



OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President George Tsereteli

Opening address to the 26th OSCE Ministerial Council

5 December 2019 | Bratislava

Mr. Chairperson,
Dear Ministers,
Colleagues and friends,

Over the course of this year, I have met many of you on behalf of OSCE parliamentarians to discuss our current challenges in a frank and open manner.

I thank you for this, and hope to hear similarly open and constructive statements during our meeting.

We have all heard references to the special moment of history we are in: 30 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain.

Commemorating our collective commitments has its great value, but our citizens want more than commemorations. They expect an increase in their security across all three dimensions of the OSCE.

They deserve an improvement to their everyday lives and a more optimistic outlook on their future.

They need this Organization, and, particularly, their political leaders, to respect and implement the OSCE commitments, and to demonstrate resolve in our joint efforts to overcome conflicts or implementation deficits.

If this fails, who knows what hardships and crises we will have to deplore in another 30 years?

This requires courageous, honest, and determined steps from governments.

We have recently seen some tangible achievements regarding the daily lives of citizens in eastern Ukraine, where the most divisive conflict since the end of the Cold War has dramatically jeopardized European security and caused death, destruction and continuous hardship for the affected population.

The steps taken now are the result of such political resolve, as demonstrated in particular by the Ukrainian authorities.

These developments do not remedy grave breaches of international law and OSCE commitments against Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

But they are a sign of hope that we can still make progress with the help of the OSCE if political leaders allow us to.

Minister Lavrov, I hope that this will also extend to the implementation of commitments and obligations Russia has undertaken:

For instance, in Georgia, where the situation in the Akhalkalaki district could easily develop into a human catastrophe, if borderization, blockades, and incidents like the arrest of the famous physician Gaphrindashvili continue.

We need more optimistic signs regarding the settlement of others conflicts namely in Transnistria or Nagorno-Karabakh.

Multilateralism is the only instrument to overcome deep divisions, which pose a threat to the vision of one Europe safe and free and I commend Slovakia and you, Mr. Chairman, for having made of “effective multilateralism” one of the key topics of your chairmanship.

Sadly, in today’s world we see leaders whose egocentric unilateral action shows contempt for their partners and the vision outlined in the Charter of Paris.

We should not turn a blind eye that, in several countries, there are anti-democratic attempts to capture the state.

When faced with such obstacles, this limits what the OSCE can do.

Sometimes we hear criticism – or are critical ourselves – regarding the lack of progress in conflict resolution and democratic development.

This is not fair towards our diplomats and the organization’s executive structures who employ many of the OSCE’s tools and are working hard to meet the aspirations of our citizens.

In the end, it depends on you, dear Ministers, and your Heads of States and Governments, to allow this organization to be successful.

This is why this gathering is so important to ensure adequate attention by the highest level to the OSCE.

Next year will also mark the 30th anniversary since our predecessors expressed their forward-looking vision to build democratic societies in the Copenhagen Document.

We politicians come and go. But the OSCE needs sustainability.

Those gathered in this hall must demonstrate leadership through results.

For this, we do not ask for miracles.

Among others, it is about adopting an adequate and timely budget, not abusing the consensus rule, and fully supporting OSCE Institutions and field operations.

The citizens we represent expect that this Ministerial Council will help unleash the OSCE's potential.

Your Excellencies,

The PA's recent Annual Session in Luxembourg, one of our best attended sessions ever, made another important contribution by adopting a high number of relevant policy recommendations.

They address a vast array of issues, including the unresolved conflicts in the OSCE area, democratic elections, but also, for instance, gender policies, fighting corruption, energy security, climate change and youth engagement.

As Members of Parliament, we must – and we do – stay in close contact with our voters and civil society organizations, which are key in our joint OSCE work.

By holding this year's OSCE PA Autumn Meeting in Marrakech, and through my recent visit to Egypt, we have again taken a lead in the OSCE's renewed efforts to revive and strengthen the Mediterranean Partnership.

And we continue to bring together parliamentarians and other leaders from both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, most notably when we will hold our 2020 Annual Session in Vancouver.

We hope to also welcome Asian Partners there.

Before closing, I would like to express my appreciation for Slovakia's good work chairing the organization throughout the year, which included strong support to and enhanced involvement of the OSCE's parliamentary dimension.

Thank you also for your warm hospitality here in Bratislava.

We also welcome Albania as the incoming Chairmanship. I have seen the strong commitment of the Albanian leadership during my recent visit.

I would like to use the opportunity to express my sympathy and solidarity to the Albanian people after last week's earthquake.

Thanking all the hard-working staff in the decision-making bodies and executive structures of the OSCE for their devotion to our common cause, and in particular Heads of Institutions for their continuous cooperation, I wish that the Ministerial Council debates bring us forward in our service to the peoples that we represent.