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Parliamentarians From Across Europe Share Lessons for Transition

European Parliamentarians Meet in Slovenia to Discuss EU Integration Issues

BLED, May 17, 2007—A group of 30 parliamentarians from across Southeast, Central, and Eastern Europe meeting in Slovenia this week agreed to expand the South East Europe Chapter of the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank (PNoWB) to include countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The gathering follows the founding of the Southeast Europe PNoWB Chapter in Greece, which took place in September 2006.

Meeting in Bled, the PNoWB held its annual conference of Parliamentarians from the Europe and Central Asia Region. Organized under the theme of “*Sharing Lessons for Transition*,” this year’s regional meeting discussed four common themes—migration; social and spatial inequality and the role of regional policy; judicial reform, and Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) for infrastructure. The parliamentarians shared their lessons and experiences of transition and European Union integration.

“*Meetings of parliamentarians from the new EU members and would-be acceding countries are very helpful to understand the complex issues of transition,*” said **Greek MP Nikos Christodoulakis**, who co-chaired the meeting. “*Sharing experiences on structural adjustment, poverty reduction, and infrastructural financing enhances cooperation and helps politicians to better assess the efficiency of policies in their own countries. The World Bank initiative to bring together current and potential members of the European Union to analyze transition issues promotes the ability of these countries to better integrate with others.*”

In his address to the parliamentarians, **Finnish MP Kimmo Kiljunen, and the co-Chair of the PNoWB Board**, emphasized the importance of the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank, and the regional Southeast, Central, and Eastern European parliamentary network in particular, in the context of its activities going beyond the annual conference level, and moving toward the establishment of national chapters. “*In the process of the European integration, with some countries of the Region emerging as donors and other countries being the recipients of international aid, it is crucial that parliamentarians are able to share experiences and lessons for transition to influence their respective governments more effectively and ensure better accountability in the area of global economic development,*” said Kiljunen.

Global issues increasingly influence the development agenda in the Europe and Central Asia Region. International migration (the Region accounts for one-third of all developing country emigration), rapidly aging and declining populations, persistent youth unemployment, and weak public and corporate governance have created a heightened demand for institutions to mobilize globally to address emerging challenges and opportunities. In Southeast, Central, and Eastern Europe, a PNoWB chapter of engaged and active parliamentarians is putting forward the development agenda to tackle these challenges and build a common economic space in the Region.

*“Parliamentarians are vital partners in furthering the development agenda in ECA,” said **Shigeo Katsu, World Bank Vice-President for Europe and Central Asia.** “Their proximity to the people and governments in the region means they know the opportunities and challenges in their countries extremely well. From a development perspective, the ECA chapter of the PNoWB brings a wide range of experience to the table, which is vital for helping ECA countries consolidate the gains of the recent past, and face future challenges. The ECA Region has witnessed major upheavals, shown remarkable resilience, and produced a lot of notable successes in the last five years but countries in the region face a variety of challenges which require sustained implementation of complex policy reforms. Parliamentarians across ECA must continue their work as drivers of change.”*

The Bled MP meeting was organized on the sidelines of the World Bank’s Annual Bank Conference on Development Economics (ABCDE) and comes at a critical time in the process of EU integration, with most of the countries invited to the conference being either already EU members, or actively involved in various stages of discussions with the EU. This year’s meeting was jointly organized by the PNoWB and the World Bank Europe and Central Asia Region, in cooperation with the Center for Excellence in Finance, and the Parliament of Slovenia.

The Parliamentary Network on the World Bank is an independent organization of over 1000 parliamentarians from 110 countries, which mobilizes parliamentarians in the fight against global poverty, promotes transparency and accountability in international development, and offers a platform for policy dialogue between the World Bank and parliamentarians.

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