

Tbilisi Declaration adopted, Christine Muttonen elected President



Voting in plenary session in Tbilisi, 4 July 2016

Bringing together nearly 300 parliamentarians from 54 OSCE participating States, the 25th Annual Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly took place 1-5 July 2016 in Tbilisi. The Session was held under the theme “25 Years of Parliamentary Co-operation: Building Trust Through Dialogue,” commemorating the quarter-century anniversary of the Assembly’s work.

At the close of the Session, the Assembly adopted the Tbilisi Declaration and elected its new leadership. Austrian parliamentarian Christine Muttonen was elected President for a one-year term, renewable once. Viliija Aleknaite Abramikiene (Lithuania), Azay Guliyev (Azerbaijan), and Isabel Santos (Portugal) were elected to three-year terms as Vice-President, and Victor Dobre (Romania) was elected to a one-year term.

Committee officers for 2016/2017 include the following:

- General Committee on Political Affairs and Security: Chair Roger Wicker (United States), Vice-Chair Guglielmo Picchi (Italy), Rapporteur Margareta Cederfelt (Sweden)
- General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment: Chair Nilza Sena (Portugal) Vice-Chair Artur Gerasymov (Ukraine), Rapporteur Marietta Tidei (Italy)
- General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions: Chair Ignacio Sanchez Amor (Spain), Vice-Chair Ivana Dobesova (Czech Republic), Rapporteur Kyriakos Kyriakou-Hadjijanni (Cyprus)

Featuring several days of parliamentary debate in committee and plenary meetings, the Session culminated in the adoption of the 2016 Tbilisi Declaration. The Declaration contains the Assembly’s wide-ranging pronouncements and policy recommendations for the OSCE and its participating States in the fields of political affairs, economics, the environment and human rights, serving as policy guidance to governments and parliaments.

Among the issues covered in the recommendations adopted by the parliamentarians are transnational terrorism, the crisis in and around Ukraine, protracted conflicts in Georgia, countering corruption, energy, climate change, migration, and the rights of refugees.

Stressing the theme of trust-building, the Declaration “reaffirm[s] the undiminished validity and historic role of the guiding principles and common values of the Helsinki Final Act signed in 1975, including the commitments on politico-military, economic, environmental, human rights, and humanitarian issues.” It regrets however the trend of gridlock in the OSCE and urges OSCE countries to enhance the level of co-operation in addressing common challenges.

The Session featured speeches by:

- Outgoing President Ilkka Kanerva (MP, Finland)
- Incoming President Christine Muttonen (MP, Austria)
- Georgian Speaker of Parliament David Usupashvili
- Georgian President Giorgi Margvelashvili
- Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili
- OSCE Chairman-in-Office and German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier

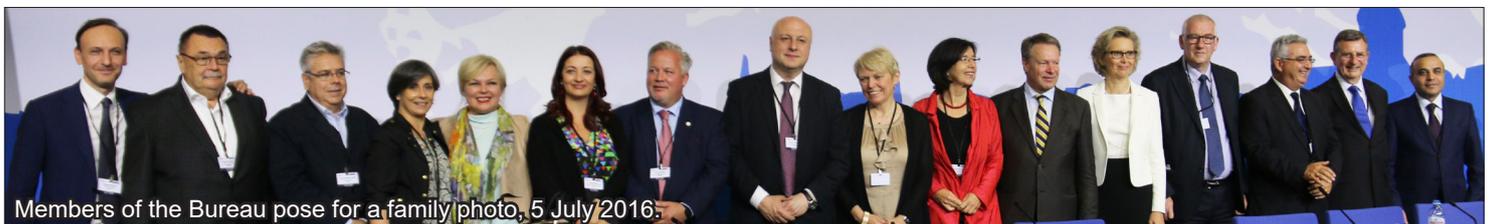
Upon being elected, Muttonen said that she would pursue direct talks with governments and other OSCE institutions on advancing avenues for closer co-operation. “Parliamentarians can play a very important role in securing peace and stability,” she said. “It will be my duty to make sure they have the possibility to do so.”

Muttonen has previously served as OSCE PA Vice-President and Special Representative for Central and Eastern Asia, and is Deputy Head of the Austrian Delegation to the PA.

In his final address as Assembly President on 5 July, Kanerva noted the importance of reviving the spirit of the Helsinki Final Act.

“As President, I have worked to reaffirm these principles, even as they have been put to the test lately. I believe that reviving the spirit of Helsinki requires ensuring that the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly remains an Assembly that is inclusive, open and transparent,” he said.

He also highlighted his special paper distributed at the Annual Session entitled “Our common vision for the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.” This paper, along with the Tbilisi Declaration and all other relevant documents, is available at www.oscepa.org.



Members of the Bureau pose for a family photo, 5 July 2016