

## Special Representative

To:

PA President

and

PA Secretary General

### *Permanent Council Brief Weeks 26 to 29, 2009*

During these weeks, which coincided with the Annual Session and the Office's participation in the Election Observation in Albania, the 2009 Annual Security Review Conference (ASRC), meetings of the PC, the FSC, the Contact Groups with Partners, the PrepCom and other committees, took place. In addition, we participated in an informal conference on Energy Security which the Chairmanship organized in Bratislava, a Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Freedom of Speech and of Religion, and an OSCE Chairmanship Expert Seminar on Electoral Management Bodies. We briefed the latter ones orally and in writing about the Parliamentary Assembly's pertinent work.

1<sup>st</sup> Committee Rapporteur Riccardo Migliori represented the PA in the **ASRC** (see the note on the PA website).

The PC took **one decision** on the "Financial Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2008 and the Report of the External Auditor".

I presented the **results of the Vilnius Annual Session** in the PC and – more in detail – in an informal briefing session for participating States. The Vilnius Declaration was met with high interest; obviously, most of the attention focused on the debate triggered by the criticism made by the Russian State Duma and the Russian Federation Council on the Resolution on Reunited Europe, which is also contained in a document that has been circulated in Vienna. However, political discussions on the resolution and the paper took place only on the sidelines of the meetings, after I had informed the delegations about the genesis and the exact content of the resolution.

In the **PC**, only the United States Delegation made a statement in response to my presentation, expressing high interest in the PA's resolution on Strengthening the OSCE. The delegation said that the resolution should be dealt with in detail by the participating States, since it contained many very interesting recommendations pertinent to the work of the OSCE. The delegation suggested organizing this debate in the framework of the work in Vienna, with the participation of PA representatives.

**In the informal briefings**, in which I presented brief abstracts of all resolutions, focusing on and describing in more detail the resolutions on Strengthening the OSCE and on Election Observation, seven of the 40 delegations present raised a number of questions. All displayed a high interest in knowing the exact results of the votes on each resolution. Several were surprised that so many resolutions with controversial substance had been voted on with overwhelming majorities or even unanimously. One example cited was the resolution on the Death Penalty. There seems to be a lack of understanding that PA members do not necessarily vote along national lines.

In line with the UK OSCE mission's tradition to take a skeptical stance on positions of the PA, Ambassador Ian Cliff came up with a number of critical questions, some of them of a rhetorical

nature. Having been present in Vilnius as an advisor to the UK PA Delegation, where he had observed that the number of Parliamentary Assembly members actually voting had often been relatively small, and referring to the overwhelming votes by which PA resolutions had been adopted, he questioned their legitimacy and seriousness. He also expressed doubts whether the Parliamentary Assembly as a political body with a focus on debate was the right body to execute the functions asked for in the resolution on Strengthening the OSCE, particularly its request to have an oversight function over the budget. He stated his clear preference that this function should be exercised by the representatives of the participating States, who "received their legitimacy from democratically elected governments".

The **election seminar** was held on a very technical level, and on the second day, ambassadors appeared to have lost their interest in the meeting. Swiss parliamentarian Andreas Gross, who represented PACE, gave a detailed explanation of the special expertise of parliamentarians. The only (expected) political statement on problems with Election Observation came from one Russian delegate. At the same time, the meeting offered an opportunity to discuss observation items on the sidelines of the meeting, given the fact that a high number of former heads of ODIHR's Long Term Observer Missions and most of the relevant staff from Warsaw, as well as representatives from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) were present. The ODIHR election department informed me of their interest to involve the Parliamentary Assembly in efforts to improve the quality of the work of long term observers. It also expressed its readiness to further enhance the degree of cooperation that had been achieved in the most recent Election Observation Missions.

In the **Conference on Energy Security**, one panelist, the representative of the Lithuanian government, made the Parliamentary Assembly's recent resolution on the topic the basis for his presentation.

I also had a meeting with the prospective director and deputy director of the **Kazakh Chairmanship Task Force**, Amb. Serzhan Abdykarimov and Talgat Unaibayv, giving me an opportunity to brief them on issues of PA involvement in the work of the executive structures and on PA-ODIHR Cooperation in Election Observation.



Andreas Nothelle  
Ambassador  
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