

**Remarks by OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President
George Tsereteli (MP, Georgia)**

to the Standing Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Copenhagen, Denmark
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Check against delivery.

Dear Madam President,
Excellencies,
Colleagues and friends,

It is an honour for me to participate in this meeting of the Standing Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and to address you in my capacity as President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. I would like to thank President Kyriakides for the invitation and for allowing me to share the views of the OSCE PA today.

As you know, I have taken over the responsibilities of President of the OSCE PA only recently, and I would like to use this opportunity to convey the regards and thanks of our former President and long-standing member of PACE, Ms. Christine Muttonen. I plan to build on her valuable work in encouraging multilateral dialogue and maintaining solid ties between our organizations.

I address you at a key moment in the political cycle of the OSCE Chairmanship. In two weeks, our Bureau will meet in Vienna ahead of the 2017 OSCE Ministerial Council. This meeting in Vienna will mark the conclusion of a process through which OSCE parliamentarians have stirred debates on our most pressing challenges and, through their intimate knowledge of local realities, fed input for policymakers across the OSCE area.

The challenges and the threats affecting our respective geographical scopes are regrettably increasing. This calls both of our Assemblies to unprecedented responsibility. Thematic challenges span from radicalization to terrorism, from populism to cybersecurity, from forced migration to organized crime. Other negative trends include growing political and social tensions both within and between States, as well as ongoing conflicts. One of my priorities as President is to ensure that the OSCE is fully equipped to address these challenges, to uphold the founding principles of the Helsinki Final Act, promote common values, and lend the PA's contribution to resolving conflicts.

We need to redouble our efforts to resolve conflicts in our region. In the OSCE PA we have consistently passed resolutions reiterating our support for Ukraine's territorial integrity and condemning the occupation of Crimea. But whether we're talking about the conflicts in Ukraine, about Nagorno-Karabakh, or about the conflict in Georgia and occupation of territories – all of these have tragic human consequences each and every day. This must continue to be our focus.

But we cannot lose hope. I was pleased to hear that consistent mediation efforts have recently resulted in agreement to reopen a bridge over the Dniester river in Moldova that will have a real

impact on day-to-day life for people there. Such people-focused efforts are critical for confidence and ultimately peace.

The OSCE's conflict mediation toolbox is extensive, covering early warning, capacity-building, facilitating exchanges and confidence-building. As elected representatives, we parliamentarians are the most direct link between governments and the people.

This is an area of comparative advantage of parliamentary assemblies. We are inclusive forums in which informal exchanges are as important as the official channels of discussion. The OSCE PA's geographical scope is vast, and notably includes both the United States and the Russian Federation, which makes our Assembly an essential forum in this era of growing mistrust.

We have seen in recent years not only a deteriorating geopolitical landscape, but also a worrisome erosion of core principles and commitments in the sphere of fundamental rights and democratic institutions.

Dear colleagues,

One of the PA's important areas of focus recently has been the situation in Turkey following the attempted coup in July 2016. OSCE PA leaders have consistently stressed their solidarity with the Turkish people in their fight for the preservation of democratic institutions following the failed coup and I personally led a delegation of OSCE parliamentarians last June to meet with government and parliamentary leaders.

We were told about the difficulties posed by facing three major challenges simultaneously: terrorism, refugees and the threat to state power posed by the attempted coup. Facing these challenges has placed a heavy burden on the people and institutions of Turkey and we should stand with them in dealing with all of these issues. However, we also must be clear that all actions by the government must be in line with international standards, commitments and principles of due process.

Dear friends,

The international context is complex and demands full co-operation between our assemblies and also with our respective governmental branches. Energies need to reach the challenges and not be dispelled in institutional posturing or unnecessary competition. Informed by our work on the ground, recommendations included in our most recent OSCE PA Declaration from Minsk are helping to shape policies on the OSCE's governmental side in the fields of political affairs, security, economics, environment, and human rights. Indeed, OSCE PA work in the fields of human trafficking, terrorism, gender, migration are all contributing to preparations as OSCE Ministers plan to gather in less than two weeks.

For instance, one of the clearest examples of our practical contribution has been on the topic of migration, which is high on the OSCE PA agenda. Over the past two years, our Ad Hoc Committee on Migration has visited frontline facilities and conducted a number of fact-finding visits to exchange with experts, civil society representatives, political actors, and migrants and refugees. Last week, the committee's recommendations, which aim at enhancing the OSCE's work in this field and at improving the treatment of and prospects for migrants, was presented at a conference in Malta organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean. Through such co-operation, we make sure to contribute to the United Nations global compact on

migration we expect to be adopted next year. Just yesterday in Vienna, our work was also presented to the OSCE's governmental side at the Permanent Council.

Our interest in issues such as migration and countering terrorism has led to the creation of useful platforms for dialogue between our delegations. This, in turn, has enabled our Assembly to open new lines of communication.

Our emphasis on dialogue and our never-ending commitment to multilateral diplomacy in the pursuit of comprehensive security has led to a number of successes this year. At our last Winter Meeting in February and our Annual Session in July, we were glad to welcome a delegation from Uzbekistan for the first time since 2003. Our main meeting in Minsk allowed a rare opportunity for parliamentarians and international experts to freely exchange with local civil society representatives on the situation of human rights in Belarus. And true to the OSCE's approach of being a forum for open dialogue, our Parliamentary Assembly remains the only pan-European forum where parliamentarians from the Russian Federation still regularly engage in our meetings and work as Members of the Assembly.

Dear colleagues,

Over the past two decades the unique expertise and complementary efforts of our two organizations has played an essential role in the transformation of Europe. The complexity of current affairs demands that we be creative to tackle them effectively and build bridges on many levels: between and within countries, societies, organizations. Our parliamentary assemblies must continue to work together and face these new realities but must never compromise on our principles.

The opportunities are ample. The OSCE PA has traditionally enjoyed fruitful co-operation with your assembly on election observation missions, including on three occasions just this year in Armenia, Albania, and Kyrgyzstan. We look forward to renewing this relationship during next year's elections, and we appreciate the continued efforts undertaken by our Secretaries General to regularly enhance co-operation in that field. In particular, we could focus more on improving our co-operation on post-election monitoring capabilities.

But I suggest we should not limit ourselves to election observation alone. Clearly, we can only benefit from a deepened relationship in other arenas as well. For instance, your Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons has undertaken commendable work to highlight the plight of migrants and refugees in Europe and protecting their human rights and our shared humanitarian values. Your Parliamentary Assembly, through your "No Hate No Fear" initiative, has also been a strong voice to safeguard civil rights and fundamental freedoms in the fight against terrorism. Your monitoring efforts are also widely recognized as an important tool for democratic development in Europe.

We have much in common, and much work to do. I am interested in hearing your thoughts and suggestions on how we might proceed, and I thank you once more for welcoming me here today.