

Special Representative

To:

PA President

and

PA Secretary General

Permanent Council Brief Weeks 43 - 45, 2006

Over these three weeks, meetings of the Permanent Council (PC), the Contact Group with the Mediterranean Partners, the Preparatory Committee, the Advisory Committee on Management and Finance, and the Working Group on Enhancing the Efficiency of the OSCE (Reform Group), as well as other working groups and two conferences, one being the SHDIM "Democratization: Strengthening Democracy Through Effective Representation", the other one a Tolerance Implementation Meeting on Hate Crimes, took place.

The Ministers, through silence procedure, and after approval by the PC, have adopted the Rules of Procedure of the OSCE. The Rules are of importance to the Parliamentary Assembly, because their provisions lay down the status quo of the Parliamentary Assembly's participation in meetings of OSCE bodies and contain a definition of the Parliamentary Assembly as an "an autonomous OSCE body which is composed of members of parliament from the OSCE participating States and maintains close relationships with other OSCE structures, determines its own rules of procedure and working methods".

The Permanent Council was addressed by the Prime Minister of Georgia Zurab Nogaideli, and the Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan Kassymzhomart Tokaev. The U.S. reiterated its position that 2009 is not an appropriate time for a Kazakh chairmanship, and suggested a target of 2011 instead. The Permanent Council also heard reports by Director Strohal on the HDIM in Warsaw, by Ambassador Vikki on the work of the mission in Kazakhstan, by the three Personal Representatives of the Chairman-in-Office on tolerance issues, and by the new Representative on Combating Trafficking in Human beings, Finnish Parliamentarian Eva Biaudet. Under "Current Issues", The PC debated the following items: the Referendum on Constitution in Serbia, the "People's Council" in Turkmenistan, the Referendum in South Ossetia, sentences against Belarusian Human Rights Activists, Moldova, and local government in Kazakhstan.

The Advisory Committee on Management and Finance has continued its budget discussions. Russia again is calling for a zero growth, which is the main contentious point in discussions about the budgets of field missions that have not offered a zero growth budget or even a decrease. ODIHR is asking for an additional €1.5 million Euros. The European Union, as well as Norway, has already accepted the requested 16% increase in the election activities budget.

The focus of discussions in these weeks was again on the two extensive meetings of the Reform Group, which met at ambassadorial level to discuss draft decisions on reform issues that might be put before the Ministerial Council (MC). On the legal status of the organization, there is a slight chance that the MC will agree on setting up a group which will be tasked with drafting a convention, most probably exclusively on privileges and immunities. It also seems that the negotiations on the installation of a system of three committees corresponding to the three dimensions on a trial basis might be close to consensus, with one country still blocking, as it blocks any increase of contracted posts substituting seconded positions. So far, there is no consensus on the format of conferences, on thematic missions, on the non-family status of missions, on strengthening the Secretariat, or on appointing the Head of the Conflict Prevention Center as a Chair for the meetings of Heads of Missions.

Finally, we have received a copy of a study by the CORE Institute, prepared on request by the Swiss, on prospects for a human rights monitoring mechanism (attached). The study lists four possible options, one of them including the PA and ODIHR (the HDIM), another one giving this role exclusively to the Parliamentary Assembly.



Andreas Nothelle
Ambassador
November 14, 2006