

## Special Representative

To:

PA President

and

PA Secretary General

### *PC Brief Summer 2020*

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to negatively impact the work of the OSCE over the summer. There was the usual August Summer Recess, which was interrupted by a Special Meeting of the Permanent Council (PC). Meetings took place in the Hofburg in a hybrid format with a reduced number of physical participants. Many Heads of Delegations, and, forcibly, persons who do not reside in Vienna, participated remotely. The “normal way” in which diplomatic negotiations take place, through person-to-person interaction, is still severely obstructed. However, two ambassadorial retreats tried to make up for this lack of traditional interaction. Moreover, the December Ministerial Council (MC) in Tirana will take place in a hybrid format. Negotiations regarding drafts for texts are supposed to take place in Vienna only and should end on the eve of the MC.

The Vienna Liaison Office has continuously participated in all meetings in person, where possible, or otherwise online. In addition, PA members have participated in person in meetings that took place in the Hofburg. We have reported directly on specific issues, such as the non-extension of the senior posts in the executive structures and the discussions about the post-election situation in Belarus.

The discussions during these weeks continued to give testimony to the increasing tensions within the OSCE, despite the temporary significant reduction in ceasefire violations in eastern Ukraine. While the Special PC on the situation in Belarus was conducted in a slightly more constructive spirit, discussions in subsequent meetings deteriorated again. The invocation of the “Moscow Mechanism” (a fact-finding tool adopted unanimously in 1991 which provides for the sending missions of experts to assist participating States in the resolution of a particular question or problem relating to the human dimension) by 17 participating States, who were supported by a number of further countries, was met with steep criticism by the Russian Federation and Belarus. The Russian Federation also persistently invoking the limitations for the current acting leaders of the executive structures, calling into question, for instance, the right of the acting Secretary General to present the draft Unified Budget to the PC.

Tonight, a Special PC witnessed language by the ambassadors of Azerbaijan and Armenia which I cannot help but describe as a language of war decorated with personal insults. Azerbaijan declared that, following what it described as provocative acts by Armenia, it will continue its military operation until the occupying forces are “eliminated” and the territory is “liberated”. Armenia in the statement of its ambassador, retorted, and also attacked Turkey, which had supported Azerbaijan. Except for general calls for an end to the hostilities made before this exchange, others than those three did not comment on what they had heard.

The usual annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, which should have taken place within the last few weeks in Warsaw, was cancelled because of the problems caused by the Pandemic. At the same time, the preceding discussions as well as the interpretative

statements made by participating States at the occasion of the adoption of the decision regarding its cancellation, illustrated the deep divisions surrounding issues that endanger the future of the meeting.

Despite these controversies, which also affect the work of the Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC), participating States found consensus on a number of (largely managerial) decisions regarding the Second Biennial Meeting to Assess the Implementation of the OSCE Documents on Small Arms Light Weapons and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition, the Dates and Agenda of the 2020 Economic and Environmental Dimension Implementation Meeting, the Financial Report and Financial Statements for the Year 2019 and the Report of the External Auditor, the Extension of the OSCE Information Security Enhancement Fund, the Extension of the Deployment of OSCE Observer to two Russian Checkpoints on the Russian-Ukrainian Border, the Dates and Venue of the 2020 OSCE Asian Conference, and the Agenda, Timetable and Organizational Modalities of the 2020 OSCE Asian Conference.

After the expiration of the deadline for applications for the senior OSCE posts, the chairmanship listed the following candidates: For Secretary General: Amb. Cristian Diaconescu (Romania), Ms. Helga Schmid (Germany), for ODIHR Director: Mr. Matteo Mecacci (Italy), Amb. José Maria Ridaó (Spain), for High Commissioner of National Minorities: Amb. Kairat Abdrakhmanov (Kazakhstan), Ms. Rita Izsák-Ndiaye (Hungary), and Representative on the Freedom of the Media: Mr. Ditmir Bushati (Albania), Ms. Maja Capello (Italy), Mr. Patrick Penninckx (Belgium), Ms. Maria Teresa Ribeiro (Portugal) and Dr. Dimitrij Rupel (Slovenia). Matteo Mecacci is a former OSCE PA Bureau member, Ditmir Bushati the Head of the Albanian PA delegation. The selection process has started.

The PA's engagement on all issues mentioned and, in particular, the operation it launched to help the OSCE get back on track were well noted. The same applies to the PA's engagement with Belarus, a case which demonstrates the excellent cooperation with the Albanian Chairmanship.



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