

Special Representative

To:

PA President

and

PA Secretary General

PC Brief Week 36, 2015

This week, the first week after the end of the Summer Recess, there were meetings of the Permanent Council (PC), the Preparatory Committee (PrepComm) and the Human Dimension Committee. During the Recess, there were two special meetings of the PC, and a meeting of the PrepComm, as well as two informal briefings of the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM). I attended a side event of the Balkan Summit on the "Budva Process" – an initiative of Serbian and Kosovar women parliamentarians, among them PA 3rd Committee Rapporteur Gordana Comic, which was hosted by the Austrian Foreign Ministry.

The PC approved a decision on the 2015 supplementary budget for the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) for the local elections in Eastern Ukraine on 25 October 2015.

In his briefing at the PC, the SMM Head, Ambassador Apakan, reported that violence reached new peaks over the summer, and the number of civilian casualties increased, ceasefire violations had become a norm, the humanitarian situation in the conflict zone is deteriorating, and the provision of humanitarian assistance is impeded as the organizations must obtain authorization through a lengthy process. He also emphasized that SMM's monitoring capability is compromised as the Mission recently experienced serious security incidents and faced numerous attempts to impede its work. In addition, the Mission is still confronted with severe restrictions to its freedom of movement and the jamming and even shooting down of Unarmed Aerial Vehicles (UAVs). Despite all this, the SMM facilitated a number of local cease-fires, which enabled the reconstruction of vital infrastructure, in particular of water management facilities.

In the first PC after the Recess, discussions on the crisis in and around Ukraine took place in light of the renewed ceasefire. Russia continued to blame the Ukrainian side for the cease-fire violations, whereas most other speakers reminded of the responsibility of Russia for backing the terrorists, and commended the constitutional changes in approved by the Ukrainian parliament, deploring the fatal attacks during the protests against the changes. Under Current Issues, most delegations also condemned the court sentencing against, as well as the abduction, continued illegal detention and alleged ill-treatment of Ukrainian citizens by the Russian Federation, calling for the release of the detainees.

In addition, USA, EU, Canada and Norway expressed concern over the sentencing of human rights advocates Leyla and Arif Yunus and of Journalist Khadija Ismayilova by Azerbaijani courts, and urged Azerbaijan to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, while Azerbaijan questioned the relevance of this for the PC's agenda and rejected claims regarding the human rights situation in the country.

OSCE SG Amb. Zannier delivered his report about the implementation of the Gender Action Plan. According to him, there is still a strong reluctance by participating States to present a sufficient number of qualified female candidates for open posts especially on higher hierarchical levels. For instance, only two out of the 16 heads of field operations are women. Also, the general share of women has decreased because of the low level of female staff in the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) to Ukraine.



Andreas Nothelle
Ambassador
September 4, 2015