

Special Representative

To:

PA President

and

PA Secretary General

Permanent Council Brief Week 7, 2008

During this week, meetings of the Permanent Council, the Contact Group with the Asian Partners, the PrepCom and of other committees took place.

The Permanent Council conducted a short discussion on Current Issues, including one on the Death Penalty in Belarus. It did not take any decisions. Serbia requested a Special Permanent Council on Kosovo to be addressed by the Serbian Foreign Minister on Tuesday next. Italian ambassador Bascone informed about the upcoming elections in Italy, informing the PC that he had written a letter to ODIHR inviting this institution to observe the elections on April 13/14.

Discussions on the succession of ODIHR Director Amb. Strohal will start soon. The list of candidates comprises former PA Vice President Barbara Haering (Switzerland) and Senator De Donnea, head of the Belgian Parliamentary Assembly delegation, former/present Permanent Council ambassadors Lenarcic (Slovenia), Bascone (Italy), Orhün (Turkey), as well as Amb. Avierinos from the Greek Foreign Ministry. In first reactions, Vienna diplomats stated the obvious: They know the parliamentarians less than they know their colleagues. Some seem to consider this as speaking against the candidates who are not diplomats.

In the Human Dimension Committee as well as in the Third Committee, in spite of a compromise proposal by the Chairmanship, no agreement could be reached on this year's Human Rights agenda of the OSCE. The main contentious issue remains the Russian and Belarusian request to discuss election monitoring in a special Human Dimension Meeting, whereas the countries West of Vienna, in particular the U.S., remain hesitant to discuss observation, as opposed to the implementation of Commitments by participating States.

The Asian Contact Group is still trying to find meaningful ways of enhancing cooperation between the partners and the OSCE.

The situation on the draft budget remains unchanged. 24 participating States have made early payments so that the "provisional bill" (50% of the assessed contributions) has been paid by 62%, and for now continuity of the work of the organization is secured.

I also participated in an International Parliamentary Forum on the Fight against Human Trafficking on February 12, 2008. The event was organized by the IPU and the Austrian Nationalrat.



Andreas Nothelle
Ambassador
February 15, 2008