

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's 25th Annual Session opens in Tbilisi



Speaker David Usupashvili addresses the 25th Annual Session.

With nearly 300 parliamentarians in attendance from 54 countries, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's 25th Annual Session opened Friday with speeches by Georgian Speaker of Parliament David Usupashvili, President Giorgi Margvelashvili, and Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili, as well as OSCE PA President Ilkka Kanerva (MP, Finland) and the OSCE's Chairman-in-Office, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier.

The Georgian host officials welcomed the Parliamentary Assembly to Tbilisi, noting the significance for Georgia hosting the event, particularly in the context of the 25th anniversary of Georgian independence. Speaker Usupash-

vili said that the best way to address common challenges is to strengthen global security.

Prime Minister Kvirikashvili highlighted reforms that Georgia has implemented but also noted the challenges the country continues to face. He called for the restoration of a full-fledged OSCE Mission in Georgia.

"As we see the interrelated effects that various crises are having on our mutual security, we cannot afford to retreat into an isolationist mindset. Instead we should utilize the OSCE's comprehensive security framework and work together towards building bridges, not walls," said President Kanerva.

Foreign Minister Steinmeier said that he "welcome[s] the manifold efforts by the members of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to create scope for dialogue and to support the process of mediation." Also addressing the plenary was PACE President Pedro Agramunt.

Following the opening addresses, parliamentarians took up the supplementary item Strengthening Relations Between the OSCE PA and the OSCE, principally sponsored by Gudmundur Steingrimsson (MP, Iceland). The item was adopted by unanimous vote with no amendments.

Standing Committee allocates 15 supplementary items to committees and plenary

Chaired by President Kanerva, the OSCE PA's Standing Committee approved on Friday 15 supplementary items for general debate, allocating five to the First Committee, two to the Second Committee and six to the Third Committee. Two supplementary items, Strengthening Relations Between the OSCE PA and the OSCE and the Compromise Supplementary Item on Unrestricted Access of Members of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Attending Official OSCE Events and Other Activities, were allocated to plenary sessions.

The Standing Committee also heard a report of Treasurer Doris Barnett (MP, Germany), focused on the OSCE PA's present financial situation. Maintaining a high level of activities, the Assembly remains within its approved budget,

Barnett reported. Standing Committee members approved the budget for the 2016-2017 financial year unanimously.

Secretary General Roberto Montella presented his report, focusing on his priorities of strengthening the Secretariat and enhancing co-operation with partners, and thanked President Kanerva for his two years of service during challenging times.

Special Representatives, leaders of election observation missions, and chairs of ad hoc committees also reported to the Standing Committee. Information was further provided on upcoming meetings of the OSCE PA, including the Autumn Meeting to be held in Skopje 29 September to 2 October. Kyrgyzstan also announced its intentions to host the 2018 Autumn Meeting.

Working lunch focuses on Georgia

A working lunch on Friday organized by the OSCE PA's Georgian Delegation featured discussions on the rule of law, democracy and transparency in Georgia. Featuring keynote speeches by Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili and Professor S. Neil MacFarlane, the event was moderated by Tedo Japaridze, Acting Head of the Georgian Delegation to the OSCE PA and Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Parliament of Georgia. Speakers focused in particular on the state of reform efforts in the country.

Programme ~ Saturday, 2 July

09.30 – 11.00	First Committee (<i>Queen Tamar Hall – Hall 11</i>)
11.30 – 13.00	Second Committee (<i>King David IV the Builder – Hall 11</i>)
11.30 – 13.00	Third Committee (<i>Queen Tamar Hall – Hall 11</i>)
13.00 – 14.30	Working Lunch on Gender Issues (<i>King Pharnavaz I Hall - Hall 3E</i>)