

Special Representative

To:

PA President

and

PA Secretary General

Permanent Council Brief Week 49, 2010

The post-Astana week, in addition to a Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on "Freedom of Religion or Belief", saw a number of events during which ambassadors discussed the outcome of the Summit. The general tendency is: the Summit was a success in spite of its failure to approve such an Action Plan. According to most, the media had not understood what was going on. The "West" argues with the strong Human Rights language in the "Commemorative Declaration", the CIS values that "99 per cent" of the Action Plan had found consensus. This is the essence of the statements in the Permanent Council, and also during a panel discussion of research institutes from Germany, Poland and Russia.

Meanwhile, the PC is back to ordinary Vienna business. The end-of-the-year recess begins on Monday, which is also the deadline for the approval of the budget. This week will show whether Russia's prediction that there will be no budget before late winter will come true. Except for the Lithuanians, delegates do not seem to be too anxious to get the job done on time, although the budget discussion was not about big issues, but rather only about disagreements regarding details. One of them concerns the future of the field presences in South East Europe, which many see as an area for possible savings. The extension of the mandate of all field presences is also on the agenda this week; the last regular PC on Thursday will therefore show whether the recess will start with important business unfinished.

It is worth mentioning the search for a new Secretary General (and a new Director of the ODIHR), which has been going on behind the scenes. The PA has called for a transparent process with the aim of finding high profile politicians for these positions. Rule 3.01.1 of the Staff Regulations provides for a widespread dissemination of vacancy notices, including a job description. In the past, the formal process started with a letter sent by the Chairmanship to all delegations that did not contain any job description. The selection was done via informal bargaining rather than through a formal process. Several delegations have been urging for more transparency this time; the lack of openness observed here gives one explanation why in Astana the word "transparency" was blocked as part of PA language in the Declaration.

The PA has also called for more transparency in financial management. A budget that continuously undergoes revisions during and even after the fiscal year, combined with extra-budgetary funds steered unilaterally by donors, is not a good basis for transparency. Nor is the absence of clear guidelines for sub-contracting and the contracting of experts, of an independent external audit that meets international (INTOSAI) standards, as recommended in 2005 by the UK National Audit Office and consistently called for in PA resolutions, the absence of systematic evaluations, as well as the failure to revise and adapt the Financial Regulations, a pending issue since 2003.



Andreas Nothelle
Ambassador
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