



**REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT
OF THE OSCE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY**

Mr. George Tsereteli

**Twenty-Seventh Annual Session
of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly**

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Upon assuming the office of President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, I have strived to highlight several priorities, which include redoubling our conflict resolution efforts, ensuring that the OSCE is fully equipped to address new challenges, and promoting our common values.

I have appreciated the level of support I have received from Members of the Assembly and the Secretariat in both Copenhagen and Vienna. This has been crucial to support an intensive agenda to meet our most pressing challenges such as addressing conflicts, radicalization and terrorism, and migration, implementing our human right commitments, striving to achieve gender equality, fostering economic co-operation, expanding our international partnerships, and reforming the OSCE PA to make our work more impactful.

Detailed information on my work as President is listed in this report. In addition to these primary activities, I have met on several occasions with Heads of OSCE institutions to improve co-ordination at headquarters and in the field and ensure that our activities complement each other. I have also met with numerous PA delegations on the margins of my travels to ensure that all voices are heard and reflected in the work of our Parliamentary Assembly. Finally, together with a small group of Members and the International Secretariat, we have held regular brainstorming sessions since our Winter Meeting to consider changes in the Assembly's work, in order to make it more effective and more visible.

I want to thank those parliaments that have hosted my visits, but also particularly applaud and thank OSCE staff. I have had the opportunity to visit four OSCE field missions¹ and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), and I have met with dedicated professionals from many other OSCE offices. I can personally attest to the excellent work they do, at times under difficult circumstances.

November 2017

Upon assuming the office on 9 November, I travelled to Copenhagen for meetings at the International Secretariat. There, together with Secretary General Roberto Montella and his staff, we made plans for presidential activities in the run-up to the Berlin Annual Session. This visit also afforded me the opportunity to discuss OSCE priorities with the Speaker of the Danish Parliament, Pia Kjaersgaard, and thank her for



¹ The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek, the OSCE Presence in Albania, and the OSCE Mission to Moldova.

Denmark's generous contributions to the work of our Parliamentary Assembly.

I returned to Copenhagen in late November to address the Standing Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and exchange both with then-PACE President Stella Kyriakides and Michele Nicoletti, who was elected President in January 2018. In my remarks, I highlighted the role that the OSCE and the Council of Europe have historically played in the transformation of Europe. I also urged continued dialogue and a creative approach to strengthen international co-operation, in particular to address migration and to counter terrorism. I also underlined a number of new and enduring challenges, which require greater attention: growing political and social tensions both within and between countries, democratic erosion and threats to human rights throughout the OSCE area, as well as ongoing conflicts, radicalization, terrorism, populism, cybersecurity, migration, and organized crime.

December 2017

I reiterated these messages in my address to OSCE Ministers and in the various bilateral meetings I held on the margins of the Vienna Ministerial Council, including with then-incoming Chairperson-in-Office and Italian Foreign Minister Angelino Alfano. I emphasized that governments should make the best use of the OSCE, which is a unique platform that deserves to be nurtured, supported and provided with necessary financial, human and material resources. I also underlined that although comprehensive security may at times require compromise, the OSCE's core values and founding principles are areas that are not up for negotiation, and that comprehensive security requires equal attention to all its dimensions – including the economic and environmental.

January 2018

Another priority of mine has been to redouble our organization's conflict resolution efforts. Each and every day, we all see the tragic human consequences of the conflicts in Ukraine, and Georgia, as well as from the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. As parliamentarians, I believe it is our duty to speak up against the violation of human rights in these conflict zones.

For my first official visit, I travelled to Kyiv to reiterate the steadfast support of the Parliamentary Assembly for Ukraine's territorial integrity, within its internationally-recognized borders, and renew our calls to reach a sustained ceasefire. I met with a range of high-level interlocutors, including the



Verkhovna Rada Chairman Andriy Parubiy, to also follow up on Kyiv's commitment to its reform agenda.

I also visited the premises of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to voice my strong support for their work. The SMM is a critical stabilizing force and it should be granted all necessary funds and security guarantees, as well as full access to Ukrainian territory, including everywhere along the border with the Russian Federation, to successfully accomplish its mission.

I reported on this visit and reiterated the key messages of my Ministerial Council remarks when I addressed the OSCE Permanent Council at the end of January. There, I also urged participating States to rapidly adopt the OSCE's budget, so the organization can live up to our expectations. On the margins of this address, I met with the President of the National Council of Austria, Wolfgang Sobotka, to voice our collective appreciation for his country's strong support to the OSCE.

February 2018

I began February by traveling to New York City and Washington, DC. In my talks with senior UN officials, including UN General Assembly President and incoming OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Miroslav Lajcak, I underlined the importance of continued close co-operation among international actors. The OSCE and the United Nations are natural partners in many areas, and these meetings served to explore opportunities for further co-operation in priority fields of work, in particular the crisis in and around Ukraine, unresolved conflicts in the South Caucasus, developments in Central Asia and South East Europe, as well as humanitarian concerns, migration and terrorism. We also exchanged on our efforts to encourage a greater participation of women the conflict cycle to increase the likelihood and sustainability of peace and security, including through closer co-operation between our Organization and UN Women.

In Washington, I noted the essential role of the OSCE as a forum for dialogue and stressed the importance of continued U.S. engagement in the Organization. My meetings with Members of Congress, State Department officials, and staff from the Helsinki Commission helped reinforce the robust working relationship that the Parliamentary Assembly has enjoyed with our American colleagues, and emphasize that continued American commitment is essential to keep our organization strong.



During our Winter Meeting, I exchanged with several delegations, including from Canada, France, Montenegro, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Romania, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, Uzbekistan, Israel and Morocco. These meetings served to prepare upcoming PA activities, presidential visits, and statutory meetings, as well as to discuss political developments in the OSCE region.

March 2018

My first activity following our Winter Meeting consisted in a trip to Baku to discuss democratic and economic reforms in the country with Azerbaijani counterparts, including President Ilham Aliyev. There, I highlighted Azerbaijan's potential as a bridge for dialogue and co-operation in the OSCE area. I also underlined that democratic reforms, particularly on freedom of the media and on creating conditions to maximize the contribution of civil society, should be addressed adequately. I explained that democratic and economic reforms in Azerbaijan mean increased security in the OSCE.

On the margins of my visit, I was able to visit jailed journalists Mr. Mehman Huseynov and Mr. Aziz Orudjev and I asked the authorities to reconsider their cases. I am glad to report that Mr. Orudjev was later released from prison and I hope we can continue to dialogue on these issues going forward.

In Baku, I also participated in the international conference on "The role of Parliamentarians in boosting economic cooperation and cultural ties along the Silk Road," organized by the Parliament of Azerbaijan and the Silk Road Support Group led by our colleague Azay Guliyev. In my remarks, I pointed out that the OSCE's economic and environmental activities are among its greatest successes. In times when all OSCE countries are becoming increasingly aware of the link between economic success and individual security, I focused on the key role that parliamentarians must play to favour economic opportunities and increase trade to support security across the OSCE area.

As I explained in Baku, it is important for the OSCE, including our Parliamentary Assembly, to remain visibly present in the South Caucasus region. I followed the political upheaval in Armenia and spoke with National Assembly President Ara Babloyan and our colleague Hermine Naghdalyan. I welcomed the active dialogue between political leaders to find a constructive solution to the situation in the country and I look forward to visiting Yerevan in the near future.



Later in March I was in Berlin to sign the official agreement to hold our Annual Session here in Berlin with Bundestag President Wolfgang Schauble. I commended Germany for its steadfast support to OSCE commitments and our Organization and also discussed a range of issues including the situation in and around Ukraine and the fight against terrorism. I appreciated this opportunity to also meet with Treasurer Doris Barnett and other Members of the German delegation.



Immediately after, I was in Warsaw for meetings with the Polish parliament and the ODIHR. With our Polish colleagues I discussed a number of issues, including domestic developments on judiciary reform and the rule of law. I also noted Poland's strong attachment to the OSCE and expressed appreciation for the active participation of Polish parliamentarians in our activities, including election observation.



In my meetings with ODIHR, I highlighted that parliamentarians bring added value to election observation: the political experience of parliamentarians complements ODIHR's expertise and long-term observation, producing a stronger, more credible assessment of the elections. I think it is important that we continue to emphasize that election observation needs political leadership underpinned by credible long-term analysis. It is this combination that makes the OSCE an indisputable leader of election observation recognized throughout the world.



April 2018

The Copenhagen Bureau meeting was the occasion for me to exchange with the Assembly's leadership on current political issues and prepare PA activities in the run-up to the Berlin Annual Session.



Following this, I was in Bishkek to take part in the Central Asian Regional Heads of Mission Meeting and for bilateral consultations. I commended Kyrgyzstan's strong engagement with the OSCE and called for sustained efforts to advance security and stability in the region. In my bilateral talks, I recognized Kyrgyzstan's considerable achievements in consolidating democratic values, while also encouraging continued vigilance and sustained progress to strengthen democratic institutions. I reiterated the Assembly's strong support for OSCE Field Missions equipped with robust mandates. I also underlined the importance of good coordination both within the OSCE and with our international partners to successfully tackle the region's challenges.



The visit was also a good opportunity to exchange with students from the OSCE Academy, as well as assess preparations for this year's Autumn Meeting. The generous offer of the Kyrgyz parliament to host us in October is a valuable contribution to our work and it is widely appreciated by all of us. It will be the occasion to reaffirm the Asian dimension of our work and for OSCE parliamentarians to debate crucial issues for Kyrgyzstan, Central Asia, and the rest of the OSCE region.

May 2018

In May, I took part in the Lisbon conference on cybersecurity organized by the Portuguese parliament under the leadership of our colleague Vice-President Isabel Santos. On the margins of that conference I also met with government interlocutors to express our gratitude for Portugal's support for the OSCE and our work. In my remarks, I pointed out that in an increasingly digital world, armed conflicts are not the only breeding ground for threats against governments and citizens. In cyberspace, we see new challenges emerging and old challenges evolving. Whether the issue is child sexual exploitation, terrorist recruitment, or crimes such as identity theft and fraud, the internet offers new opportunities for criminals and extremists. This conference was timely to ensure that we respond effectively in a proportionate way to these threats.

I then travelled to Eastern Ukraine as part of a delegation also consisting of President Emeritus and Special Representative on Mediation, Mr. Ilkka Kanerva, Third Committee Chair and Special Representative on OSCE Border Issues Mr. Ignacio Sanchez Amor, and Special Representative on Eastern Europe, Mr. Kent Harstedt. Our delegation travelled to areas close to the frontline in eastern Ukraine where we met with internally displaced persons and people living in the conflict zone. We exchanged with local NGOs and international humanitarian organizations, as well as with representatives from the Donetsk and Luhansk regional administrations, to better understand the tragic humanitarian situation.

We took a close look at buildings damaged by hostilities and observed government efforts to restore infrastructure. Along check-points on the line of contact we witnessed the considerable extent to which mine fields and areas containing unexploded ordinances pose a threat to civilians. We saw that everybody in the region has in reality become a casualty of war with the targeting of civilian housing and hospitals, destruction of schools, and extensive damage to agricultural production.

Our visit contributed to gain extensive insight into the work of the Special Monitoring Mission. We saw a demonstration of the



operation of short range, medium range and long range Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) equipped with cameras that monitor the region and follow up on cease-fire violations. Many of them have been made inoperable by electronic jamming or even shot down, in flagrant violation of the Minsk accords. We underlined the SMM's enormous contribution, serving as a reliable point of contact for all people in the conflict region, and providing credible and detailed information to the international community.

We then travelled to Kyiv to meet governmental and parliamentary leaders, including President Petro Poroshenko, Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin, and Deputy Chairperson of the Verkhovna Rada Iryna Herashchenko. I reiterated the OSCE PA's solidarity with the people of Ukraine who face tragedies on a daily basis and renewed our call for the full implementation of the Minsk Agreements to end this armed conflict. In our discussions, we supported efforts to launch a UN peace-keeping mission to be deployed in the whole conflict area including the border with Russia, which would finally make a fully effective monitoring by the SMM possible. We also stressed the importance of pursuing the domestic reforms necessary to implement the Minsk Agreements and urged OSCE participating States to prioritize assisting the country in its efforts to ease the plight of the up to two million internally displaced persons.

Later in May I was in Tirana for bilateral meetings with the Albanian government and parliament, including President Ilir Meta, Speaker Gramoz Ruci, and Foreign Minister Bushati. Among other topics, we discussed deepening the co-operation between the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and Albania, as well as the challenges the country faces in the implementation of decisive reforms. The visit was useful to highlight the region's special significance for the OSCE and to reaffirm our commitment and determination to continue actively engaging with Albania and the whole South East European region following the retirement of our Special Representative, Mr. Roberto Battelli after his more than 25 years of service on behalf of our Assembly. My visit to Tirana was also the opportunity to participate in a security forum organized by our colleague Fatmir Mediu, with the participation of leaders from Western Balkans countries and U.S Deputy Assistant Secretary Pete Marocco.

June 2018

In June, I met in Tbilisi with a delegation of 25 Permanent Representatives to the OSCE, and discussed with them the OSCE PA's agenda, including our priority issues such as



terrorism, migration, protracted conflicts, election observation, and the crisis in and around Ukraine. We also had a fruitful conversation on our efforts to build co-operation within the OSCE family.

At the end of the month, I undertook the first OSCE PA presidential visit to Moldova in almost a decade, where I lauded recent achievements in the Transdniestrian settlement process and encouraged both Chisinau and Tiraspol to sustain the momentum of progress in the coming months to create the necessary conditions for a comprehensive and peaceful resolution of the conflict. I noted that at a time when European security and stability are threatened, Chisinau and Tiraspol are setting a positive example for the rest of the OSCE area, where conflict resolution has been characterized by lack of progress.

As part of my visit, I travelled through the he Gura Bicului – Bychok bridge, which reopened last November after being closed to traffic since the 1992 conflict. In Tiraspol, I also visited a joint vehicle registration office, which will allow for the participation of vehicles from Transdniestria in international traffic starting on 1 September 2018. I saw that, as a result of recent agreements, people on both sides of the Dniester/Nistru River can already notice tangible improvements to their daily lives and encouraged Chisinau and Tiraspol to continue to display resolve to overcome their remaining differences to pave the way for a long-term and comprehensive settlement.

As part of my visit, I also met with the extra-parliamentary opposition, civil society representatives and members of the international community to discuss recent political developments and stress the need to reinforce the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary in Moldova.

Immediately after, I traveled to London to participate in a regional forum on the Western Balkans hosted by the House of Lords. There, I underlined the importance of continuing reform efforts to strengthen democratic institutions and reiterated our collective commitment to South East Europe.

This was my last activity as President of the OSCE PA prior to the Berlin Annual Session. Let me once again thank Secretary General Montella and the International Secretariat for their support and express my gratitude for the strong engagement of our Members over the recent months. This has greatly contributed to strengthening our Organization and making it more visible and effective. I look forward to continuing this good work with you in the year to come.

