**OSCE PA Press Release

Efthymiou proposes reforms at opening of 20th Annual Session**

BELGRADE, 6 July 2011 – Parliamentary Assembly President Petros Efthymiou today called for significant changes to the operations of the OSCE to make it more effective in addressing modern political and security crises.

Speaking at the opening of the 20th Annual Session of the Parliamentary Assembly under the theme of “Strengthening the OSCE’s Effectiveness and Efficiency – A new start after the Astana Summit,” Mr. Efthymiou recalled the OSCE success in South-Eastern Europe as a model for its role in other parts of the world but said reforms are needed in the Vienna-based operations.

"For the OSCE to be as effective as it has been in the past in regions like this one, I recommend the Ministerial Council meet twice a year to create more opportunities for high level political consultations,” Mr. Efthymiou said. “It is also high time that the OSCE change its consensus-based decision-making process in times of crisis so no one country can alone hold up needed progress on human security issues."

The Annual Session was the first major public appearance for the new OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier. “I believe there is much scope for co-operation in addressing challenges that originate beyond the OSCE area, such as our efforts to confront transnational threats and to deepen the OSCE’s engagement with Afghanistan. Parliamentarians can play a crucial role in the OSCE’s efforts to support ongoing democratic transition processes in the Southern Mediterranean,” said Zannier.

In addressing the more than 240 parliamentarians, Speaker of the Serbian Parliament Slavica Dukic-Dejanovic said, "It is my message and hope that the session in Belgrade will mark a truly new beginning for the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly so that it might take a central position in the OSCE family in the upcoming period and continue to be a strong and integrating factor in the development of cooperation."

OSCE Chair-in-Office and Lithuanian Foreign Minister Audronius Azubalis commented on the value parliamentarians add to the OSCE’s wider work, saying “It’s a vitally important body, which gives political will and political spirit for the OSCE in general.”

Parliamentarians at the Annual Session will vote on the Belgrade Declaration on Sunday, which will help shape OSCE and national policy.

For resolutions and speeches, go to [www.oscepa.org](http://www.oscepa.org). For photos from the Session, go to [www.flickr.com/oscepa](http://www.flickr.com/oscepa).

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