

DRAFT REPORT ON CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT

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Kyriakos Kyriakou-Hadjjiyiannis, designated OSCE PA Special Representative on Civil Society Engagement



Then Rapporteur of the third Committee Kyriakos Kyriakou-Hadjjiyiannis (Cyprus) at the meeting of the Third Committee, 21 February 2019

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Civil Society challenges for Democracy, Rule of Law, and Peace



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“There is No Democracy without Civil Society and there is no Civil Society without Democracy. Internal repression and external aggression go hand in hand”.

Dr. Kyriacos Hadjiyianni

Special Representative for Civil Society Engagement at OSCE PA

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“A political system in which the members regard one another as political equals, are collectively sovereign, and possess all the capacities, resources, and institutions they need in order to govern themselves”.

Robert A. Dahl

The participation of Civil Society as the heart of democracy

The main purpose of the participation of Civil Society in the processes of the assembly is to strengthen the dialogue for the benefit of the quality of democracy with content and views proposed by the structures of Society. Consequently, Civil Society should be able to vaccinate the content of political decisions with suggestions. Citizen participation is at the heart of democracy. Representative democracy is based on the right of the citizen to elect representatives on a regular basis and is a legacy of the OSCE participating States. In fact, bearing in mind that the form of direct democracy with the right of citizens through their initiatives to collect signatures and even hold referendums, is a prevailing tradition in some states. Participatory democracy is based on the right to influence the public authority in the exercise of its powers in a way that strengthens direct and representative democracy. That is why the right of NGOs and civil society to participate in citizens' political decision-making processes must be guaranteed. However, it is emphasized that the ultimate responsibility and accountability for decision-making lies with the public authority on the basis of democratic legitimacy.

Faced with the question of whether and to what extent civil society participation in governance in OSCE region can further democracy, we have to realize that some of these conditions are well anchored in Europe. Human rights, the rule of law, civic culture, efficient public administration, and social and economic welfare are safeguarded by the OSCE members. In comparison, the mechanisms that make political authorities responsive to the concerns of the people no longer function properly. Consequently, the discussion concentrates on how the sovereignty of the people in terms of collective self-government can be restored. The basic principle of democracy is the political equality of the citizens. The citizen should have an equal chance to influence the political process, but in order to align her or his preferences with their interests and explore alternative courses of action, information is essential. Transparency in the sense of open access to relevant information is only a necessary, not a sufficient, precondition for keeping the citizens informed. In order for citizens to be able to pursue their political interests, they must be aware that their concerns are at stake. Consequently, publicity, not transparency, makes a difference. In addition, as citizens do not live in isolation, a sphere of public communication and deliberation is needed that makes it possible to balance individual interests and find new means to achieve common interests. However, democracy is more than free and responsible opinion-forming by the citizens and the public expression of their preferences. It requires the inclusion of citizen demands in the process of policy formation, so that they have an impact on output. Accountability is generally considered the best way to connect the decisions of those politically responsible to the will of the citizens.

Appointment of the Special Representative for Civil Society Engagement

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, based on the Luxembourg resolution (2019), has appointed the first special representative for civil society, MP Pia Kauma (2019-2020), who has implemented a significant series of actions and contacts with NGOs. Then came the second appointment of MP Dr. Kyriakou Hatzigianni (2021-2022) with equally important action. The second consecutive

appointment indicates the Convention's continuing interest in making Civil Society policy one of its priorities.

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Resolution on Civil Society and Inter - governmental level on Civil Society Involvement

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly adopted a resolution supporting the involvement of civil society in its work, in order to strengthen dialogue in decision-making. On the other hand, the OSCE governmental level, despite many efforts to adopt practices of civil society participation, has not been possible as a number of countries have raised strong objections. Efforts to find a solution to this issue are ongoing but to no avail, at least to date, in establishing a procedure for approving the participation of NGOs in OSCE work. Personally, I have offered my good services at the disposal of the Special Representative to facilitate the conciliation process, and I thank him in particular for his painstaking work on the subject.

But what does the participation of the CP in the work of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly mean? In order not to misinterpret the intentions of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, we do not mean institutionalized participation in the organs of the assembly. What we mean and the spirit of the Luxembourg resolution is the participation and contribution of civil society in the dialogue. The dialogue on the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly is the cornerstone of the OSCE's philosophy of existence. So, the dialogue is strengthened with the participation of civil society, which is what is being sought.

Development of relations with NGOs

The development of relations between the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and NGOs is an urgent need. At the same time, the recognition of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly by civil society is a particularly important parameter. Civil society is mainly expressed by NGOs operating globally, regionally and locally. As a special representative I have conducted meetings with hundreds of NGOs, through physical meetings but also through tele-meetings. Conducting teleconferences facilitates the development of relations with NGOs (especially during the outbreak of the pandemic or due to other constraints) without this meaning that we substitute the value of physical meetings for dialogue.

Digitization of meetings expands opportunities between OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and NGOs

The opportunity offered for meetings through online platforms is a very good tool in order to strengthen the dialogue with NGOs. Saving time and money is a key factor in the success of strengthening relationships with NGOs. OSCE Parliamentary Assembly OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Insufficient visibility of civil society-related activities without accrediting the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly for civil society policy

While meetings and events related to civil society are being held by many OSCE Parliamentary Assembly officials, however, there is insufficient publicity for these activities, which has a detrimental effect on the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly policy as these efforts are not credited to

the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. There is a need to develop relations with NGOs from all walks of life and all topics related to the three committees. The prevailing perception that NGOs are only in the area of the Third Committee is wrong. Although this impression is justified due to the intense persecution of Human Rights activists, a matter which this committee deals with.

Need for annual planning of actions related to Civil Society

The planning of civil society-related actions on an annual basis is a particularly important factor in the effectiveness and strengthening of civil society relations. Therefore, I suggest that three annual meetings be held with NGOs in person. The first meeting should be held in parallel and on the sidelines of HDIM's work in Warsaw around October, during which there is usually a large number of NGOs from around the world. The second meeting with physical presence to be organized in the framework of the work of the autumn assembly in the country that hosts the assembly in order to give the opportunity to have a dialogue with the local NGOs. The third with a physical presence and at the same time possibility for online meetings where it will take place during the winter session in Vienna during which the rapporteurs will be able to consult their initial thoughts on their resolutions. The basis of all discussions will be the resolutions of the assembly.

Cooperation with International Organizations and participation in international thematic actions

At the same time, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly as a regional organization needs to have a significant presence in other international organizations and vice versa. As we have done this year, it is particularly important that the Special Representative responds to invitations to UN work, as well as to NGOs and international organizations to attend and present the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly positions. The special representative for civil society should be well thought out about the overall package of summer session resolutions. Equally important is the presence of the Special Representative in thematic conferences such as climate conferences during which he will be able to develop relations with NGOs.

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly OSCE Parliamentary Assembly OSCE Parliamentary Assembly OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Experimental mechanism for consulting the resolutions of the Convention with Civil Society

Organizing a meeting to consult the resolutions of the committees with the NGOs is something that has been organized for the first time. The rapporteurs of the resolutions of the committees of our assembly presented their resolutions, followed by a discussion on the final published text of the resolutions. The consultation resulted in the production of amendments to the resolutions and the strengthening of the resolutions with further ideas. However, the purpose of this experimental consultation was to gather experience in order to create a regular consultation mechanism for the resolutions of the assembly. This mechanism should be accepted by the Bureau.

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Need for academic development of Civil Society assistance to the OSCE Integrated Security Model

A third point of clarification is the need for the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to develop the theme of civil society assistance in the model of the OSCE security system. I am not at all sure that there is a common understanding among the members of the General Assembly on the role of civil society in the OSCE integrated security model. In order to examine the contribution of civil society to the, integrated security model a series of clarifications are imperative. It must be disclosed along which the concept of civil society is used and on which grounds we base the assumption that civil society participation can promote democracy and security. At the same time, during my one year of service as Special Representative on Civil Society Engagement, I will refer to a series of meetings I have had to discuss issues of concern to civil society and how it participates in the public.

National Parliaments and the need to adopt Guidelines for civil participation in political decision making on the basis of a code of conduct for democratic principles.

The fourth need concerns the national parliaments and the possibility of adopting Guidelines for civil participation in political decision making. National parliaments apply different NGO participation practices.

The basis of the Special Representative's dialogue with each parliament is the effort to seek good practice from each national parliament. It is not an end in itself to point out right or wrong, but to recognize the potential for climate change and to improve the involvement of civil society in decision-making processes.

The cooperation of the Special Representative with the national commissioners dealing with the ombudsman is particularly important. Their contribution is crucial as it can provide advice on an ongoing basis for the proper participation of civil society. The aim is to create a climate for effective participation based on human rights, democracy and the rule of law, gender equality, access to public documents, the legal status of NGOs and, finally, a code of good practice for its participation. civil society in the political decision-making system. This climate can be created by taking into account the experience, views, expertise and information associated with participation.

Another difficulty in involving civil society at national level is the current national legislation on how NGOs are regulated in the Member States. The differences between national legislation on NGOs between states are very large as we have states that NGOs enjoy all freedoms while on the other hand, we have states that apply very strict conditions and restrictions on the operation of NGOs. Many times, under the pretext of national security or terrorism, the operation of NGOs is completely hindered.

Guidelines for civil participation in political decision making need to be developed and voted on at Assembly level. The purpose of these will be to strengthen and regulate the participation of NGOs and civil society in general in the wider political decision-making system. The right of NGOs to participate in the dialogue and in the political decision-making process should be guaranteed. By adopting a resolution at the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly level, the Member States will be called upon to adopt them as far as possible. Concepts such as civil participation, decision making system, non-governmental organizations, civil society, public authority, etc. will need to be defined through the Guidelines.

APPENDIX 1

Situation related to NGO participation in OSCE events (not OSCE PA):

For several years, there have been increasing objections related to operating methods in OSCE human dimension meetings for civil society participation. Particularly in the past ten years, a number of OSCE countries have complained that individuals that they consider to be criminals or terrorists were given the opportunity to speak at human dimension events. Objections have even resulted in the cancellation/postponement of human dimension seminars. Several countries boycotted Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) meetings – intended to be the OSCE’s main annual human dimension event – due to objections to individuals who registered as civil society.

A process has been put in place to create a forum for addressing concerns related to participation by NGOs. There are ongoing discussions among diplomatic missions in Vienna related to this. For the past several years, the OSCE Chairmanship has established an Informal Working Group on Civil Society Participation at OSCE meetings within the Permanent Council to lead the process.

Background – OSCE

There is little in terms of actual agreed regulations that can guide the organizers on these issues. Specifically:

1. The 1992 Helsinki Summit meeting agreed “to make open to NGOs all plenary meetings of review conferences, ODIHR seminars, workshops and meetings ...”. However this “will not be applied to persons or organizations which resort to the use of violence or publicly condone terrorism or the use of violence.”
2. In 2002 the Permanent Council agreed that “All non-governmental organizations having relevant experience in the field of the human dimension will be invited to participate”.

In December 2016 the ODIHR Director stated that “ODIHR does not have the mandate or the legal possibility to conduct background checks of the self-registered participants”. The ODIHR Director encouraged participating States to seriously address the problem, but it went unresolved, resulting in even greater problems in following years.

Objections related to participation of specific individuals have been voiced by several delegations over the years.

Following the problems encountered in September 2017, Members of the OSCE Permanent Council established an informal consultation group led by the Swiss Ambassador to the OSCE, a role now fulfilled by the Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina. While real results have yet to be seen from this process, the fact that the concerns are being seriously discussed may in itself be of help. However, there are clearly divergent approaches by different OSCE countries, with some insisting on an open-door policy and others insisting that some people must not be admitted.

APPENDIX 2

Situation / Background – OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Within the OSCE PA, we have largely avoided the over-politicization of civil society participation at our events. This can be partly attributed to the fact that it does not happen in large scale. However, the nature of the organization is also quite different, and there has never been any suggestion that civil society should be participating within OSCE PA meetings in a formal manner (as with some OSCE meetings).

Within the OSCE PA we have a relatively simple process related to participation in meetings by non-parliamentarians. We have implemented a process through which civil society representatives wanting to attend OSCE PA meetings must gain sponsorship from an OSCE PA member participating in the meeting. These members thereby take responsibility for the participation by those they invite.

Relevant references in OSCE PA documents:

While the OSCE PA has always encouraged an open approach to civil society at OSCE events, the challenges faced in recent years have resulted in the following being adopted during OSCE PA Sessions:

Berlin Declaration, 2018:

132. Reaffirms the critical importance and fundamental value of NGO participation in all dimensions of OSCE activities;
157. Calls on all OSCE participating States to welcome NGO participation in OSCE events, and to reject all efforts to restrict participation in OSCE human dimension events so long as these groups do not resort to or condone violence or terrorism, to ensure the broadest possible contribution from NGOs to the OSCE's work and a full and unrestricted exchange of information and opinions;

Luxembourg Resolution, 2019: Resolution on The Role of Civil Society – Individuals and Non-Governmental Organizations – in Realizing the Aims and Aspirations of the OSCE

1. Stressing the role of parliamentarians, as elected officials, in making the work of the OSCE reflect the needs of the people they represent, and to be relevant to their interests and aspirations,
2. Recalling that the multilateral diplomacy initiated by the Helsinki Final Act has been enhanced significantly by individuals who, acting upon their rights, formed non-governmental organizations to monitor and report on government compliance with the principles and provisions of the Final Act and subsequent documents, and thereby to encourage all participating States to implement their existing commitments and adopt new and more specific ones in response to repeated violations,
3. Regretting that, despite the many contributions of individuals, civil society, and non-governmental organizations to the OSCE and its goals, their role continues to be restricted in many participating States, and those who seek to know and act upon their rights, including the defence of the rights and freedoms of others, often face various forms of

- harassment, including threats and physical attacks, as well as punitive legal action by governments, including fines, restricted ability to travel and imprisonment,
4. Attributing the rise of public protests in several participating States to the failure of governments to be responsive to the concerns, needs and aspirations of the people they represent, the immunity of public officials from prosecution for corruption or other criminal acts, and the failure to provide other effective means for the redress of grievances,
 5. Remaining concerned by the increase in the number of political leaders and platforms that encourage and support aspects of populism that negatively impact human rights and fundamental freedoms within and among the participating States,
 6. Noting with concern that academic freedom continues to be threatened to varying degrees in some participating States and in other parts of the world,
 7. Believing that the OSCE can, through active and direct engagement, do more to make its work known to the public and to civil society and non-governmental organizations in particular,
 8. Expressing deep concern regarding efforts by some participating States to make the OSCE less open to public observation and less conducive, particularly in the human dimension, to the participation of non-governmental organizations,
 9. Observing with considerable frustration the efforts of some participating States to dilute the impact of non-governmental organizations by creating additional ones controlled by governments and, by definition, supporting government policy,
 10. Noting that greater openness and access to OSCE meetings and activities, including those of the Assembly, can enhance the visibility of the Organization and make its work more effective,

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly:

11. Honours those individuals who, often at great risk and cost to their own human rights and physical safety, have worked within non-governmental organizations or otherwise engaged as civil society to deepen security and co-operation between the participating States, particularly by defending human rights and fundamental freedoms;
12. Commits, as a body of elected representatives of the people in participating States, to protect and promote the work of individuals, alone or in association with others, to know and act upon their rights and freedoms, to peaceably assemble to advocate those rights, to observe the ongoing work of the OSCE and to contribute directly to that work;
13. Urges governments and parliaments of the participating States to rescind laws restricting the ability of individuals, civil society and non-governmental organizations to work together and to receive voluntary financial contributions from national and international sources for promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms;
14. Reiterates its ongoing request for the unconditional release of human rights defenders and other persons detained for peaceably exercising their rights to freedom of expression, assembly, association and religion or belief;
15. Welcomes the contributions of individuals, civil society and non-governmental organizations to assist refugees, asylum seekers and all those otherwise victimized by natural disasters, conflict, repression, terrorism, human trafficking, domestic violence and other challenges in the OSCE region;
16. Encourages the active engagement of individuals, civil society, and non-governmental organizations to advance safe, inclusive and equitable societies, including by responding to all manifestations of intolerance, prejudice and discrimination;
17. Considers the work of non-governmental organizations critical to efforts to expose and combat corruption as well as to promote environmental protection in the OSCE region;
18. Recognizes the rights of individuals to have access to information, including in regard to hazards or other threats to their persons, homes and communities;

19. Commits to efforts to increase transparency and accountability in government;
20. Urges that academic freedom and respect for the rights of freedom of expression, assembly, association and movement be protected from politically motivated interference, restrictions or retaliation as an essential basis for the sharing of opinions, ideas and knowledge envisaged by the Helsinki Final Act to promote mutual understanding and benefit all peoples, including future generations;
21. Notes the value of the contributions of civil society at the annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting organized by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to hold the participating States accountable for non-compliance with their OSCE commitments, the Supplementary Human Dimension Meetings organized under the auspices of the Chair-in-Office to foster dialogue on specific issues of concern, as well as relevant meetings and events organized by various OSCE institutions and structures;
22. Encourages parliamentarians to provide opportunities for OSCE officials to appear in public to highlight the work of the Organization in responding to today's challenges;
23. Expects governments to engage civil society rather than create and control purportedly non-governmental organizations that seek to dilute public criticism by reinforcing official policies criticized by genuine non-governmental organizations;
24. Urges the participating States, through the OSCE and its institutions and field activities, to:
 - a. maintain and build upon existing practices and precedents relating to the participation of non-governmental organizations in meetings and seminars organized under OSCE auspices and particularly those in the human dimension, and reject efforts to restrict their participation;
 - b. allow the Chair-in-Office, in consultation with the previous and incoming Chairs-in-Office (the Troika) as well as relevant OSCE institutions, the discretion to rule on the validity of claims by representatives of participating States that an individual or non-governmental organization seeking to participate in an official OSCE event "resorts to the use of violence or publicly condones terrorism or the use of violence";
 - c. open sessions of the Permanent Council to public observation, including but not necessarily limited to live streaming on the Internet;
 - d. expand regular consultation and co-operation with non-governmental organizations which engage in domestic election observation, monitor human rights and fundamental freedoms, provide expertise on democratic institution building, promote respect and tolerance in society, and respond to the needs of victims, including by considering the appointment of a Special Representative of the Chair-in-Office for Civil Society;
25. Suggests that the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly:
 - a. consider designating a representative among its delegates to serve with Secretariat support as a focal point for public engagement, with the goals of facilitating access of individuals and non-governmental organizations to meetings of the Assembly and broadening the inclusion of non-governmental organizations and experts more frequently in official presentations made to the Assembly to introduce debate topics at Annual Sessions as well as Winter and Autumn Meetings;
 - b. develop and present to the Assembly for consideration proposals to increase opportunities for non-governmental organizations to suggest and work with delegates to organize side events, especially at Winter and Autumn Meetings, within the existing timeframes and venues;
 - c. be strongly represented by its officers, special representatives and delegates at Human Dimension Implementation Meetings and other meetings of the OSCE where the rights of individuals and the role of civil society and non-governmental organizations in achieving the aims of the Helsinki Final Act are discussed.

APPENDIX 3

Actions 2021-2022 from Special Representative for Civil Society Dr. Kyriakos Hadjiyiannis: Ensuring democracy through dialogue

As Special Representative of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE / ODIHR) on Civil Society Involvement, I had the opportunity to attend a meeting of the Civil Society Platform in Warsaw on 14/10/2022 with topic "Human dimension



in the OSCE: Revival of basic principles from the past, looking to the future". The OSCE faces significant challenges in all three dimensions of its action (political-security, economic-environmental and human) and these are particularly strong in the human dimension. The escalation of geopolitical tensions within the OSCE has a very negative impact on the protection of human rights. The non-realization of the Meeting for the Implementation of the Human Dimension is an indication of these consequences. The need to activate more effective mechanisms so that states are truly accountable for the commitments they have made in the field of the human dimension. Finally, the importance of the participation of civil society organizations in the activities of the OSCE, while acknowledging the existence of difficulties, due to the lack of the necessary consent on the part of all OSCE participating States.

Two weeks later, I participated in the online meeting on "The Impact of Populism on

European Institutions and Civil Society" on 27/10/21.

During the online session of the OSCE PA Standing Committee - 04/11/2021 in the framework of the 19th Autumn Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE PA), I had the opportunity to take part in an online session of the OSCE PA Standing Committee of the Assembly. During the discussion on the current activities of the Convention, I emphasized to the delegates that my main goal is to facilitate the interaction between the OSCE / ODIHR and civil society, in order to enrich the work of the Convention. Consulting civil society can have multiple benefits as it involves experts who can provide important know-how on key issues such as climate change and human rights violations. At the same time, I participated in the Conference on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), held in Warsaw, and had contacts with both ODIHR experts and representatives of Non-Governmental Organizations. during which the expectations and challenges faced by civil society in its interaction with the OSCE were discussed. There is a need for OSCE participating States to adopt and implement the ODIHR Guidelines for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, while there is concern about the worsening of the incarceration of political prisoners without trial.

Then on 04/11/2021 I was given the opportunity to participate in an online session of the OSCE Parliamentary Mediterranean Forum during the work of the 19th Autumn Meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) . It is a fact that the Mediterranean region is already suffering from the effects of climate change, while the recording of last summer as the warmest to date and the fires that burned huge forest areas in Cyprus, Greece, Turkey and other Mediterranean countries. There is a need to take targeted actions to address these effects. In this context, the importance of cooperation at the scientific level to address the effects of climate change, as this cooperation has the potential to overcome any diplomatic obstacles.



In an online session of the OSCE Joint Committee on the current developments in Afghanistan that took place on 05/11/2021, which concluded yesterday the work of the 19th Autumn Meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (CC). On the current developments and the situation in Afghanistan, I made extensive reference to the overall work being done, both by OSCE field missions and by they were forced to leave the country. Additional resources must be made available to support these countries in managing migration, preventing terrorism and combating organized crime. The withdrawal of US and allied forces from Afghanistan combined with the limited presence of international organizations on the ground creates a huge gap and stressed that the OSCE must help strengthen humanitarian operations in order to continue the safe evacuation of Afghan civilians. The Afghan people should not pay the price for the Taliban's actions. The OSCE must be able to press for the protection of human rights, the prevention of the export of terrorism, the provision of support to both the Afghan people, in order to prevent a new humanitarian crisis and future similar cases. Civil society in such cases contributes to combating violent extremism and radicalization and to providing support to those leaving the country, especially women and girls, who are in a particularly precarious situation.



Then, on 17/11/2021, I participated in a seminar of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) on violence against women in politics and public life. Violence against women and girls is an international issue that extends across the social spectrum. The extent and forms of violence against women in politics and public life are particularly worrying and violence against women politicians is aimed at discouraging their participation in political events.



Women journalists and activists often face the same challenges, with a growing number of threats, attacks, and even assassinations, and stressed that the voices of independent and reputable journalists continue to be silenced around the world. The COVID-19 pandemic is deepening gender inequalities for women and girls. It is important to put an end to the silence of women about the multiple forms of violence they are experiencing, and added that in order to achieve this, healthier conditions and better structures must be created in each state.

In my capacity as Special Representative for Civil Society, I attended an online meeting of the Migration As Hoc Committee on 12/12/2012. With regard to the situation on the EU's eastern borders, the EU, due to the lack of legal channels for the transfer of refugees to its

territory, is exposed to blackmail from countries that use human suffering and systematically push migrants across European borders to secure political benefits. Managing refugee and migration flows is a huge challenge, for which a comprehensive solution must always be found with respect for human rights but also with a view to ensuring the security and interests of all states.

For a similar issue "Combating intolerance towards refugees and migrants" I participated on 17/12/2021 as Special Representative of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE / ODIHR) on Community Participation Citizens, in a teleconference co-organized by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE) and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on combating intolerance towards refugees and migrants. It is important to realize that refugees and migrants can make a significant contribution to the societies of their host countries, if given the opportunity, and that citizens' perceptions have a significant impact on this perspective. International and local NGOs can make a significant contribution to shaping positive perceptions. The development of effective interpersonal contacts between the local population and refugees or migrants, as well as the encouragement of the local population to participate in voluntary activities, strengthens sympathy and understanding and creates the conditions for the cultivation of positive perceptions in the host countries. Civil society organizations are ideal actors for promoting this type of action. Moreover, efforts to cultivate positive perceptions in the societies of the host countries run into additional challenges when citizens of front-line countries need to accommodate disproportionately large numbers of migrants and refugees. This is a result of the unacceptable refusal of other states to contribute to the hosting of refugees and migrants and their instrumentalization by states seeking to secure political exchanges. Therefore, we must make every effort to find a holistic solution to migration, in order to reap its most significant benefits in the most efficient way.

The topic of "clean energy revolution and its effects on the OSCE region" occupied an online dialogue of the OSCE Central Committee - 05/02/2022. The role of Civil Society is important for the promotion and implementation of the energy transition, since the participation of Civil Society contributes positively to the successful implementation of the relevant policy decisions, whether they are taken nationally or internationally. In recent years, Civil Society has made persistent demands for climate protection, more than ever there is a need to adopt a social culture that will incorporate scientific achievements for the benefit of society. They demand measurable results in terms of achieving the goals of the energy transition and noted that the education system has contributed to the correct information about the importance of the green transition, especially in the consciousness of the new generations.



Also, the ignorance of part of the public opinion about the green transition can be an important deterrent to the State's effort to adopt the necessary policies. In this context, society should be aware that the energy transition has high economic costs, but at the same time it should be aware of the negative consequences on the quality of life of not moving to a green growth model. Political timidity and reluctance are further factors slowing down the energy transition. In this context, the current energy crisis will not be an isolated or temporary event, predicting that other similar crises will follow, as maintaining the balance of energy supply and demand will be difficult to maintain in the future. These imbalances will create inflationary pressures, which in turn will shake the confidence and resilience of civil society, and this, combined with the insecurity arising from current geopolitical developments, further reduces investor confidence, whose contribution is required for the realization of the projects that are necessary for the implementation of the energy transition. Civil society and especially the younger generation will have to fight for a new perspective focusing on energy justice. The current situation is a unique opportunity to promote the

adoption of a sustainable energy model in the wider OSCE region. The importance of "energy democracy" is enormous as the energy transition should be based on socially just, participatory and democratic parameters and reiterated that the involvement of Civil Society in consultation and decision-making, both locally and nationally level, ensures the principles of transparency and the rule of law.

At the same time, as Vice President of the Ad Hoc Committee of the OSCE GA and Special Representative of the Assembly for Civil Society, I had visited on 19-20 / 03/22 immigrant reception centers in Lesbos and Samos.

Together with other members of the delegation we visited the reception and identification center in Lesbos and the Closed Controlled Structure of Samos and will have separate meetings with local authorities, representatives of the competent security bodies, as well as representatives of



the European Border and Coast Guard and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The delegation also had meetings with non-governmental organizations operating on the two islands.

Then in an online meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Immigration of the OSCE Central Committee on 29/03/2022. An on-site visit by Commission members to immigrant reception centers in Lesvos and Samos was carried out. During the meeting, issues related to the new legislation governing the operating framework of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), as well as the living conditions in immigrant reception centers were discussed.



In Athens, together with the members of the Ad Hoc Committee for Immigration, we had a meeting with members of the Greek delegation in OSCE. At the same time, as the Special Representative for the involvement of Civil Society, I had meetings, among others, with the Ombudsman and with representatives of the National Commission for Human Rights.

Then as Special Representative of the OSCE PA, I had visited Albania and Serbia on 28/03/2022. I had a short working visit to Albania. During his visit to Albania, I had separate meetings, among others, with the Ombudsman and a delegation of the Human Rights Committee of the Albanian Parliament. Then, on Wednesday, March 30, 2022, I went to Serbia, where I had led a delegation of the Assembly to observe the presidential and early parliamentary elections in the country, on April 3, 2022.

The war in Ukraine has created new data, bringing us face to face with the biggest refugee crisis since World War II. Therefore, the need to categorize refugees and immigrant groups is now imperative, with the basic criterion being the need to protect them and not their nationality. The very difficult situation created in many European countries due to the reception of the huge wave of refugees from Ukraine makes the need to meet the needs of these people insurmountable.

Between 10 and 11 May 2022, I participated as a Special Representative for the Participation of Civil Society in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) at a UN High Level Conference in Malaga on "For a future free of terrorism: The role of human rights, the rule of law and the involvement of civil society in the fight against terrorism ". As keynote speaker at the meeting on "The role of parliamentarians and civil society in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism".

Recently, 16/06/2022, I have participated as the keynote speaker at the OSCE Asia Conference on: "Strengthening Security for All and All - Synergies and Cooperation Opportunities between Europe





and Asia", held in Vienna. In my speech, I pointed out, among other things, that in the current era of multilateralism under intense pressure and relations between states have been disrupted due to geopolitical and other problems, civil society can make a significant contribution, internationally and nationally, to de-escalate tensions and promote dialogue, if it cooperates effectively with state institutions.

In this context, I noted that The OSCE acts as a platform for dialogue between the national

parliaments of the OSCE participating States, with the participation of civil society, facilitating the transfer of know-how on a wide range of issues, such as human rights, environmental protection and the fight against terrorism.

Regarding the cooperation of the national parliaments with the civil society, I noted that the inclusion of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the consultation process can significantly strengthen the citizens' confidence in the legislative process. Furthermore, the NGOs can make a positive contribution to monitoring the implementation of state commitments, as they result from relevant international conventions.

Finally, I would like to welcome the participation of civil society organizations in activities in the Organization's Asian partner countries, which concern the integration of the gender dimension, the mitigation of the effects of the war in Afghanistan and the improvement of living conditions. groups, especially women and young people.

Work by Special Representative Pia Kauma, 2019-2021

Ms. Kauma was appointed by the OSCE PA President following the adoption of the Luxembourg Declaration calling for steps in this regard. She participated in several events, such as the HDIM, in this capacity, and met with a range of civil society actors to hear their concerns. In February 2019 she organized a side event on the fringes of the OSCE PA Winter Meeting with a civil society network; the intention was to bring multiple actors together in one group, rather than having competing events.

Ms. Kauma also sponsored participation in a couple of OSCE PA events by some civil society groups she had worked with. She held some individual meetings online and in person. Finally, upon specific request, on one occasion she organized a meeting between a civil society actor to the



relevant delegation so that they could directly make their case to the OSCE PA delegation. This facilitating role was greatly appreciated.

APPENDIX 4: Main Speeches

Briefing Talking points for Kyriakos Hadjiyianni, Special Representative on Civil Society Engagement Standing Committee, 3 November 2021

- I was pleased to be appointed as Special Representative on Civil Society Engagement by the President, and have been active in examining issues in this field.
- It is of course a big topic. I suspect that consultation with civil society experts is a standard part of work for most of us. Civil society can include international NGOs, neighbourhood associations, business interests and many more. They provide important expertise on climate change, on disarmament, and on human rights monitoring, but also on Global Sustainable Goals.
- Of course, I have no intention of engaging in the substance of all of these topics. However, I do hope to be able to facilitate their work and to ensure that our Assembly can benefit from input by civil society representatives that want to speak with us.
- The OSCE governmental side continues to experience significant difficulties related to civil society participation particularly in human dimension events. They have an informal process looking at this. I stand ready to support this process if considered useful.
- I was pleased to participate in the celebrations of ODIHR's 30th anniversary last month, and took the opportunity to meet with ODIHR experts as well as many NGO representatives. I think it is important that we understand both their expectations and the challenges that they face in interacting with the OSCE.
- While in Warsaw, I was also honoured to address a civil society organized side event focused on human dimension issues. This conference reaffirmed my belief that we have much to benefit from close interaction with civil society.
- Through the many meetings I have had with Civil Society actors from many countries in the OSCE region, I would like to inform the committee about the deteriorating situation regarding the persecution of Human Rights Defenders. In many countries the situation has gotten out of hand. I have noted very strongly the phenomenon of imprisoning people as political prisoners without trial, to be the rule and not the exception.
- I identify the need for the OSCE participating States to adopt and implement the ODIHR Guidelines on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders which are based on OSCE commitment and universally recognized human rights standards that OSCE Participating States have undertaken to adhere to.
- I will try to meet and talk with a large number of NGOs. Listen to as many NGOs and activists as possible. For this reason, I will respond to the invitations I receive for meeting with them, either in person or via teleconferences. At the same time, through participation in seminars and conferences, such as the one I attended a week ago when I attended the conference which organized from ecas europe on «The Impact of Populism on European Institutions and on Civil Societies». Furthermore, I will attend to the next Human Dimension Seminar (HDS) which will take place on 16-17 November 2021 on the topic of Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Girls. The conference organized

by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), will take place in Warsaw and online.

- Field visits:
- I will try, in addition to the ODIHR Program which applies to five countries, to talk to national parliaments about strengthening their role in developing the engagement/ involvement of civil society in their work. The objective of the visits will be the examination of the situation of civil society in those countries, and be informed about caps and challenges, as well as identification of good practices.
- I hope that as Special Representative, I will continue to facilitate opportunities for this interaction.

The role of civil society in raising awareness of the green transition in OSCE region

Civil society organizations (CSOs) are considered vehicles of change. Alongside governments and the media, they play an active role in identifying local community needs and designing and implementing collective actions. CSOs are also beneficiaries of sustainable development. However, CSOs in many Countries face several challenges that affect their work and effectiveness. Moreover, they have been deeply affected, like other sectors, by the COVID-19 pandemic. CSOs can play an important role in the green transition. However, in order to fulfil their potential, more support from their governments and other regional and international agencies to enhance their capacities.

To begin with, Civil society organizations (CSOs) in our Region (Eastern Mediterranean) and OSCE countries often lack the adaptive management capacity that is essential to become effective agents for coordinated and long-term development processes. This leads to haphazard, uncoordinated interventions and a lack of shared goals. By working in silos, CSOs risk duplicating efforts, missing out on opportunities to capitalise on the work of other CSOs, and potentially undermining initiatives. CSOs in the region also struggle to apply innovative practices and methods given their limited financial resources and lack of synergies with other institutions and organisations. Additionally, existing legal frameworks in some countries region limit innovative practices and hamper CSOs' agency to address environmental challenges.

Recently, civil society has been considered to be under serious attack in several countries and civic actions in societies around the world are impacted by the “shrinking space” effects, which also apply to Eastern Mediterranean and OSCE countries. CSOs in the region working on environmental issues, in relation to the green transition are particularly vulnerable to this shrinkage because of the lack of vision on environmental issues, which are not considered a priority in most countries especially non-EU members.

Furthermore, governments do not consider CSOs as key partners in the field of environment and sustainable development. Other obstacles stem from the limited resources available for CSOs working on the green transition in comparison to those working on charity issues and health, which poses additional challenges for CSOs in this field. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, societies around the globe were put under lockdown for different periods. The work of many CSOs was stunted, as crucial activities were put on hold and communities that were usually served were left

unattended. CSOs have faced serious challenges, such as delays in operations, funding shortages, difficulties in cooperation and coordination with partners, downsizing for failing to pay staff salaries and rent, and lack of technological platforms to operate efficiently respecting social distancing measures.

The new Agenda for Cyprus and the green transition Based on the conviction that, sustainable prosperity and resilience can only be built in strong partnership across the country and the Region. The above Agenda for the Mediterranean and OSCE countries highlights opportunities for new partnerships on strategic priorities of green and digital transition. Although COVID-19 has had devastating effects on the world economy, it also offers opportunities for the green transition in the recovery process.

While the 2008 recession led to a “grey” transition scenario, the post-COVID-19 context can be the occasion to boost the transition to a sustainable and green economic model by investing in clean-energy jobs, healthcare for all, ensuring safety and civil rights, and positioning climate justice high on the priority list.

According to this approach, on the 23rd of September 2021, the Cyprus Parliament voted for the enactment of the new legislation regarding the liberalisation of the electricity market in Cyprus, which provides the opportunity to individuals and legal entities to obtain licence for the production, transport, distribution, supply and storage of electricity and providing third parties access to power transport and distribution infrastructures.

The new legislation aims to enhance the position, rights and role of the end customers of electricity with the introduction of further protection, new rights and provisions. Specifically, it aims to offer the opportunity to all consumers to have a direct stake in producing, consuming or sharing energy as well as to deliver real choice for all end customers, new business opportunities, competitive prices, efficient investment signals and higher standards of service. Having said that, citizens will have the chance to take ownership of the energy transition, benefit from new technologies to reduce their bills and participate actively in the market.

The new legislation also provides for the establishment and operation of citizen energy communities by which certain groups of household customers are enabled to participate in the electricity market, who otherwise might not have been able to do so, and have access to a citizen energy community's network on fair and cost-reflective terms.

Moreover, the Cyprus Energy Regulatory Authority is the competent energy regulatory authority in Cyprus whose main objective is to ensure the smooth operation of the energy market in Cyprus. The new legislation that was voted by the Cyprus Parliament provides that Cyprus Energy Regulatory Authority is legally distinct and functionally independent of any other public or private entity, it takes autonomous decisions independently of any political organization, it draws up separate budget forecasts, with budgetary autonomy and with sufficient human and financial resources to accomplish its duties. Cyprus Energy Regulatory Authority aims, amongst others, in protecting the final consumers including vulnerable customers. It also encourages and facilitates genuine competition in the electricity market, avoiding adverse discrimination and aiming ultimately at reduced prices of electricity.

Role of CSOs Over the years, CSOs have proven to play an important and unique role among other stakeholders as they advocate for change and raise public awareness on existing challenges; provide services to meet social needs; act as experts given that they bring unique knowledge and experience

to shape policy and strategy as well as identifying and suggesting solutions; contribute to capacity-building of various segments of society; and represent and give power to the voice of marginalised or under-represented communities.

In conclusion, to fulfil their roles and address existing challenges, CSOs contribute to policy analysis, policy-making and strategy formulation at international, regional, national and local levels; assist in the implementation and localisation of policies in collaboration with national and local governments; develop innovative approaches, good practices, participatory methodologies and multi-stakeholder partnerships; enhance the resilience and meaningful participation of vulnerable and marginalised communities; facilitate knowledge exchange and sharing of good practices and lessons learned; and support monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Briefing of talking points Kyriakos Hadjiyianni, Special Representative on Civil Society Engagement Standing Committee, 25 February 2022

- Since being appointed as Special Representative on Civil Society Engagement, I have remained engaged in advocating an open approach to civil society by both the OSCE and other bodies.
- Most notably, recognising the difficulties that the OSCE governmental side has related to NGO participation in their meetings, I visited Warsaw to participate in the events surrounding ODIHR's 30th anniversary. This served as an opportunity to meet with many civil society representatives interested in OSCE work. It also served as an opportunity to explore the challenges NGOs face.
- The OSCE governmental side continues to experience significant difficulties related to civil society participation particularly in human dimension events. This is politically sensitive, and they have an informal process looking at this. I of course expressed my readiness to support this process if considered useful. While I would be pleased to engage, the responsibility for fixing these problems lies, of course, with OSCE governments and the Permanent Council.
- I have also participated in several other events with a strong civil society component, ensuring that the OSCE PA remains a voice encouraging openness and active engagement.
- In recent months I have participated in a series of meetings with NGOs from different OSCE countries. A relevant list of meetings is attached for transparency purposes. At the same time I started meetings in different countries with commissioners related to civil society to discuss and seek good practices related to the participation of the CP in the decision-making processes in each country separately.

- The main issues that have occupied civil society in recent months are: the green transition due to the international climate meeting, secondly the violation of human rights in crisis areas and thirdly the course of democracy and the rule of law.
- In relation to the role of the CP in the green transition, I call on the rapporteur of the second committee to include in his resolution the need to strengthen the role of the CP for the green transition.
- The prosecution of HR Defenders is a major concern for civil society in most OSCE countries. The situation is out of control and I am preparing an additional resolution for this purpose.
- The involvement of the CP in the Member States is very disappointing. The level and perceptions prevailing in various OSCE countries about the role and participation of the CP in a democratic state is very worrying.
- The basis for CP involvement should be the principles for proper CP involvement, as defined by the OASE / ODIHR, which aim to enhance CP involvement in the public decision-making system.
- The civic charter provide a framework for participation of Civil Society. The civic charter is grounded in our common humanity and reflects universally accepted human rights, freedoms, and principles. It provides a framework for people's participation that identifies their rights within existing international law and agreements. It is imperative that all governments, all levels of public administration, international institutions, business and civil society organizations worldwide fully respect and implement the provisions of this Charter.
- What is most important for my work, however, is ensuring that the OSCE PA itself is open to engagement with civil society. Overall, I am pleased with what I see. I know that our President and other Officers regularly consult civil society experts, particularly during field visits. Similarly, exchanges with NGOs is a standard part of all of our election observation activities as organized by the Secretariat. We have also regularly had civil society representatives as expert speakers in our many web dialogues in recent years.
- Looking at our formal meetings, I believe that we have a good system in place, through which civil society that wishes to attend our meetings gain agreement of a Member of the Assembly. However, as we will hopefully soon return to holding meetings fully in person, we will want to make sure that in a post-COVID world we remain appropriately accessible.

- In order to involve the CS in the resolutions of the assembly, as soon as the draft resolutions are released, I intend to organize an open discussion with the Civil Society. This practice will be an innovation for the work of the assembly and will result in the strengthening of the open dialogue.
- Having examined processes in other organizations, I believe that the OSCE PA is quite well-positioned. However, we should not be complacent, and should continue to be open to further engagement with civil society experts.
- I suggest that the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly follow the model of participation of the UN General Assembly. The creation of a file of affiliated organizations with the special representative for the CP by the secretariat should be the first step. However, it would be much more useful if this connection was made with a specific structure in the secretariat.
- Finally, all international organizations (UN, Council of Europe, EU, etc.) have standards of civil society involvement, whether they involve participation in the international organization itself or civil society involvement in the public decisions of their members. . For this purpose, I suggest that the Code of Basic Principles for the participation of the CP in the public debate and in the public decisions of the Member States be put to a vote before the next General Assembly.

Speech at UN High Level Conference in Malaga

As the Special Representative on Civil Society Engagement of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, I work to promote co-operation and serve as a focal point for engagement between the OSCE PA and representatives of civil society and non-governmental organizations.

The OSCE is the world's largest regional security organization and takes a comprehensive approach that encompasses politico-military, economic and environmental, and human aspects of security. It therefore addresses a wide range of issues, including arms control, human rights, national minorities, democratization, economic and environmental activities, and of course, counter-terrorism.

Having until recently also served as Chair of the Assembly's Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions, I certainly have strong opinions about the centrality of human rights in our work. I therefore applaud the organizers of this event for putting human rights and civil society engagement at the centre of counter-terrorism efforts. Allow me to briefly share some thoughts related to parliament and civil society co-operation, and why I see this interaction as particularly critical in the field of counter-terrorism work.

It is often said that parliament serves three core tasks: lawmaking, representation, and oversight. Firstly: as parliamentarians, we pass laws to implement the policies we believe will improve the lives of our fellow citizens. Second: we represent our constituents to ensure that all citizens can have a voice at the table of parliament. And thirdly: parliamentarians hold institutions accountable to the rule of law through regular and ongoing oversight work.

One point of criticism is that both parliaments and governments allow the involvement of civil society in the decision-making process in part and in part. It is considered necessary to introduce a code of civil society participation in decisions.

I would suggest that partnership with civil society experts and groups is particularly vital to success in the first and third of these key parliamentary roles. In principle this is valid in almost all fields, but is particularly true in the sensitive area of counter-terrorism efforts. Work in this field has both important security and human rights challenges. Finding the appropriate path can be complex.

Unfortunately, to date, the management of terrorism issues has a monopoly character, ie only by the state, and this should be changed by introducing the involvement of civil society, assigning it the role of observer, rapporteur and co-creator of policies.

In order to strengthen the contribution of OSCE parliamentarians in addressing violent extremism and radicalization, in 2017 the OSCE PA established the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism. It particularly works through (1) coherent policy development, (2) regular exchanges of innovative ideas and lessons learned, and (3) co-ordinated parliamentary initiatives.

The protection of human rights and the involvement of civil society has always been a top priority of the Committee. In this respect, the Committee has promoted engagement with NGOs in all official visits and events, be it in the context of deradicalization, or in supporting the victims of terrorism. In 2018, the Committee drafted a resolution, which stressed the need for a co-operative and whole-of-society approach to counter terrorism, with civil society at the core. The Committee also contributed to the drafting of the UN Model Legislative Provisions for Victims of Terrorism

(2022), which emphasize the crucial and multifaceted roles that civil society plays in supporting the victims of terrorism.

Within the OSCE, all countries have agreed that a key element of justice is that legislation is “adopted at the end of a public procedure”.¹ Implicit within this commitment is the idea that members of the public, including through civil society groups, have a legitimate ground for making their case to legislators.

There are two basic reasons for this: firstly, expert civil society input can significantly improve legislation. Civil society organizations are often on the front-line of providing services, whether they be victim-support groups, groups for women or youth, community or religious groups, or violence prevention networks. As such, they can offer hands-on experience that can and must inform our legislative activities.

Secondly, involving non-governmental groups in the consultative process can significantly enhance trust in the resulting legislation, which is critical to stability and good implementation and can be particularly advantageous in sensitive fields like counter-terrorism. Civil society groups play an integral role, both in supporting victims of terrorism and in rehabilitation and reintegration of those who have served in terrorist or violent extremist groups, including by assisting with the provision of assistance and medical, legal and psychosocial support services.

I would also note that in an era when almost all of our parliaments are limited by financial and human resource constraints, NGOs can provide useful advice on how to turn international commitments into effective domestic legislation. Utilizing civil society on emerging issues both internationally and locally can be valuable in the effort to prevent and combat terrorism. Such as the development of more effective control of parliaments in relation to high-tech companies as well as money laundering to finance terrorism.

Even in the case of "war terrorism" between states, the role of civil society is crucial. Since it can reject or approve sanctions or increase armaments programs. In cases where unrecognized regimes or dictatorial regimes that are not accountable to the UN and do not participate in international conventions as well as the rule of law is controversial, the role of civil society is crucial, as it is the main means of reaction. An example is the Turkish-occupied areas of the Republic of Cyprus where they have been an area for 48 years, where they can find refuge and terrorist activities can flourish. This naturally leads to the third parliamentary role that I mentioned: oversight. Parliamentary oversight is necessary to guide government policy and action and to ensure that state actions are efficient and respond to the needs of the public.

Parliaments have the duty of protecting the rights and liberties of citizens, for example by detecting abuse or illegal conduct on part of the government and public agencies. Civil society groups, particularly those providing front-line services, are in a key position to help highlight such issues.

They are also some of the best-placed bodies to provide ongoing monitoring that can highlight areas in need of further parliamentary attention. Their advice can be pro-active, in shaping legislation, but also re-active, in identifying areas that need officials to make corrections.

It would be helpful for the work of both national parliaments and civil society if the reports of international organizations took the form of a country-by-country progress report on the

¹ Copenhagen Document paragraph 5.8

implementation of anti-terrorism resolutions. The progress report would be a useful tool for the opposition as well as for civil society, a tool that would put pressure on the executive to implement the resolutions. Also, the practice of "naming and shaming" should be the responsibility of the international organizations that prepare the reports.

From a purely political perspective, civil society can be important to ensure that there is continued political impetus for oversight. In this regard, civil society is critical in bringing public awareness to the human impact of terrorist acts, which, in turn, can also contribute to the prevention of terrorism and the building of resilience and social cohesion. Similarly, civil society actors can play an important role in efforts to counter terrorism by emphasizing the need to promote international solidarity in support of victims of terrorism and to ensure that victims of terrorism are treated with dignity and respect.

Parliamentary action is critical to effectively counter-terrorism. Yet, even more essential is to ensure implementation of adopted anti-terrorism legislation and policies, for which purpose we need to engage in dynamic partnerships with civil society actors. I recognize that every parliament has its own legislative processes and culture, but finding appropriate space for civil society engagement is a win-win scenario.

[Briefing talking points for intervention by Kyriakos Hadjiyianni, OSCE PA Special Representative on Civil Society Engagement - 2022 OSCE Asian Conference, 15 June](#)

Madam Minister Linde, Madam Secretary General Schmid, Madam Chairperson, Your Excellencies, dear colleagues,

Thank you for organizing this important conference in these challenging times and for the invitation to speak. Co-operation between Europe and Asia has been a central pillar of the OSCE process since its founding and I thank the Swedish Chairmanship of the Asian Partners Group for investing additional efforts in connecting the two regions.

A vibrant civil society remains at the heart of stable societies throughout the Euro-Atlantic and the Eurasian area, and I believe can play an important contributing role to regional stability as well. Within the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, I work to promote co-operation and serve as a focal point for engagement between the Assembly and representatives of civil society.

The OSCE PA itself serves as a platform for dialogue between OSCE parliaments and, very often, we engage in dialogue with outside experts. Our co-operation with civil society takes place in all fields and across all dimensions. The OSCE, as well as the Parliamentary Assembly and national parliaments and governments benefit from expertise provided by civil society in topics as widespread as arms control, human rights, national minorities, democratization, environmental work, and counter-terrorism.

Mr./Ms. Chairperson,

Multilateralism is under strain. The Russian invasion and ongoing war on Ukraine have clearly worsened this, but we all know that there were problems well before February 2022. And this is not limited to the OSCE region – interstate co-operation within Asia and beyond also faces serious challenges. Yet while government-to-government relations may be hobbled by geopolitical and

other disputes, a great deal of co-operation among civil society groups remains. Indeed, such contacts have the potential to supplement our official work. They must be maintained and can even contribute with a stabilizing role.

But perhaps the most important contribution that civil society can play is on the domestic scene, if properly engaged with state institutions. As an example, please allow me to briefly share some thoughts related to parliament and civil society co-operation. The experience, of course, is equally relevant to other state institutions.

Mr./Ms. Chairperson,

It is often said that parliament serves three core tasks: lawmaking, representation, and oversight. Firstly: as parliamentarians, we pass laws to implement the policies we believe will improve the lives of our fellow citizens. Secondly: we represent our constituents to ensure that all citizens can have a voice at the table of parliament. And thirdly: parliamentarians hold institutions accountable to the rule of law through regular and ongoing oversight work.

I would suggest that partnership with civil society experts and groups is particularly vital to success in the first and third of these key parliamentary roles. Within the OSCE region, all countries have agreed that a key element of justice is that legislation is “adopted at the end of a public procedure”. Implicit within this commitment is the idea that members of the public, including through civil society groups, have a legitimate ground for making their case to legislators.

There are two basic reasons for this: firstly, expert civil society input and academia’s scrutiny can significantly improve legislation. Civil society organizations are often on the front-line of providing services, whether they be victim-support groups, groups for women or youth, or community or religious groups or humanitarian networks. As such, they can offer insights from hands-on experience that can inform policy discussions.

Secondly, involving non-governmental groups in the consultative process can significantly enhance trust in the resulting legislation. This long-term trust is critical to stability and good implementation. This is particularly advantageous in sensitive fields like counter-terrorism or human rights work. Their early consultation and involvement can help to gain their continued support to initiatives. In practical terms, for example: if civil society groups will be working on rehabilitation and reintegration of those who have served in terrorist groups, it can be useful for them to have a full understanding emanating from involvement in the process that has led to the relevant legislation and regulations.

I would also note that in an era when almost all of our parliaments and governments are limited by financial and human resource constraints, NGOs can provide useful advice on how to turn international commitments into effective domestic policy.

This naturally leads to the third parliamentary role that I mentioned: oversight. Parliaments have the duty of protecting the rights and liberties of citizens, for example by detecting abuse or illegal conduct on the part of the government and public agencies. While it may not be up to parliament to intervene if one police officer is misusing his or her power, it is definitely the job of parliament to ensure that systems are in place to deal with such abuses when identified. Civil society groups, particularly those providing front-line services, are in a key position to help highlight such issues and together with academia to inform policy debates and advocate for changes.

We have to remember that if work stops at parliament's, or government's door, our efforts will inevitably fail. Implementation is key, and for this, we need to engage in dynamic partnerships with civil society actors.

It is therefore encouraging to learn about the best practices in the Asian Partner Countries in areas such as gender equality. For example, I was pleased to learn about the involvement of civil society organizations in gender-mainstreaming activities in Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Thailand, in partnership with the OSCE, ASEAN, and UN Women, as was discussed at recent Asian Partners' meeting.

Similarly, I welcome the announced projects within the OSCE Framework for Response to the Implications of Afghanistan for the OSCE Region, supported at the Ministerial Council in Stockholm. In particular, I would highlight the projects in Central Asia targeting vulnerable communities, especially women and youth, in regions bordering Afghanistan as examples of effective synergy between the OSCE, Asian Partners and civil society. In that sense, I welcome the recent Secretary General Schmid's thematic Report on Afghanistan.

The OSCE-Asian dialogue process is intended to enable us to learn from each other, and I am very pleased that this conference can address important substantive issues. I hope, however, that in the future the OSCE can find ways to directly involve civil society representatives in similar meetings. This would have the potential to improve civil society contacts and networks across regions, and contribute to our communal stability.

Mr./Ms. Chairperson,

Let me conclude by thanking you for your attention, and thank you to the organizers for putting this important theme on the agenda.

Briefing of talking points for Kyriakos Hadjiyianni, Special Representative on Civil Society Engagement Birmingham Session, 5 July 2022

- Since being appointed as Special Representative on Civil Society Engagement, I have remained engaged in advocating an open approach to civil society by both the OSCE and other bodies.
- Most notably, recognising the difficulties that the OSCE governmental side has related to NGO participation in their meetings, I visited Warsaw to participate in the events surrounding ODIHR's 30th anniversary last year. This served as an opportunity to meet with many civil society representatives interested in OSCE work. It also served as an opportunity to explore the challenges NGOs face.
- The OSCE governmental side has experienced significant difficulties related to civil society participation particularly in human dimension events. This is politically sensitive, and they have an informal process looking at this. I of course expressed my readiness to support this process if considered useful. While I would be pleased to engage, the

responsibility for fixing these problems lies, of course, with OSCE governments and the Permanent Council.

- You will of course also all be aware that there are serious disputes about the human dimension work of the OSCE, and many believe that even the flagship Human Dimension Implementation Meeting is at risk in its entirety. As we have often heard, including in Helsinki+50 discussions, civil society engagement has been central to OSCE work, particularly in the human dimension, since its inception. We must continue to work to find ways to keep civil society participation in all such activities.
- I have also participated in several other events with a strong civil society component, ensuring that the OSCE PA remains a voice encouraging openness and active engagement. This has included my addresses to United Nations forums, to think tanks, and others.
- What is most important for my work, however, is ensuring that the OSCE PA itself is open to engagement with civil society. Overall, I am pleased with what I see. I know that our President and other Officers regularly consult civil society experts, particularly during field visits. Similarly, exchanges with NGOs is a standard part of all of our election observation activities as organized by the Secretariat. We have also regularly had civil society representatives as expert speakers in our many web dialogues in recent years.
- Having examined processes in other organizations, I believe that the OSCE PA is quite well-positioned. However, we should not be complacent, and should continue to be open to further engagement with civil society experts.
- With this in mind, last month I took the initiative to try and upgrade this engagement, by organizing a consultation call in preparation for our work at this Session in Birmingham. I thank the Rapporteurs of our 2nd and 3rd Committees for participating, and for engaging in a very substantive discussion with some expert civil society partners. It was greatly appreciated by the participants from civil society, who came with some very well-grounded thoughts and recommendations. I am pleased to note that some of the ideas raised by civil society representatives at that meeting have materialized in the form of amendments to our resolutions here in Birmingham.
- I think that in this process, we have demonstrated our responsiveness to civil society representatives. And the result is a strengthening of our resolutions. Their detailed expertise coupled with our political leadership is an impactful combination.
- I'm very pleased with the results of this recent consultation call, and believe that we could consider such opportunities again in the future, perhaps even earlier in the process.
- I hope that our Assembly will continue to be open and innovative in its approach to civil society engagement in coming years.