

Special Representative

To:

PA President

and

PA Secretary General

July 21, 2008

Permanent Council Brief Week 29, 2008

During this week, meetings of the Permanent Council and several subcommittees took place. The Finnish Chairmanship organized an informal event in order for me to present the results from our Astana Annual Session.

The Permanent Council took no decisions. The main points on the Permanent Council agenda were Georgia - in a special meeting - and the address by the French Minister for Foreign Affairs Bernard Kouchner as representative of the chairmanship of the European Union. Under "Current Issues", I made a brief statement on the results of the Astana Annual Session. The delegations of Ukraine, the Russian Federation and Turkey replied, focusing on the discussion the PA had on the Holodomor. While Ukraine explained its motives and thanked the PA for having passed the respective resolution, Russia voiced concern about the attempts by Ukraine to declare, what had been criminal action of a totalitarian regime, genocide. Like Russia, Turkey said that historic events should be left up to the historians and not be made subject of political decisions. In addition, Turkey said that the resolution contradicted another part of the Astana declaration which calls for joined history commissions.

The informal briefing stretched over 90 minutes and highlighted the main issues dealt with in all resolutions contained in the Astana document. Five delegations took the floor, in addition to the chairmanship. The main thrust of the questions and comments was criticism of the language used in the resolutions and in particular in the resolution on the OSCE reform. The Italian delegation said that the PA, if it wanted to be taken seriously, should focus more on the issues dealt with by the OSCE and avoid requests and taskings to the governmental side, which had no legal basis. The delegation specifically referred to resolutions passed in the Second Dimension, which left the scope of the OSCE agenda. Germany and the USA made remarks of a similar nature. The contents of the resolutions were not commented by delegations.

The ambassadors of Lithuania and of Canada are leaving Vienna. They used the opportunity to refer to the upcoming meetings of the PA in their countries. The Lithuanian ambassador also commended the good cooperation he had had with the PA.

On the issue of the PA's exclusion from the ambassadorial retreat I have heard rumors that a few delegations refused to participate if the PA representative is in the room. Presumably, this is linked to their criticism of PA activities like the talks with the CIS Parliamentary Assembly. I personally think that some ambassadors are generally unhappy with the presence of a Parliamentary Assembly "spy" in their meetings. This uneasiness is a reflection of the resistance I faced occurred when first coming to Vienna in 2003. The fact that I resorted to the support of parliamentarians in order to change the attitude of some delegations on vital issues like the draft convention on privileges and immunities, or election observation, is certainly not appreciated. Unfortunately, interventions by parliamentarians with their foreign ministers are the only instrument the PA can use to influence the negotiations in Vienna. This is also true in this case.



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Ambassador