

Special Representative

To:

PA President

and

PA Secretary General

Spot Report Week 13, 2009

Greek Chairmanship endorses last year's Finnish decision to circumvent the OSCE Rules of Procedure, reducing the established degree of transparency and cooperation with the PA

In 2002, under the Portuguese Chairmanship, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Permanent Council agreed to open up all formal and informal "open-ended" (=open to all delegations) bodies in Vienna to Parliamentary Assembly representatives. In 2003, under the Dutch Chairmanship, this was implemented, with the exception of the ACMF, which followed in 2005 under the Belgian Chairmanship. The OSCE Rules of Procedures name all the relevant bodies that existed at the time of their adoption and define the Parliamentary Assembly's rights of participation. When the three informal committees were newly created, there was no doubt that we were admitted.

Until 2008, all work of substance was done in those bodies or in the informal bodies that were created later. However, the Finnish Chairmanship started to move parts of the preparations for the 2008 Ministerial Council into so-called "ambassadorial retreats", without even informing the Parliamentary Assembly about it. After the Astana Annual Session, I was told that it had been made a policy not to invite PA representatives to these retreats.

The Greek Chairmanship has now issued invitations for another retreat on April 25, 2009. It has formally decided that the Parliamentary Assembly has to stay out of this, under the pretext that it is "purely inter-governmental". Apparently, the retreat will deal with follow-up to the discussions about the proposals for a "new" European Security Concept. It is all-the-more amazing that we are excluded from these debates, considering that many ambassadors were present when the Parliamentary Assembly discussed this issue at the recent Winter Meeting.

The argument that this is "purely inter-governmental" is a blow to all efforts to make the work of the OSCE more transparent and accountable. Most of what is discussed in the meetings that we are participating in is inter-governmental. It is not because it is PA business that we were invited to these meetings, but rather the participation in these meetings enables a free flow of first-hand information between the Parliamentary Assembly and the executive side. The decision to limit our participation constitutes a radical step backwards with respect to what has been achieved since 2002, and it constitutes a dangerous precedent which might eventually undermine the status of Parliamentary Assembly-Permanent Council cooperation.



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Ambassador
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