

# **OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Session**

**Tbilisi, Georgia | 1 July 2016**

## **Opening Address by Chairman of the Georgian Parliament David Usupashvili**

I would like to greet the President of Georgia, Mr. Margvelashvili; Prime Minister of Georgia, Mr. Kvirikashvili; OSCE PA President, Mr. Kanerva. Minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany, Mr. Steinmeier; OSCE PA Secretary General, Mr. Montella; Heads of National Delegations; Members of the Delegations and our dear guests.

On behalf of the Parliament of Georgia, I would like to welcome you to our country on this very important occasion and wish you a successful 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Session of the OSCE.

Twenty-five years ago, on 9 April 1991, based on the results of the referendum, the Parliament of Georgia adopted the Act of Reestablishment of Independence of Georgia. In the same period, on 2-3 April 1991, the OSCE predecessor, Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) made an important decision at the meeting in Madrid concerning the inclusion of the parliamentary representatives of the Members States into matters of security and cooperation. Thus, the Parliamentary Assembly was established. As a result, we can safely say that modern Georgia and OSCE PA are historical twins, celebrating their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary together. Congratulations to both Georgian citizens and OSCE PA Members.

The theme of this year's conference is noteworthy: '25 years of parliamentary cooperation: building trust through dialogue'. The last 25 years have been turbulent and painful for Georgia and not only. This period was filled with glorious and exciting, as well as tragic events. If we look closely, we will see that all the pain and suffering that took place in the last quarter of a century in the OSCE member states as well as throughout world, was the result of a lack of dialogue, lack of trust, lack of co-operation.

Therefore, today, as we gather here in Tbilisi, the primary theme of our discussion will revolve around the dialogue between peoples, nations, governments, opposing sides and parties involved in conflict. Dialogue is the only right way to restore confidence and solve such problems. Indeed, we call for more dialogue and less monologue. We ought to do more listening and less ignoring. We need to have more arguments and less tanks. We need to allow for more compromise and less categorical positions. More trust and less hostility.

I am confident that 'dialogue' will be the leitmotif of the entire Session and will be reflected in every decision that the Assembly makes.

OSCE is the world's biggest and most influential organization in security matters, because of its ability to best meet the demands of different epochs. This is how the Helsinki Process

gave us a conference, then the organization with its Parliamentary Assembly. Maybe it is time for us to think about yet another transformation for the organization, in order for it to effectively handle the growing deficit of security and cooperation of modern world.

Georgia's case compels us to consider this notion further. OSCE was not only unable to prevent and stop the Russian aggression, but also found itself expelled from the territory of Georgia. The ethnic cleansing of Georgian people from the South Ossetian territory was followed by the eviction of the OSCE from Tbilisi. This is why we ought to start thinking about the necessary transformation of the OSCE for it to effectively accomplish its mission.

We will be pleased if our experience serves as a demonstration for the need to move forward and establish new standards. In this regard, we are glad that the OSCE did not give the Peacekeeping Status to the Russian armed forces in Eastern Ukraine, as was the case for many years in Georgia with respect to Abkhazia and Tskhinvali. But we all learn from our mistakes and we must continue to do more in this direction.

A human life is a value of the highest rank. Security is the highest mission of our community. But at the same time, humans have the desire to feel secure while being free; to live in prosperity, not in poverty; to have justice, not discrimination. The above mentioned matters are why Georgian cooperation with the OSCE is so important. For us, the OSCE is not just a security organization, we have a very fruitful cooperation with other structures when it comes to developing democracy, raising the standards of human rights, etc. Therefore, Georgia will always be a patriotic Member State of the OSCE, ready to receive the benefits it has to offer but also contributing to global security, just like we do with other international organizations such as NATO and the European Union.

War and terrorism do not recognize borders and become a terrible threat to all. We see this in many countries; we encounter this in Europe as well. In today's world, there is no such thing as walled-off safety and soon there will be no walled-off wellbeing either. Therefore, I think anyone who tries to solve globalized problems in an isolationist manner is mistaken. Handling global threats alone without any partners will result in a quicker defeat. I am telling this to our British colleagues as well as our Russian ones, but for very different reasons. We need to consolidate our efforts and deal with all types of threats together; all other paths will lead us to defeat. Georgia will continue to strengthen the international system and will try to do its part, whether by hosting this Session or anything else within our powers.

Finally, let me emphasize how honored and privileged we are to be able to host the esteemed elected officials of 57 countries, who will be making decisions in the name of 57 nations – it is a unique opportunity for us to introduce ourselves to you as well.

We will be glad if your stay in Georgia will not only be effective, but pleasant as well. Hopefully, you will be leaving our country with a desire to come back as soon as possible.

Thank you.