



**Address to the Russian Parliamentary Forum:
“The role of parliaments in ensuring international security in contemporary
conditions”**

*Ilkka Kanerva, President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly
1 October 2015
Moscow*

Dear Mr. Speaker,
Esteemed colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The topic of this Forum could not be more relevant in the current climate of growing East-West tensions, geopolitical confrontation and manifestations thereof in several regions and contexts in the world.

There are two words in particular that come to my mind when I think about the contribution that international parliamentary organizations, our national parliaments, and we, as parliamentarians, can make: Those words are dialogue and responsibility.

These can only be realized with two conditions: First, we need to have efficient political systems (states), and secondly, we need strong and influential international organizations. Considering both of these aspects, national parliaments have a crucial role. International organizations celebrating anniversaries this year also need to be reformed in order to stay relevant.

It goes without saying that our ultimate goal is to ensure a safe, prosperous and sustainable environment for the citizens we serve. Especially in the context of

international security, we must highlight the rules, procedures and norms by which the international system is able to function. We really need multilateral organizations to be effective and coalitions of the willing to solve the problems we are facing today.

Unfortunately, it is clear that at the moment the international system is in a state of abnormal flux. We see the greatly differing views of various stakeholders as to what is right. So, strong commitment to international rules, procedures and standards is needed more than ever.

Having said that, there are reasons for the current state of affairs. The Russian Federation has called the Helsinki Final Act principles into question by illegally annexing Crimea. The Russian Federation also has a central role in stabilizing parts of eastern Ukraine. The absolute first step would be the unconditional implementation of the Minsk Agreements.

Taking into account the numerous other challenges we face today – from mediating for peace, preventing conflicts and fighting terrorism, to the grave challenge posed by the refugee crisis – more co-operation and dialogue is urgently needed. We are all united when it comes, for example, to the threat posed by ISIS, and we should build a strong, joint coalition against that evil.

We, as parliamentarians and active members of international parliamentary bodies, need to take clear positions and in many cases lead the efforts to face these grave challenges. We must support and strive for realistic, workable and sustainable solutions for all the burning issues on our global agenda today.

To start our common work towards de-escalation and reconciliation, I would argue that we need more mechanisms and platforms to conduct meaningful dialogue in order to build confidence and to increase the chances of mutual understanding. I do not see alternatives for dialogue.

We, as parliamentarians, do not represent the power politics of the day: Our task is to promote dialogue. This is the basic reason why we need open and unhindered interaction between the parliaments. In order for us to be able to carry out our mandates, we cannot tolerate any external interference.

This Forum serves as one example of the possibility to move away from the language of confrontation into one resembling more construction than demolition.

This type of interaction – or rather non-interaction – is unfortunately not alien to the OSCE either. On the other hand, with all its shortcomings, the OSCE stands out as one of the only platforms still available for dialogue both in parliamentary as well as governmental levels. In this context I would like to mention the work done by the OSCE as a whole to support and facilitate the implementation of the Minsk Agreements.

Making sure the lines of communication stay open, even during times of hardship, is not only our responsibility, but also our privilege. Keeping this basic tenet in mind would go a long way toward enhancing the role of parliaments in strengthening cohesion and ensuring international security. And above all, we must demonstrate that we care.

Thank you.