

Special Representative

To:

PA President

and

PA Secretary General

Permanent Council Brief Week 20/21, 2007

During these two weeks we participated in meetings of the Permanent Council, the Forum for Security Cooperation, the Mediterranean Contact Group, the PrepCom, the Permanent Council Committees, the Working Group on Legal Status and Immunities, an Anti-Trafficking Conference, and in an informal briefing by ODIHR Director Ambassador Strohal on election related issues. I also took part in the observation of the Armenian Elections.

The Permanent Council took a decision on the agenda and on organizational modalities for the 2007 Annual Security Review Conference (ASRC) and saw reports by the Heads of the missions to Kazakhstan, Ambassador Vikki, and to Ashgabat, Amb. Djikic.

The **Armenian elections** figured first under "Current Issues". All delegations expressed more or less the same, namely praise for the "step forward", praise for the cooperation between parliamentary assemblies and ODIHR, and praise for the participation of a large Russian component. Russia was pleased that the International Election Observation Mission (IEOM)-statement was generally in line with the CIS's. This cannot conceal, though, that the post election statement – because of the resistance of ODIHR, and contrary to what had been agreed last year – did not reflect that the OSCE election observation is a joint undertaking by the PA and ODIHR who operate on the basis of the Cooperation Agreement.

This week, and the next week, Special PCs will be addressed by the Foreign Ministers of Russia, Lavrov, and of the U.S.A, Rice.

Briefing by Amb. Strohal on election related issues

The original intention of the briefing was to inform about the new Long Term Observer Handbook, recently published by the ODIHR. In the light of the complaints of Russia and others about ODIHR's alleged failure to comply with the relevant Ministerial Council Decision from Brussels, ODIHR also gave a detailed account of what it had done to implement this decision. The fact that this was done only orally in this meeting, instead of in the Permanent Council on the basis of written reports, was again commented upon critically by Russia and others.

Working Group on Legal Status and Immunities

Upon request from the Working Group, the OSCE Legal Services have delivered an expert opinion saying that in spite of the fact that this term is often used in OSCE documents, the Parliamentary Assembly is not an OSCE institution. For many, this is a matter of principle. They see the Parliamentary Assembly as something outside of the "real" OSCE, and they believe that the Parliamentary Assembly's involvement should be strictly limited to inter-parliamentary dialogue. Any interference with the work of the executive branch, even in the format of established procedures like our dialogue on the budget, is seen almost as a perversion. My efforts to include the Parliamentary

Assembly in the text of the draft convention and my proposal to list it along with the institutions are seen as attempts to “change the character of the (inter-governmental) organization” (Belgium) and to misuse the Convention as a “Trojan Horse” for this purpose (Italy).

The **Danish Delegation**, with the support of Armenia, but opposed by Germany and others, reintroduced its proposal of an Article extending privileges and immunities to the Parliamentary Assembly Secretariat and to Parliamentarians when traveling abroad on behalf of the OSCE.

The **Mediterranean Contact Group** conducted an interesting discussion on the basis of a report by the Ambassador of Israel on minorities in his country. However, while the preparations for this year’s Mediterranean Seminar are progressing, there is still no solution on the issue of the venue. The reason behind it is a controversy about an invitation by Israel that wants to host this or one of the next conferences, or at least ensure that a mechanism like a rotating system ensures that it will be the host in the foreseeable future.



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