

## Special Representative

To:

PA President

and

PA Secretary General

### *Permanent Council Brief Weeks 3/4, 2009*

These two weeks marked the beginning of the Greek Chairmanship. Meetings of the Permanent Council, the FSC, the Preparatory Committee and the Human Dimension Committee, as well as the Annual Heads of Missions' Meeting and the first part of the Annual Economic Forum (this time on Migration), took place. The PA was well represented in all events, as has been reported in the News from Copenhagen.

Already the first meeting of the PrepCom, which had been expected to be routine turned out to be exciting. Instead of extending the terms of the three Personal Representatives of the CiO on Tolerance Issues, Weisskirchen, Orhun and Crickley, the Greek Chairmanship announced the (already implemented) appointment of three new representatives. Most everybody was extremely surprised, including the three countries whose nationals the previous representatives are. Turkey in particular vehemently protested against the lack of transparency and consultation, in which it also saw a violation of the Rules of Procedure. The new Personal Representatives are Rabbi Andrew Baker, USA, (on "Combating Anti-Semitism in the OSCE region"), Ambassador Vyacheslav Gizzatov, Kazakhstan (on "Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims") and the the EP-Parliamentarian Mario Mauro, Italy (on "Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, also focusing on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians and Members of Other Religions").

The Chairmanship has also appointed the Chairs of the three Permanent Council Committees (dealing with the same issues as those of the Parliamentary Assembly): Amb. Dr. György Molnár, Hungary, for the Security Committee, Amb. Cornel Feruta, Romania, for the Economic and Environmental Committee and Amb. Renatas Norkus, Lithuania, who will chair the Human Dimension Committee. The first meeting of the latter has taken place, discussing its working program for the year, which will include further work on elections/election observation, mentioning – in this context – the cooperation with the Parliamentary Assembly. Russia requested to have another seminar on the issue of election observation, preferably again in July. Another dominant issue will be rule of law.

In the first regular Permanent Council Meeting, the Special Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on protracted conflicts, Ambassador Charalampos Christopoulos, reported about the efforts of the Greek Chairmanship to come to solutions with respect to the Mission in Georgia. Some hope for a possible compromise solution was expressed, but it still lacks concretization.

Under "Current Issues", the Permanent Council debated Freedom of the Media in Azerbaijan, Freedom of the Media in Kazakhstan, Freedom of Conscience and Religious Belief in Kyrgyzstan, the murder of a journalist and human rights lawyer in the Russian Federation, and the detainment of a human rights defender in Belarus. Belarus and Russia again criticized what they see as one-sidedness of the accusations, which did not create an atmosphere of mutual confidence. Russia also announced it will start to list human rights violations in European Countries.

There is still no movement on the budget (next week's ACMF has been cancelled).



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January 27, 2009