

Special Representative

To:

PA President

and

PA Secretary General

Permanent Council Brief Weeks 4 and 5, 2012

During these two weeks, there were meetings of the Permanent Council (PC), the Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC), of committees, and several informal meetings. All these bodies largely dealt with routine business. There was also a side event and a round of statements for Holocaust Memorial Day. Roberto Montella from the Vienna Office accompanied the PA President on his visit to Rome and Marc Carillet participated in the ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission for the upcoming parliamentary elections in Slovakia.

Apart from the discussions under "Current Issues", which are part of the same routine, the most interesting development took place in parallel to the meetings: The Ministerial Council in Vilnius, under the Lithuanian Chairmanship decided to open a "silence procedure" for the decision on the Chairmanships in 2014 and 2015, meaning that if no minister objects ("broke the silence") before noon on February 10, 2012, Switzerland and Serbia will chair the OSCE in these two consecutive years. Before the meeting of the PC it became known that Lithuania is requesting an extension of the silence period until July 2012. This is apparently linked to a competition between Serbia and Lithuania for the Presidency of the UN General Assembly. When Lithuania raised the issue in the PC, claiming it needed more time "to consider the matter", the Irish Chair stated that the Chairmanship did not consider the silence to have been broken. The Chair did not indicate any further steps to be taken.

In his report, the Chair mentioned the "comprehensive and substantial" visit of the PA President and the PA Secretary General, who were joined by the PA President Emeritus, to Dublin. A week earlier, the Secretary General had reported in very positive terms about his visit to the PA's International Secretariat in Copenhagen. Other points on the agenda included an address by the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, Hammarberg, and the (last) report by the current Head of the Mission in Kosovo, Amb. Almhofer.

In his report to the PC, the Secretary General also raised a matter which is symptomatic of the current financial difficulties the organization is facing: The successful and important project for the removal of the dangerous missile fuel "mélange" from Ukraine had to be suspended in December due to lack of funding, risking the formal discontinuation of the current contract.



Andreas Nothelle
Ambassador
February 3, 2012