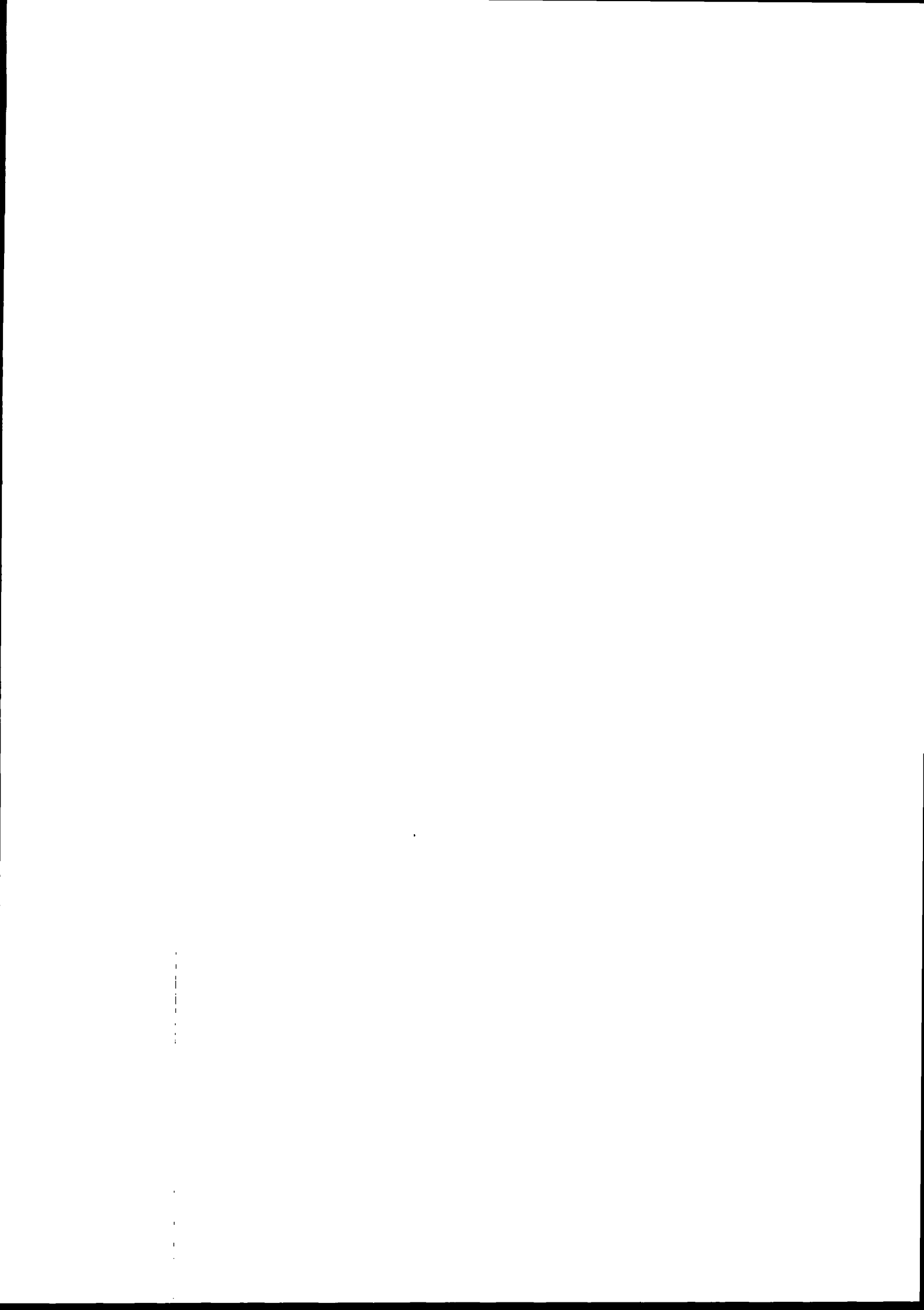
*"Through the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Colloquium on 'The Future of the OSCE', your thoughtful and farsighted contribution to OSCE reform efforts has demonstrated the positive role which the Parliamentary Assembly can play in offering direction to the OSCE. Many of the ideas which you raised have become integral parts of our shared thinking on key reform issues."*

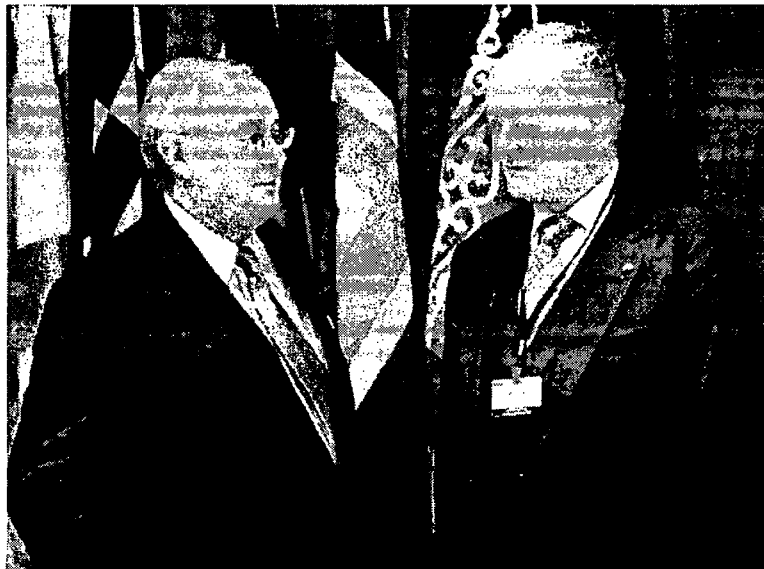
**OSCE Secretary General Marc Perrin de Brichambaut**

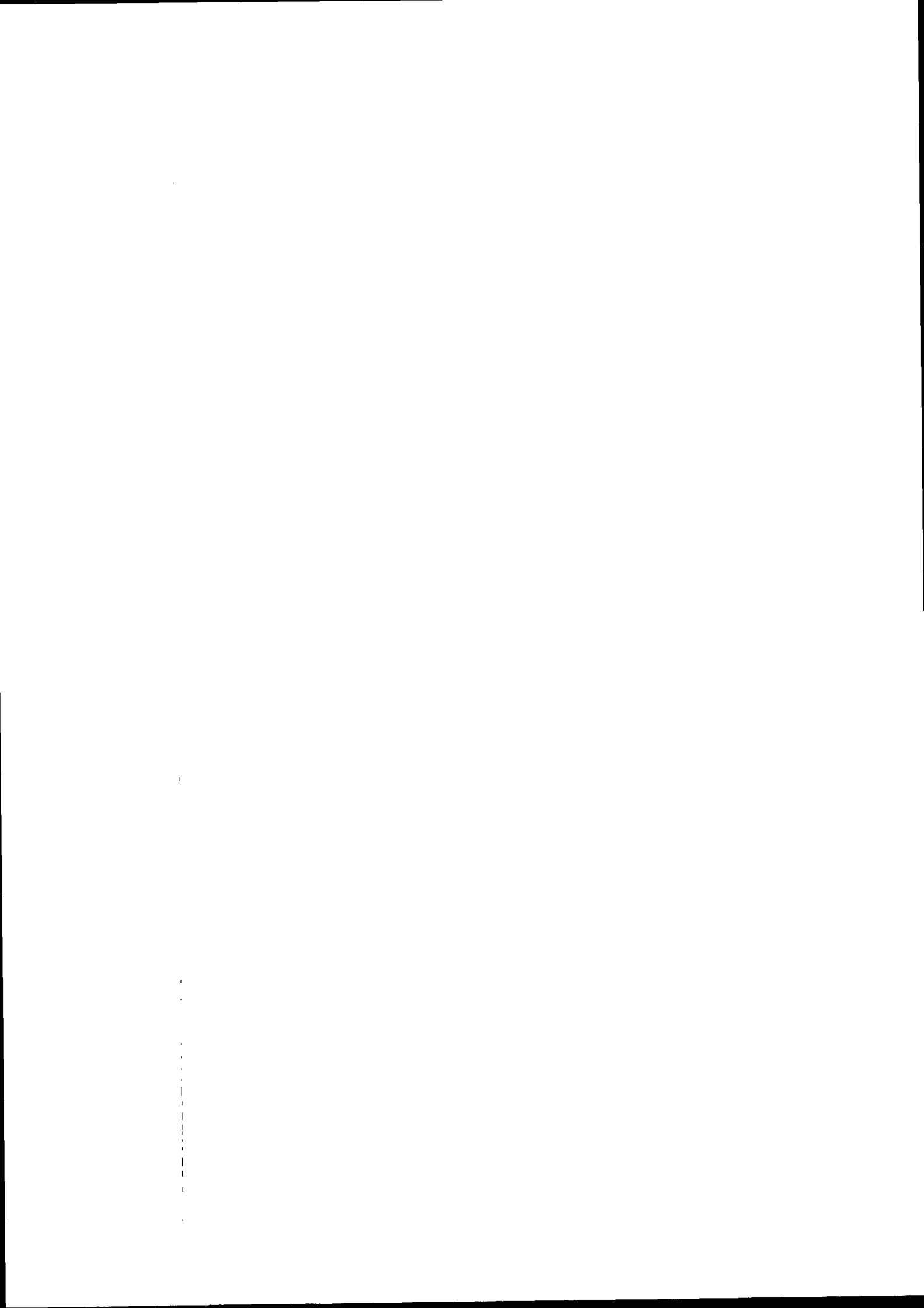














## The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Photo: Philippe Nobbe

The OSCE PA is the parliamentary dimension of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, whose 55 participating States span the geographical area from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

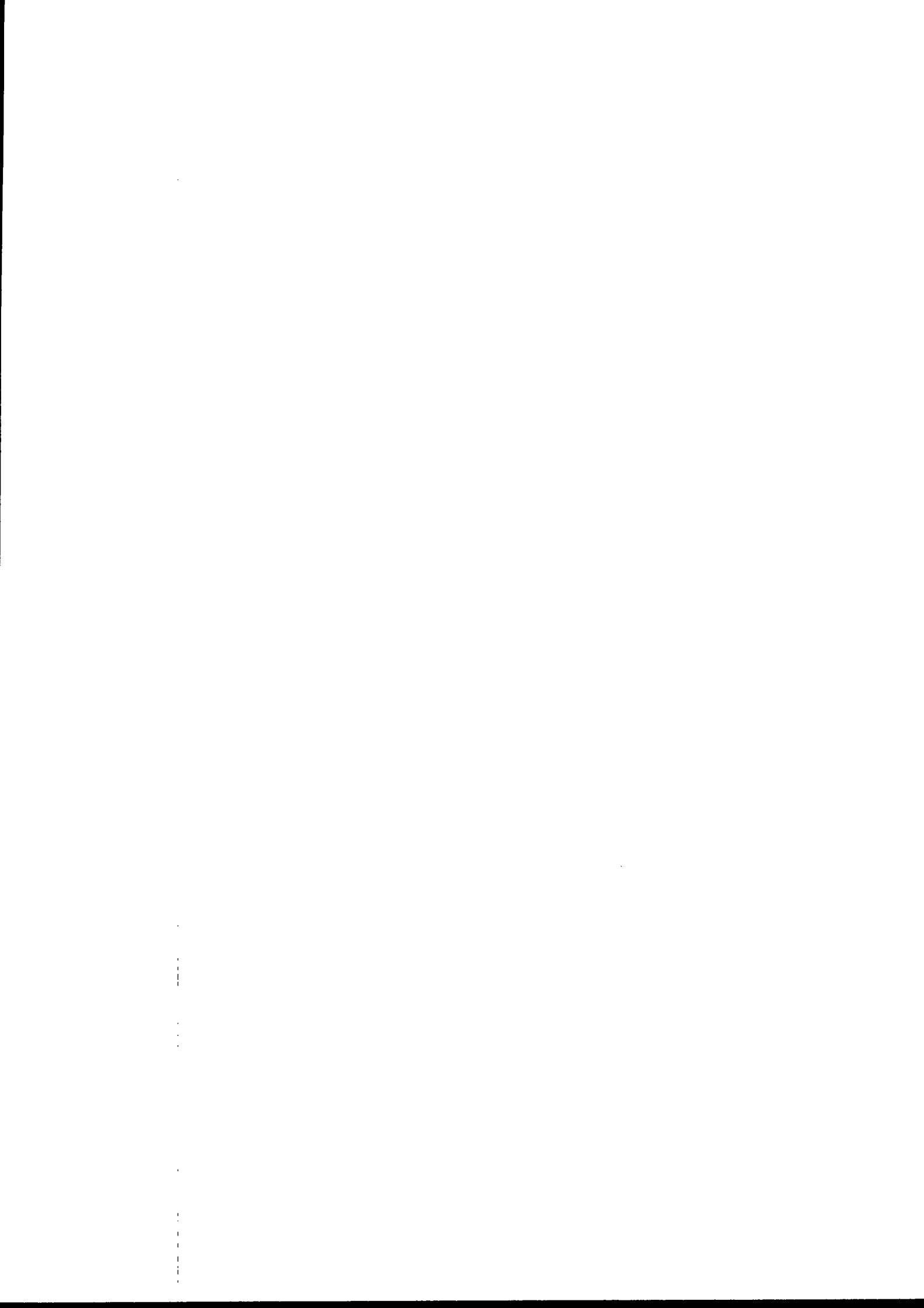
The primary task of the 317 member Assembly is to facilitate inter-parliamentary dialogue, an important aspect of the overall effort to meet the challenges of democracy throughout the OSCE area. Recognized as a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, the OSCE is a primary instrument for early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation in its area. The Parliamentary Assembly, originally established by the 1990 Paris Summit to promote greater involvement in the OSCE by national parliaments, has grown into a very active and esteemed member of the OSCE family.

The basic objectives of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly are:

- To assess the implementation of OSCE objectives by participating States;
- To discuss subjects addressed during meetings of the Ministerial Council and the summits of Heads of State or Government;
- To develop and promote mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflicts;
- To support the strengthening and consolidation of democratic institutions in OSCE participating States;
- To contribute to the development of OSCE institutional structures and of relations between existing OSCE Institutions.

To pursue these objectives, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly employs a variety of means:

- A Final Declaration and a number of resolutions and recommendations are adopted each year at the Annual Session in July;
- Committee work addresses important contemporary international issues;
- Programmes and Seminars designed to develop and strengthen democracy including an extensive election observation programme;
- Special parliamentary missions to areas of latent or active crisis.



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