

Session opens with addresses by host officials, Commemorative Event

Finnish President Sauli Niinisto, Finnish Foreign Minister Timo Soini and OSCE PA President Ilkka Kanerva (MP, Finland) addressed the opening plenary of the OSCE PA's 2015 Annual Session in Helsinki on Monday.

OSCE PA President Ilkka Kanerva welcomed parliamentarians to the second OSCE PA Annual Session that his country has hosted. He recalled the "hard negotiations, hard concessions, and more than a little bravery" that culminated in the signing of the Helsinki Final Act four decades ago, but expressed concern about recent developments.

President Niinisto noted the enduring relevance of OSCE commitments. "As postulated in the Helsinki Accords, both Moscow and the capitals in the West agreed to refrain from the use of force and respect the sovereignty of countries and inviolability of borders. These points are as valid today as they were 40 years ago," he said.

Finnish Foreign Minister Timo Soini offered comments on the decision not to grant visas to Members of the Russian Delegation who fall under the European Union travel ban. "It is unfortunate that not all Delegations are here today. As there are EU sanctions in place, we have followed the rules we have agreed to," Minister Soini said.



The opening plenary of the 24th Annual Session included a special Commemorative Event for the 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act.

Secretary General Spencer Oliver also addressed the Assembly, recalling his more than 40 years of involvement in the Helsinki Process, including in the preparations for negotiating the Helsinki Final Act as early as 1972.

Later, Oliver, Kanerva and several think-tank experts presented the Final Report of the PA's Helsinki +40 Project. The report contains wide-ranging ideas for reforming the OSCE on the occasion of the Helsinki Final Act anniversary to ensure its relevance and efficiency in the years ahead.

A resolution based on the report, sponsored by Project Chair Joao Soares (MP, Portugal), was later unanimously agreed to, before the parliamentarians took up a resolution on Russia's violations of OSCE commitments in Ukraine. Debate continues on this resolution Wednesday.

First and Third Committees consider Reports and Draft Resolutions



First General Committee

Chaired by Roger Wicker of the United States, the First Committee on Monday discussed the report and draft resolution presented by Rapporteur Margareta Cederfelt (MP, Sweden). Fourteen parliamentarians took the floor to debate the wide-ranging report, touching on subjects including combating terrorism, arms control, Europe's security architecture, and the need for improving East-West dialogue.



Third General Committee

Third Committee Rapporteur Gordana Comic (MP, Serbia) presented her report and draft resolution, emphasizing the opportunity offered by the OSCE in strengthening human rights norms but noting that the opportunity is being squandered. Her resolution calls on the OSCE's decision-making structures to place individuals' rights at the core of their mandates. The meeting was chaired by Isabel Santos (MP, Portugal).

Both committees continue debating and amending the resolutions on Tuesday.

Programme ~ Tuesday, 7 July

09.00 – 10.30	First Committee (Finlandia Hall)
09.00 – 10.30	Second Committee (Veranda Hall 1&2)
11.00 – 12.30	Third Committee (Finlandia Hall)
14.30 – 16.00	First Committee (Finlandia Hall)
14.30 – 16.00	Second Committee (Veranda Hall 1&2)
16.30 – 18.00	Third Committee (Finlandia Hall)

Side event on building parliamentary involvement in conflict mediation



Finland's Minister for Foreign Affairs Timo Soini addresses side event on conflict mediation, 6 July 2015

Organized by the Finnish Parliament and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in co-operation with the OSCE PA, a side event on Monday focused on how to strengthen parliamentary involvement in conflict mediation efforts. It was addressed, inter alia, by OSCE PA President Ilkka Kanerva and Minister for Foreign Affairs Timo Soini, and explored topics such as inclusive mediation and national dialogue facilitation.