

## Special Representative

To:

PA President

and

PA Secretary General

### *Permanent Council Brief Weeks 24/25, 2009*

During these two weeks, several meetings of the Permanent Council, one of them jointly with the Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC), of the FSC, the PrepCom, and of other committees, took place. Also, several seminars and a roundtable on the legal status of the OSCE were held. A series of briefings and discussions prepared delegations for the upcoming informal Ministerial Council Meeting in Corfu. I also participated in VP Grossruck's pre-electoral visit to Tirana.

The main message that one could extract from all these meetings is that it will be difficult – even with all the efforts the Greek Chairmanship puts into it – to move ahead and to start reducing the tension that has built up between several CIS countries and "the West". One of the major obstacles of course remains the stalemate on the future of international missions in Georgia. The extensive briefing given to the delegates of the participating States in the joint PC-FSC meeting by the major representatives of the international community that deal with the conflict, including the reports from the Geneva talks that tried to convey some optimism, did nothing to conceal the deep rift between the two sides. The Russian position remains unchanged: A precondition for progress is "serious dialogue based on mutual respect between Tbilisi, Tskhinvali and Sukhumi", along with the formulation of strict guarantees of the non-use of force.

Other obstacles lie in some of the fundamental issues that come up now and then, like the issue of a legal personality for the organization. Russia is still linking its readiness to accept a decision on the draft Convention that had been worked out two years ago to the establishment of an OSCE Charter. The EU is now ready to enter into discussions about such a document, but the U.S. seems less ready than it did previously, and nobody except for the CIS countries wants to make a decision on the Convention dependent on an agreement on a Charter.

Likewise, there is disagreement about a possible outcome of the informal Ministerial Council in Corfu. While the Chairmanship is quite ambitious, wants to discuss both commitments and institutional issues, and would like to see "a framework" in Vienna in which a draft decision for the MC at the end of the year in Athens could be discussed as a possible outcome of the informal MC, others are much more hesitant. However, taking into account that the turnout of Ministers appears to be substantial, and in light of the NATO-Russia Council which is scheduled in the same place before the informal MC starts, the meeting has some potential and will at least be of a high symbolic value, even if the outcome will be nothing but a "Chairperson's Summary" at the end of the meetings.

Other issues during these two weeks included the presentation of the regular report by the High Commissioner on National Minorities. It seemed to have been slightly less well received this time by some delegations, because of the critical remarks he made, for instance in the context of the refusal of a fact finding mission by the South Ossetians. The Afghanistan Election Support mission is still lacking sufficient funding. The discussions about the Program Outline for the 2010 draft Budget finished with criticism of the recruitment and contracting mechanisms of the OSCE.



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