

**Remarks by OSCE PA President Christine Muttonen
to the OSCE Ministerial Council
8 December 2016**

‘Building strong and effective OSCE through principle-based dialogue’

Dear Ministers,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Looking around the OSCE region today, it seems there is no end to the number of threats and challenges that we face. Conflicts have emerged and been fueled in the OSCE area, and along with them, all of the tragedies of war that we are all too familiar with. We are struggling with developing a common response to the refugee and migrant crisis. At the same time we must continue our efforts to counter violent extremism, to promote arms control, to defend human rights, and even to combat climate change.

The cascading and interrelated effects of all these challenges are coming at a time of growing mistrust, rising populism and increasing political divides.

It may at times seem that we are out of options. But we do have a chance and we have a choice: we can either “see no evil and hear no evil,” or we can put our efforts and hopes in the power of multilateral co-operation and joint solutions. This choice means building bridges.

We all know the appeal of acting alone: it is far easier. But it is also far less likely to have the desired results. The results that we need for the peace and prosperity of each of our countries.

Dear Ministers, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the 323 parliamentarians of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly I am here today to offer joint actions for the improvement of current security challenges.

The Parliamentary Assembly stands ready to do its part in working for a more effective OSCE. The Assembly is an integral part of the OSCE family and we are team players – team players that can help to mobilize the political will needed for real results. In today’s security environment, being paralyzed by politics is simply not an option.

Our parliamentarians are a powerful tool of people-to-people diplomacy. All our work is guided by the key principle of enhancing dialogue. East and west of Vienna are both close to our hearts. I myself led the recent observation mission to the US elections, and only last week I came back from important talks with the leaders of both the Duma and the Federal Council in Moscow. Let me point out one more important issue: As a political assembly, we can speak out and act quickly and clearly, unconstrained by the consensus process. This we have shown by our quick ‘on-

the-ground' response soon after the attempted coup in Turkey, but also by our work in promoting a common European-wide response to the migration crisis, as well as by pursuing dialogue and mediation in response to the crisis in and around Ukraine.

In difficult times, our Assembly has always been able to open channels for dialogue to keep the discussion going.

Our world today requires clear and principled voices willing to speak up in defence of the values contained in the Helsinki Decalogue. We should not be silent when these principles are violated or close our eyes when a part of a sovereign state is occupied by another.

We should not look away when a military attempt to overthrow an elected government takes place. Nor should we mince our words when populations are deprived of their democratic rights through unfair elections, or when human rights abuses are carried out by any participating State.

Ministers,

There is no question: a strong OSCE is necessary to help to improve the security situation in our region. The OSCE field missions are some of the key assets our Organization has as we strive for improved security. It is deeply concerning that a number of these offices are facing increasing pressure from their host countries, and even the threat of closure. If our Organization is to remain functional, useful and visible in the years to come, our field missions need more, not less support from us. These offices provide useful tools. Tools that should be utilized. More, not less, OSCE involvement is needed today to reinforce security and co-operation in our region.

In the coming year, the OSCE PA – in our usual inclusive manner that puts all Members on an equal footing – will be hosting events both East and West of Vienna. Of course being Austrian myself, I also look forward to hosting several important events in Vienna itself, including one that will gather leading female decision makers to discuss security questions.

Ministers,

Before concluding, I would like to thank Minister Steinmeier for your efforts over the past year to renew dialogue, rebuild trust and restore security. Your honest assessments of the current security environment, your strong commitment to peaceful solutions and development have brought us closer to results.

I am especially looking forward to addressing this meeting next year in my home country Austria and look forward to continuing our excellent cooperation.

Thank you!