



PA.GAL/3/14
17 February 2014
OSCE+
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Security Committee Meeting Monday, 17 February 2014

Talking points of Amb. Andreas Nothelle, OSCE PA Special Representative

Thank you, Chair.

Welcome to the representatives of DCAF in this meeting.

Security Sector Governance Reform has been and will always be one of the Parliamentary Assembly's priority concerns. The PA has passed numerous recommendations addressing all related issues, and we have cooperated closely with the Conflict Prevention Center, the Field Presences and others in order to strengthen security sector governance. These recommendations are directly addressed to the participating States and to the executive structures of the OSCE. We have also been directly involved in projects of assistance to parliaments of participating States and regional awareness-raising and training projects of the field presences.

We therefore value the efforts of the Swiss Chairmanship and of DCAF to reinvigorate the OSCE's work in this area. We have a history of cooperation with the DCAF, which we plan to continue during this year's Autumn Session in Geneva. Although these are not the only items we are working on in the first dimension, we have consistently focused on parliamentary oversight, the Code of Conduct and other means of strengthening democratic governance in the security sector. In addition, we have always stressed the cross-dimensional character of this work, by underlining the importance of human rights protection in all security operations. Beyond the traditional work with the military and the police, we have placed particular emphasis on issues related to the work of the intelligence community and the private sector. Both pose considerable challenges to oversight and democracy in general because of the lack of transparency that their work entails. All this and more will figure on the PA's agenda at our upcoming Annual Session end of June this year.

In light of all this, we continue to be amazed by some methodological flaws of the study presented today. I understand that it was the Chairmanship's intention, when commissioning this study, to list strategic deficiencies, weaknesses and other problems of the OSCE's project work, and I understand that these weaknesses are to be found predominantly in those structures that report to the Permanent Council. We are, however, deeply disappointed that an important study that directly addresses issues of democratic governance was undertaken in total and deliberate exclusion of the PA. We are further surprised by the lack of diligence displayed by the authors when they claim that the PA is only engaged in inter-parliamentary dialogue, and that it is not involved in operational activities.

Only a short look at our history and our Rules of Procedure would already have avoided this mistake. Our Rules of Procedure determine what the purpose of our work is. The rules of the OSCE's parliamentary institution have been mandated by the Heads of States and Governments at their Paris Summit. Listed among the objectives of the PA's work are the following:

“develop and promote mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflicts;
(d) support the strengthening and consolidation of democratic institutions in the OSCE participating States;
(e) contribute to the development of the institutional structures of the OSCE and of relations and co-operation between the existing OSCE institutions.”

The DCAF concludes that most of the activities of executive structures consist of meetings aiming at awareness-raising. It then states that the PA is the main entity involved in awareness-raising. In other words, as far as this activity is concerned, we are doing much the same as the rest of the OSCE. It is therefore contradictory for the authors to refuse to include the PA in the findings based on the assumption that the PA is only an internal talk shop. I have also heard a lot about the need to include Civil Society in the OSCE's work on these issues. I would strongly suggest starting by including the elected representatives of our citizens.

In the course of this project 170 persons were interviewed and several workshops held in Vienna. I do not think it is asking for too much for researchers to verify such a radical hypothesis as claiming that MPs are only talking to themselves by at least looking into some of the PA's documents and by seeking to get in touch with me. We also believe that those from the Secretariat involved in designing and assisting this study, beginning with the Secretary General, should have guided the authors towards an inclusive approach. We had a vigorous internal discussion about this during our Winter Meeting.

We hope that in future we will continue our cooperation in a fruitful manner and in avoidance of further misunderstandings of this nature.