

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's 22nd Winter Meeting



2023
23-24 February

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Cover: a black flag of mourning flies outside of OSCE headquarters on 24 February 2023, the first anniversary of the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine (photo: Nat Parry/OSCE PA)

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Summary

The Russian Federation's war against Ukraine was the main focus of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's 22nd Winter Meeting, which took place in Vienna 23-24 February with nearly 250 parliamentarians from 52 countries in attendance. A top priority of the international community, OSCE parliamentarians said, must be bringing the war to an end in full respect for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, and to ensure justice and accountability for war crimes.

OSCE PA President Margareta Cederfelt (Sweden) opened the meeting with a speech noting that for the past year, every principle of the OSCE's founding document, the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, has been violated. Also addressing the opening session was President of the Austrian National Council Wolfgang Sobotka, who spoke about the need for a common approach to security, highlighting the war in Ukraine and several other pressing challenges in the OSCE area. The OSCE Chairman-in-Office and Foreign Minister of North Macedonia, Bujar Osmani, addressed the PA in a video message, and Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid was represented by Ambassador Luca Frattini.

The OSCE PA's three general committees met for discussions on the war in Ukraine's political-security aspects, economic and environmental impacts, and human rights implications. Committees heard presentations by

representatives of the OSCE, who discussed the role, functioning, and contributions of the organization. Representatives of other international organizations and academia also addressed the parliamentarians, with discussion focusing on international law and clean and sustainable energy in the OSCE region in the context of the war.

In the closing joint session of the general committees, President Cederfelt announced the adoption of a document by the OSCE PA Bureau, with the Assembly's overwhelming support, entitled "Action on the One-Year Anniversary of Russia's War Against Ukraine and the International Legal Order."

The OSCE PA's Standing Committee, consisting of the heads of national delegations and Bureau members, also met in Vienna to hear reports and discuss internal matters. As a special guest of the President, exiled Belarusian opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya addressed the Standing Committee, highlighting the movement for democracy in Belarus.

The Sub-Committee on the Rules of Procedure, chaired by Vice-President Pascal Allizard (France); the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism, chaired by Reinhold Lopatka (Austria); and the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration, chaired by Mark Pritchard (United Kingdom), also met on the margins of the Winter Meeting.





Ukraine

Azerbaijan

Joint Session of the General Committees

Meeting in a joint session on 23 February, OSCE parliamentarians heard from President of the Austrian National Council Wolfgang Sobotka, President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Margareta Cederfelt, OSCE Chairman-in-Office Bujar Osmani, and Amb. Luca Frattini, representing the Secretary General of the OSCE. The Russian invasion of Ukraine featured prominently in their remarks, as well as in the open debate that followed. The war has shattered European security and requires parliaments, governments and the OSCE to work together in developing a common response, speakers said, including by ensuring justice and accountability for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and for the crime of aggression.

Joint Session of the General Committees

Address by the President of the
Austrian National Council,
Wolfgang Sobotka

In his address, President Sobotka condemned in the strongest terms Russia's continued war on Ukraine as a violation of the country's territorial sovereignty and integrity, as well as the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. He also underlined the necessity for OSCE parliamentarians to think about the steps to take when the war is over.

Address by the President of the
OSCE Parliamentary Assembly,
Margareta Cederfelt

President Cederfelt (Sweden) noted that for the past year, every principle of the OSCE's founding document, the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, has been violated by the Russian Federation. "As a direct result of Russia's actions, our entire region is spiraling into the unknown," Cederfelt said. "And as a consequence, the OSCE and our Parliamentary Assembly find themselves at a crossroads."



**As a direct result of Russia's actions, our entire region is
spiraling into the unknown.**

- President Margareta Cederfelt

Sobotka noted that the OSCE, with its comprehensive approach to security, must be a part of the solution and must do everything possible to make sure that diplomatic efforts continue.

Highlighting the importance of the OSCE as a platform for dialogue, Sobotka stressed that its efforts in addressing other security threats within the framework of combating terrorism and anti-Semitism can serve as a role model for inter-parliamentary dialogue and co-operation with other international stakeholders.

She said that multilateralism has never been easy, but today, considering the OSCE's membership and its consensus-based rules, it is particularly challenging. "How can we move forward if the countries responsible for devastating our common security are also the ones crippling the OSCE?" she asked. Left unchecked, these violations could lead to the demise of collective security, it was stressed, and therefore it is essential that international obligations and commitments are upheld.

While defending the PA's long-standing role as a forum for open, frank and honest dialogue rooted in shared values and commitments, she pointed out that this does not mean it should provide a completely unrestricted platform.

Address by the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE and Minister of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia, Bujar Osmani

nisms in order to fully deliver to the people of the OSCE region. He therefore urged OSCE parliamentarians to keep the faith in the organization, to foster the much-needed political will, and to invest in the OSCE, enabling it to pursue its unique mandate.

"I will again reiterate that this war is no reason for defeatism," Osmani said. "It is a reason to rather to scale up our efforts in order to prevail."



The very founding principles of the OSCE have been shattered.

- OSCE Chairman-in-Office Bujar Osmani

This OSCE PA Winter Meeting, Chairman-in-Office Osmani said, comes at very difficult times for the OSCE and the whole European security architecture. "The very founding principles of the OSCE have been shattered," he stated. As Chairman-in-Office, he stressed the role and utility of parliamentary diplomacy, and encouraged parliamentarians to engage constructively in the OSCE PA.

Reiterating the motto of the 2023 OSCE Chairpersonship, "It's About People," Osmani highlighted the need to preserve the OSCE and its mecha-

Address by the OSCE Secretary General, delivered by Director of the Secretary General's Office, Amb. Luca Fratini

Speaking on behalf of OSCE Secretary General Helga Schmid, Amb. Fratini highlighted the terrible toll the war has taken on the people of Ukraine, as well as its profound effects beyond the country's borders. The war has challenged the international rules-based order and undermined multilateralism, Fratini said, but despite these challenges, the OSCE continues to deliver for the people of the region, including the peo-

Joint Session of the General Committees

ple of Ukraine. Regrettably, however, in 2022, the OSCE was forced to close its two missions in Ukraine and two former staff members of the Special Monitoring Mission are imprisoned in the Donbas, Fratini said, stressing the need to continue to press for their release.

The OSCE has returned to Ukraine, the ambassador said, under an entirely donor-funded effort, with a 60-person team in Kyiv working on various projects including demining and countering human trafficking. Fratini also highlighted the OSCE's continued work in all three dimensions throughout the OSCE region with field activities. The OSCE continues to deliver despite the lack of a budget, Fratini said, while acknowledging that the budgetary situation is not sustainable.

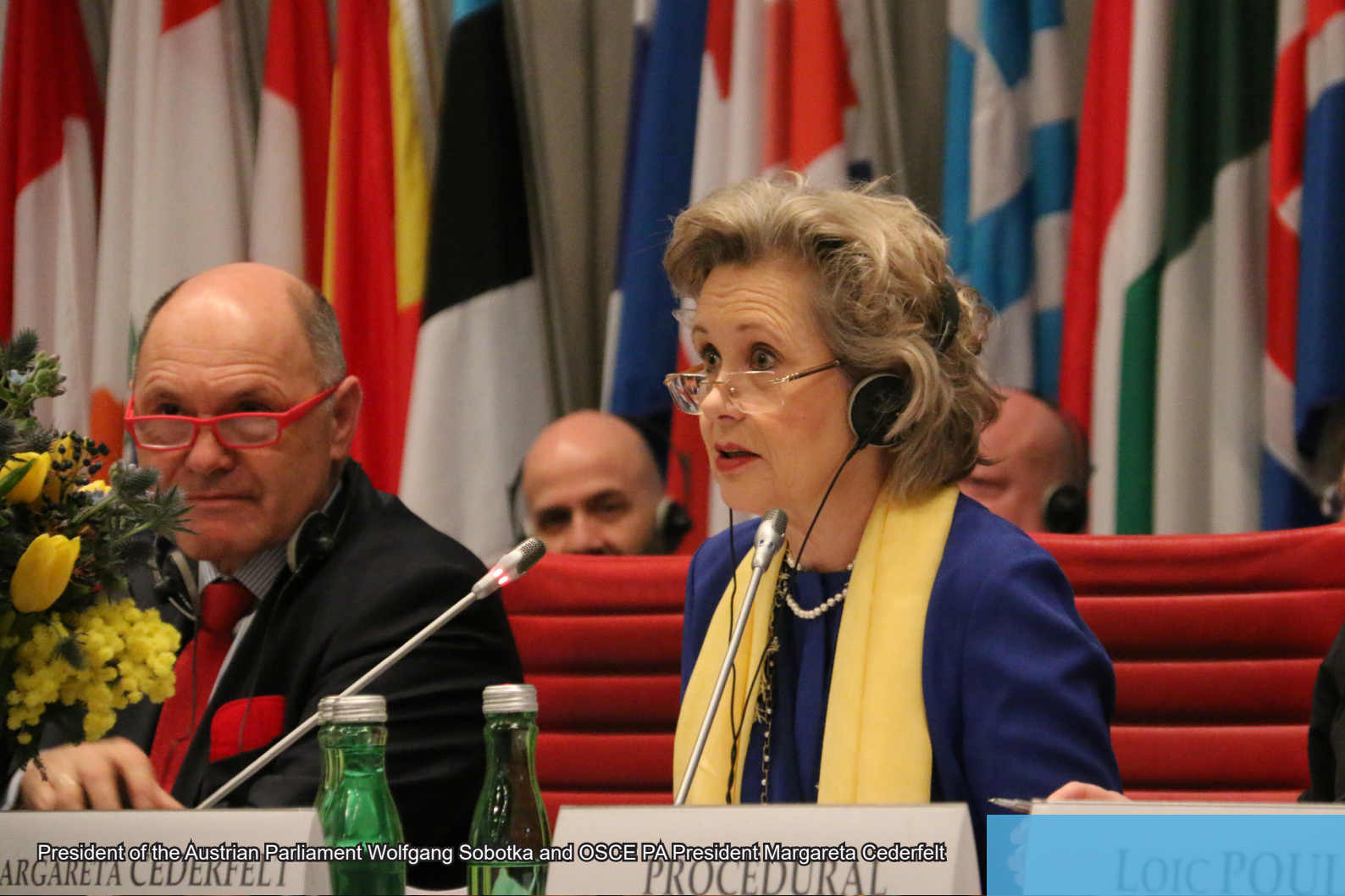
Despite its challenges, the OSCE plays an important role in many areas of security, Fratini said.

Open Debate

At the beginning of the debate, Peter Osusky (Slovakia) took the floor to read a statement on behalf of the Ukrainian Delegation, which had opted not to attend the meeting in protest against the presence of Russian parliamentarians. The statement raised objections to the Russian participation at the meeting, noting the brutality of the war and highlighting the need for the OSCE PA to isolate and punish those who help enable violations of fundamental OSCE principles.

In the discussion, PA Members roundly denounced the Russian Federation's actions in Ukraine. The importance of returning to the hope and optimism embodied in OSCE documents such as the Helsinki Final Act and Charter of Paris was highlighted as essential, so as to ensure the continued relevance of the organization.





President of the Austrian Parliament Wolfgang Sobotka and OSCE PA President Margareta Cederfelt



General Committee on Political Affairs and Security

Chaired by Richard Hudson (United States), the General Committee on Political Affairs and Security met on 23 February 2023. Hudson's opening remarks were followed by the presentations of Ambassador Stelian Stoian, Chair of the Security Committee of the OSCE Permanent Council and Permanent Representative of Romania to the OSCE; Ambassador Siniša Bencun, Chair of the Forum for Security Co-operation; Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities; and Ambassador Tuula Yrjölä, Director of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre. They briefed the parliamentarians on how the OSCE is responding to the war in Ukraine, in particular the "no business-as-usual" approach it is applying to its work.



General Committee on Political Affairs and Security

Richard Hudson, Chair of the First Committee

Chair Richard Hudson (United States) noted that one year ago Russia launched a full-scale and unprovoked invasion against Ukraine, a war of choice that has cost thousands of lives. He emphasized that this war was launched in direct contravention of all of the principles of the Helsinki Final Act.

The First Committee should therefore explore how parliamentarians can maximize support to Ukraine and how it can be magnified through the OSCE, the Chair said. He stressed the need for dialogue based on the promotion of the values and principles of the Helsinki Final Act, which are the basis of peace and security in the OSCE region. Hudson added that support for Ukraine will endure as long as necessary to see a free, sovereign, independent, thriving Ukraine, and full accountability for the aggressors.

Ambassador Stelian Stoian, Chair of the Security Committee of the OSCE Permanent Council and Permanent Representative of Romania to the OSCE

Stelian Stoian (Romania) stated that the Romanian Chair of the Security Committee of the OSCE Permanent Council will spare no efforts in defending OSCE principles and commitments. Strengthening the OSCE collective capacity to deal with multidimensional security threats is more important than ever, Amb. Stoian said. He highlighted the fact that the OSCE managed to pursue its work and deliver to the participating States despite the impact of the Russian war in Ukraine. Moreover, he pointed to the use of the Moscow Mechanism to ensure accountability and emphasized that the Permanent Council and its subsidiary bodies have consistently expressed their support for Ukraine.

Amb. Stoian announced the upcoming work



of the Security Committee, which will focus, he said, on the impact of the Russian war against Ukraine, cyber security, transnational organized crime, border security, and management with a multi-stakeholder approach that incorporates principles of gender mainstreaming.

Ambassador Siniša Bencun, Chair of the Forum for Security Co-operation and Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the OSCE

Siniša Bencun (Bosnia and Herzegovina), as Chair of the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC), informed the members of the First Committee about the FSC and how it could be best used to address armed conflicts in the OSCE region. Amb. Bencun recalled that during recent decades, the FSC has made significant contributions to comprehensive security in the OSCE area through tools such as the Vienna Document, the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, the Principles Governing Conventional Arms Transfers; the Framework for Arms Control, and the OSCE Documents on Small Arms and Light Weapons and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition.

He regretted, however, the deterioration of the arms control instruments, and weakened confidence- and security-building measures in the OSCE region in recent years while highlighting that the success of the FSC was determined by political will, constructive engagement, good faith, and the spirit of co-operative security.

Bencun mentioned that the Vienna Document was invoked by Ukraine and Lithuania in April 2021, and twice in February 2022, to discuss security concerns linked to the holding of military

exercises and the massing of large numbers of military equipment and troops by the Russian Federation and Belarus near the borders of participating States, in particular Ukraine. Bencun concluded by appealing for the holding of the Annual Implementation Assessment Meeting and by stating that the FSC should contribute to an urgent shift from the current “war rhetoric” to “talking about peace,” and give diplomacy another chance.

Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM)

Kairat Abdrakhmanov underscored the importance of the role of parliamentarians in promoting security. He recalled the Astana Commemorative Declaration signed by every participating State in 2010 that committed themselves to uphold a free, democratic, and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community. Unfortunately, he observed, the OSCE community has not been able to effectively ensure this security. Nevertheless, Abdrakhmanov expressed his confidence in the possibility of peace moving forward.

He recalled his mandate to provide early warning and action to prevent tensions involving national minority issues and underlined the expertise shared with the participating States to develop policies that facilitate the integration of diverse societies. He insisted on the role of such policies to protect minorities from political instrumentalization.

Abdrakhmanov expressed his willingness to use bilateral mechanisms and dialogue to

General Committee on Political Affairs and Security



provide advice in a number of policy areas, including in regard to post-war recovery in Ukraine. He also underlined his continued engagement with the Russian Federation on national minority issues, especially in the context of education and cultural expression. Special attention was given to the Crimean Tatars, Abdrakhmanov said.

Ambassador Tuula Yrjölä, Director of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre

Tuula Yrjölä reflected on how the OSCE can contribute to addressing the consequences of the Russian Federation's war against Ukraine. The war, she said, has socio-economic consequences that could have far-reaching consequences in the form of increased instability in participating States. Therefore, she outlined that the OSCE must pay even closer attention to the risks of environmental disasters and the socio-econom-

ic impact caused by the war, to countering the spread of small and light weapons, to combating the trafficking of human beings, and to ensure that women who have been subjected to gender-based violence receive support. She thanked the PA Vienna Office, which is part of the OSCE's Early Warning Network and actively contributes to monitoring regional developments and policy issues.

Yrjölä focused on how the OSCE has, since 2014, responded to the unfolding crisis in Ukraine. She recalled the deployment of the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) and the Observer Mission at the Donetsk and Gukovo border crossing points. Although this mission was forced to close, the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine developed an extra-budgetary project to provide support for immediate humanitarian needs. She reported that this support mission procured emergency items including generators, power banks, flash



drives, and mobile phones to help ministries, public agencies, and local communities continue to operate in extremely challenging conditions. On 1 November 2022, the OSCE officially launched the Support Programme for Ukraine (SPU), she noted. It addresses the most urgent needs and continues to provide much-needed assistance to long-standing partners in Ukraine.

Finally, she reminded the Assembly that three OSCE staff members are still illegally detained in the occupied areas of Ukraine and called for their immediate and unconditional release.

Special Debate: One Year of Russia's War Against Ukraine: Understanding OSCE's Role, Functioning and Contributions

During the discussion, parliamentarians reaffirmed their condemnation of Russia's war against Ukraine and recalled that it is a viola-

tion of the Helsinki Final Act, further expressing the need for continued solidarity with the Ukrainian people. They stressed the importance of holding those responsible for these crimes accountable. OSCE parliamentarians also expressed their concerns regarding Russia's suspension of participation in the New START nuclear arms treaty.

Parliamentarians of neighbouring States described the political and socio-economic instability resulting from the war in Ukraine. Another topic discussed was the EU Observation Mission at the borders between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which was welcomed.

Multiple messages of condolences were also offered by OSCE PA Members to Türkiye for the lives lost in the devastating earthquake earlier in the month.

General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment

The General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment met on 23 February, with Azay Guliyev (Azerbaijan) chairing the meeting. The committee heard from Rapporteur Gudrun Kugler (Austria), Chair of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Committee Florian Raunig, and Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities Igli Hasani, under the item of advancing a common OSCE approach in promoting economic and environmental security. This was followed by a special debate on the prospects and challenges of affordable, secure, clean and sustainable energy in the OSCE region, with presentations from Wei Huang, Director of Division of Energy Planning at the International Atomic Energy Agency, Professor Steve Koonin from New York University's Tandon School of Engineering, and John Aldag, Member of the Canadian Delegation.



BONABELLO
TOR ADVISOR
OSCE PA

General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment

Azay Guliyev, Chair of the Second Committee

Azay Guliyev, Chair of the OSCE PA's Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment, opened the meeting by highlighting the dramatic consequences of the Russian Federation's war against Ukraine, and the pressing need to address related economic and environmental repercussions.

Guliyev underlined the importance of economic and environmental security in the daily lives of citizens, and the need to consider the impact of the war in the wider context of ongoing efforts to rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Chair also mentioned the impact of the conflict on food security, highlighting the four-month extension of the United Nations and Türkiye-brokered grain deal between Russia and Ukraine, while still urging all parties to continue dialogue to find a solution to resolve this urgent matter.

Guliyev expressed his view that promoting security and stability in the OSCE region through sustainable economic recovery and sound environmental policies should be a top priority for the Second Committee, and that therefore it was taking an active approach in linking economic recovery, green transition and environmental protection considerations.

He also highlighted the three issues prioritized by the Second Committee leadership for this year: (1) socio-economic instability, (2) energy and food insecurity and (3) climate change, priorities that align with those adopted by North Macedonia's OSCE Chairmanship.

Gudrun Kugler, Rapporteur of the Second Committee

Rapporteur Kugler (Austria) shared her priorities for the report that she will present at the 30th Annual Session in Vancouver (30 June – 4 July). Her report, she said, will focus on economic security through co-operation and sustainable economies, including energy security, demographic changes, good governance and fighting corruption. The report will highlight the key importance of environmental protection, science and technology as tools to achieve and reinforce economic security in the OSCE region.

Finally, the rapporteur expressed her readiness to include the suggestions of the members of the assembly in her report and highlighted her continuous and good co-operation with Special Representatives of the OSCE PA on topics linked to the Second Committee.

Florian Raunig, Chair of the OSCE's Economic and Environmental Committee

Ambassador Raunig presented the 2023 plan for the Economic and Environmental Committee. He stressed that Ukraine will be at the core of the attention of the Committee throughout all its activities.

The EEC has ensured a general balance between economic and environmental topics, with additional meetings on timely and crucial topics connected to water and food security, corruption, and energy security to be announced. He also reaffirmed his willingness to co-operate with the PA and to increase existing synergies to provide ways to address transnational threats facing the OSCE.

Ambassador Igli Hasani, Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities

Amb. Hasani presented to the Assembly the OCEEA's key priorities for 2023, including the plans to address the economic and environmental consequences of the war in Ukraine, through the implementation of new activities addressing emerging needs and priorities to support the government of Ukraine.

The priorities of his office focus on climate change and the development of flagship projects on environment and security, good governance and fighting corruption, energy security, and a new initiative to protect critical energy networks.

Wei Huang, Director of Division of Energy Planning, Information and Knowledge Management, Department of Nuclear Energy, International Atomic Energy Agency

Huang stressed the importance of promoting energy accessibility, and the impact of the war in Ukraine on efforts to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement on climate change, adopted in 2015. The IAEA recommends two elements to mitigate negative trends in the production of greenhouse gases, including electrification and deployment of low-carbon technologies including nuclear power.

In his presentation, Huang highlighted the advantages that nuclear energy can present, including a lesser land footprint and added social economic benefits. Nuclear energy can also help decarbonize other sectors including heating and hydrogen production.

Finally, he expressed the IAEA's readiness to help countries deciding to use nuclear power by providing advice and a broad range of technical services.

Steven Koonin, Department of Civil and Urban Engineering at NYU's Tandon School of Engineering

Prof. Koonin expressed several recommendations to governments of the OSCE region, including the importance of promoting climate science research to deepen knowledge in this matter and improving communication to the public to give an accurate view of climate and energy that go further than dramatizing the current situation. He also stressed the need to acknowledge that energy reliability and affordability take precedence over emissions reductions, and that governments should embark on thoughtful decarbonization programmes incorporating technology and economics.

Koonin concluded by underlining that while mitigation is important, adaptation is also essential for the energy transition, and that energy systems should be changed gradually to avoid undue disruptions.

John Aldag, Member of the OSCE PA Canadian Delegation

John Aldag (Canada), who authored a resolution on clean energy at the OSCE PA 29th Annual Session in Birmingham, focused his remarks on the pressing need to achieve a green transition, following 2022, when the world saw the all-time peak for global coal demand. The global energy crisis sparked by Russia's invasion of Ukraine has reaffirmed the necessary transition to renewable energies, he underlined. Aldag further argued that the tools to achieve this transition already exist, and that continued investment and innovation in renewable energies will help to further reduce the costs of the transition.

Aldag referred to his resolution presented at the

General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment



Annual Session in Birmigham in 2022, and expressed his readiness to build on this resolution by collaborating with Members of the Assembly on ideas to further support sustainable energy among OSCE participating States.

Special Debate: Affordable, secure, clean and sustainable energy in the OSCE region: prospects and challenges

Several OSCE parliamentarians took the floor to express their solidarity with Ukraine and to address national concerns over the war's ripple effect on energy and economic security.

The importance of the economic and environmental dimension was reaffirmed, and parliamentarians expressed the necessity for co-operation in this time of crisis, and the importance of turning to a green transition to diversify our energy resources and to mitigate the effect of climate change.

Parliamentarians expressed their national achievements, prospects and challenges in terms of energy transition and mitigating climate change through greener energy systems and stressed the need to keep a united front to tackle these issues.



General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions

The meeting of the General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions took place on 23 February 2023. Committee members heard presentations by Chair Nikoloz Samkharadze (Georgia), Rapporteur Johan Büser (Sweden), ODIHR Director Matteo Mecacci, and OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Teresa Ribeiro. Also addressing the committee were Judge Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, President of the Appeals Division, International Criminal Court; Ambassador Anne-Marie Callan, Chair of the Human Dimension Committee of the OSCE Permanent Council and Permanent Representative of Ireland to the OSCE; and Professor Veronika Bílková, Head of the Department of Public International Law, Faculty of Law, Charles University. A special debate was held on the topic, "Accountability for human rights abuses during times of conflict."



KOLOZ
ARADZE
THIRD COMMITTEE
GEORGIA

General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions

Nikoloz Samkharadze, Chair of the Third Committee

Opening the meeting, Chair Samkharadze (Georgia) described the tools that the committee uses on a regular basis to promote human dimension commitments. The committee leaders regularly speak out on thematic issues and utilize in-person interactions with human rights defenders, Samkharadze said, as well as with state authorities in various countries to promote OSCE principles and values.

Samkharadze highlighted the special focus on challenges to democracy and persecution of the media and the treatment of civil society in Russia. He thanked committee members for their visit to Georgia this year and noted that such visits serve as an opportunity to continue the committee's practice of meeting with national human rights bodies.

Johan Büser, Rapporteur of the Third Committee

Presenting his ideas for the report being prepared for the 30th Annual Session in Vancouver, Rapporteur Büser (Sweden) drew attention to issues such as pandemics, military conflicts, socio-economic inequalities, a refugee crisis, racism, and harassment of women, journalists and human rights defenders. He stressed that the most fundamental right – to live – has been taken away from countless innocent victims in Ukraine, noting that the war has caused immeasurable suffering in terms of death, abuse, displacement and other trauma. He underlined that it is more important than ever that the participating States come together to protect human rights.

Büser noted that the committee is focusing on several broad groups of challenges. First, the



committee will continue the work to ease the suffering caused by war and support those individuals standing against all human rights abuses. Second, Büser encouraged the participating States to take seriously economic inequalities and major socio-economic consequences of the pandemic and the war in Ukraine. Third, the rapporteur raised the violation of minorities' rights, including LGBTI people, as well as religious, racial, and ethnic minorities, and indigenous peoples. Büser stressed the importance of their full inclusion in economic, political, and social life.

In line with the topic of forced migration, he stressed that participating States must continue to offer protection to all refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine. In conclusion, Büser called on all delegations to reaffirm their commitment to the human rights dimension of the OSCE region and thereby contribute to comprehensive security.

Matteo Mecacci, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)

Director Mecacci began by noting that human rights must remain at the core of OSCE efforts and underlined the need to call for accountability. ODIHR has been documenting violations of international human rights and humanitarian law in Ukraine since the early days of the conflict through the deployment of monitors and interviews on the ground, Mecacci said, adding that it also co-operates with relevant authorities and other organizations that are conducting similar monitoring in the country.

He underlined that ODIHR provides assistance

to the Ukrainian Parliament to increase its democratic standards, support judicial bodies with targeted expertise on international human rights law and capacity-building to combat human trafficking in neighbouring countries. The ODIHR Director also expressed trust in the close co-operation with the OSCE PA Third Committee and called for further strengthening of the OSCE human dimension. In this respect, Mecacci called for the renewal of his invitation for closer co-operation between ODIHR and the PA to reinforce democracy and human rights in participating States.

Moreover, he expressed support for the joint work on observing elections across the OSCE area and underlined the upcoming elections in Kazakhstan, Montenegro, Turkmenistan, Albania, Türkiye, Poland and Bulgaria.

Teresa Ribeiro, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

Ribeiro stressed that the fighting in Ukraine has had a devastating impact on the media, with hundreds of news outlets being forced to shut down as a result of the war. She underlined that when rebuilding the destroyed infrastructure in Ukraine, the media sector will also have to be rebuilt, which will require a comprehensive international response.

She noted that national and international journalists and media workers have been killed while on duty and underlined that no journalist should be targeted for doing his or her job.

The consequences of the war are also very tan-

General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions

gible in the Russian Federation, Ribeiro added, where journalists risk imprisonment and high fines if they even mention the word “war.” She added that almost all independent news outlets were forced to leave Russia and continue their operations from abroad.

Ribeiro also urged participating States to appreciate the important role that free media plays in promoting peace and security in the OSCE region, stressing that political will and a strong commitment to media freedom is a key pillar for security.

Ambassador Anne-Marie Callan,
Chair of the Human Dimension
Committee of the OSCE
Permanent Council

Amb. Callan stated that the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms is crucial for sustainable peace and security, and stressed that Ukraine must remain at the forefront of the OSCE work in all the meetings in 2023. She welcomed the generally positive response of OSCE participating States to the largest humanitarian and refugee crisis in the history of the OSCE due to



Russia's war against Ukraine, while underlining that other priorities must not be neglected, including discrimination and intolerance, combating trafficking in human beings, freedom of the media, social inclusion and integration in democracies, and the eradication of violence against women.

As Permanent Representative of Ireland to the OSCE, she expressed her delegation's support for the commitment of North Macedonia's OSCE Chairmanship to actively engage with civil society and to place a high priority on youth, and noted that the Human Dimension Committee had discussed the right to education in war, conflict and humanitarian crisis over the last year.

While the Ukrainian refugee crisis is the main focus of the committee, she also noted that it intends to focus on issues including combating sexual violence as a weapon of war, supporting tolerance and nondiscrimination, freedom of the media, democratic institutions, freedom of peaceful assembly, combating trafficking in human beings, addressing the shrinking space for civil society, and promoting the safety of human rights defenders.

Special Debate: Accountability for human rights abuses during times of conflict

Judge Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, President of the Appeals Division at the International Criminal Court, opened the discussion by pointing out that the most serious violations of the Geneva Conventions are now a central element of the law of war. He addressed the issue of prosecuting States that commit major crimes and violate human rights during international armed conflict, underlining that war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of genocide are investigated in accordance with the provisions of the Rome Statute.



Valiant Richey, the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, addresses the Third Committee on 23 February.

Veronika Bílková, a law professor at Charles University, presented two reports on war crimes in Ukraine that were produced in April and July of 2022 under the OSCE Moscow Mechanism, noting that they both found serious violations of both international humanitarian law and human rights law had been committed in the conflict. Most of these violations occurred in the territories under the effective control of the Russian Federation.

Furthermore, she said, while the whole population is suffering, the conflict has a disproportionate impact on individuals belonging to certain vulnerable groups, such as children, older persons or persons with disabilities.

In the discussion, parliamentarians expressed support for Ukraine and stressed that rights of Ukrainian citizens have been gravely violated. In particular, OSCE parliamentarians raised various issues related to the protection of human rights including support of children and women in Ukraine, human trafficking, and sexual exploitation. It was also noted that the rule of force must be replaced with the rule of law.

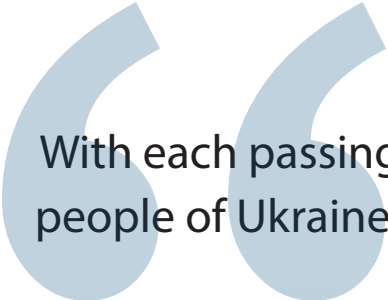
Joint Session of the General Committees

Opening the general debate at the closing session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's 22nd Winter Meeting at the Hofburg in Vienna on 24 February, President Margareta Cederfelt recalled that exactly one year earlier, OSCE parliamentarians were gathered in the same room as Russian missiles rained down upon Ukrainian cities and military columns poured across the border.

After a year of war, she said, OSCE parliamentarians are still gripped by the shock of the aggression and continue to strive for the restoration of peace. "With each passing hour we hope to come

Assembly's overwhelming support, entitled "Action on the One-Year Anniversary of Russia's War Against Ukraine and the International Legal Order."

Introduced by OSCE PA Vice-President Roger Wicker (United States), the document states: "On this solemn anniversary of this tragic and unjustifiable war of aggression against Ukraine, we, members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, pledge to use our voices, votes, and influence as members of our national parliaments to urge our governments and internation-



With each passing hour we hope to come closer to the day when the people of Ukraine will enjoy their full independence and sovereignty.

- President Margareta Cederfelt

closer to the day when the people of Ukraine will enjoy their full independence and sovereignty within their internationally recognized borders," Cederfelt said. "But each passing hour also brings countless victims – from the soldiers defending their homeland, to those sitting in their home as a Russian bomb erases their life. Their sacrifice calls on us to redouble our efforts to guarantee the right of all Ukrainians to live in peace and dignity."

President Cederfelt announced the adoption of a document by the OSCE PA Bureau, with the

al institutions" to uphold "Ukraine's fully justified defense against Russia's illegal and unjustifiable aggression and Ukraine's efforts to restore its sovereignty and territorial integrity to its internationally recognized 1991 borders."

The joint session included reports by OSCE PA officials who hold mandates related to the war in Ukraine, including the Special Representative on Eastern Europe, the Special Representative on Parliamentary Dialogue on Ukraine, the Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration, the Special Rapporteur on War Crimes in Ukraine, and the

General Debate: One Year In: Russia's Continued Full-Scale War on Ukraine



Joint Session of the General Committees



General Debate: One Year In: Russia's Continued Full-Scale War on Ukraine

Special Representative on Political Prisoners.

Special Representative on Eastern Europe Daniela De Ridder (Germany) emphasized the need to ensure that one country cannot simply take territory from another. She highlighted the need for dialogue at the OSCE PA in order to uphold the principles of the Helsinki Final Act, which she noted provides protections for human rights as well as territorial integrity. De Ridder further urged PA Members to support international investigations into war crimes and increase aid to Ukraine.

OSCE PA Special Representative on Parliamentary Dialogue on Ukraine Reinhold Lopatka (Austria) spoke about the efforts he has made in developing contacts with interlocutors to resolve the war. He pledged to continue using even the smallest of opportunities to contribute to a peaceful solution with full respect to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

The Chair of the OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Migration, Vice-President Mark Pritchard (United Kingdom), made it clear that the Ukrainian refugee crisis is entirely the fault of the Russian Federation's invasion and can be reversed immediately by a decision by Moscow to end its war. Pritchard also urged more resolute support for Ukraine.

OSCE PA Special Rapporteur on War Crimes in Ukraine John Whittingdale (United Kingdom) reported on his activities including meetings he has held at the International Criminal Court in The Hague and with judges in Ukraine. He noted that Ukraine's government has recorded tens

of thousands of war crimes committed on its territory and hundreds of children killed. Civilians have been targeted, Whittingdale said, and hundreds of attacks have been committed on journalists. He called for unprecedented legal measures against Russia to uphold international law and defend the international rules-based order.

OSCE PA Special Representative on Political Prisoners Steve Cohen (United States) argued that the war has been made possible by a growing trend of autocracy in Russia, which is exemplified by the proliferation of political prisoners, noting the cases of Vladimir Kara-Murza and Alexei Navalny and recalling that there are also many political prisoners in Belarus. The worst thing that can happen to political prisoners, he said, is for people to forget about them, so he implored all OSCE parliamentarians to remember and keep fighting for them.

In the debate, OSCE parliamentarians expressed overwhelming solidarity with Ukraine and strongly denounced the Russian Federation's war. OSCE PA Members noted the vote at the UN General Assembly the previous day, in which 141 countries voted for Russia to withdraw its forces from Ukraine.

Many parliamentarians urged increased financial and military support to Ukraine, but also stressed the importance of improving the tracking of weapons to prevent them from falling into the wrong hands. Increasing international pressure on Russia was highlighted as important, as well as avoiding the risk of further escalation and preventing the spread of the conflict to neighboring countries.

Standing Committee Meeting

The Standing Committee of the OSCE PA, consisting of the heads of national delegations and members of the Bureau, met on 24 February 2023 to hear reports and discuss ongoing Assembly work.

President of the OSCE PA Margareta Cederfelt

Chaired by OSCE PA President Margareta Cederfelt, the Standing Committee opened with the agenda adopted by the delegates.

President Cederfelt offered her report, which focused largely on the Russian Federation's ongoing war against Ukraine and the related challenges that it poses to the OSCE, including the Parliamentary Assembly. She discussed how the OSCE PA's long-standing commitment to parliamentary dialogue is called into question by the debate over what sort of engagement is possible with the Russian Delegation at this time.

President Cederfelt stressed, however, that the question over engagement should not serve to sow divisions among those who have repeatedly demonstrated support for Ukraine and underlined the need for continued discussions on this issue.

Special Guest of the President, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya

As a special guest of the President, exiled Belarusian opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya addressed the Standing Committee, highlighting the movement for democracy in Belarus and seeking support from the OSCE PA to keep Belarus high on the Assembly's agenda. Tsikhanouskaya particularly appealed to parliamentarians

across the OSCE area to continue speaking out on human rights and pressing for the release of political prisoners.

Report of OSCE PA Treasurer Peter Juel-Jensen

Treasurer Peter Juel-Jensen (Denmark) presented his report, as well as the audited accounts of the Assembly for the preceding financial year. He noted that the International Secretariat continues to operate efficiently and that the management of the budget was in compliance with national legislatures.

Report of OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella

Secretary General Roberto Montella presented his report, emphasizing that the Assembly has shown unwavering support for Ukraine since 2014. He noted that the Assembly has exercised its existing tools in the sanctioning of the Russian Delegation, for example, by voting down its resolutions and declining to elect a Russian to the OSCE PA's Bureau.

Montella noted that unlike the OSCE governmental side, which is constrained by the consensus rule, the PA has persistently used every opportunity – through inter-alia resolutions, statements, press releases and visits – to condemn the illegal and unjustifiable actions of the Russian Federation in Ukraine in the strongest possible terms.



Standing Committee Meeting



Reports on Election Observation Missions, Chairs of Ad Hoc Committees and Special Representatives

Pere Joan Pons (Spain), Vice-President of the OSCE, presented his report on November 2022's election observation mission to the United States, followed by reports by Reinhold Lopatka (Austria), Vice-President of the OSCE PA and Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism; Pascal Allizard (France), Vice-President of the OSCE PA and Chair of the Sub-Committee on Rules of Procedure; and Mark Pritchard (United Kingdom), Vice-President of the OSCE PA and Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration.

U.S. Senator Ben Cardin reported as Special Representative on Anti-Semitism, Racism and Intolerance, followed by Special Representative on Gender Issues Hedy Fry (Canada); Special Representative on Fighting Corruption Irene Charalambides (Cyprus); Special Representative on Disinformation, Fake News and Propaganda Oscar Mina (San Marino); Special Representative on Youth Engagement Farah Karimi (Nether-

lands), Special Representative on Civil Society Engagement Kyriakos Hadjiyianni (Cyprus); Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs Pascal Allizard (France); Special Representative on Eastern Europe Daniela De Ridder (Germany); and Special Representative on South East Europe Michael Georg Link (Germany).

The Chairs and Special Representatives offered details on their recent and upcoming work, emphasizing the need to maintain a comprehensive approach to achieving security in the OSCE area.

Reports on Preparations for future OSCE PA meetings in 2023

The President informed the Standing Committee that a meeting of the Bureau would take place in Copenhagen on 24 April, that the 30th Annual Session of the OSCE PA would meet on 30 June – 4 July in Vancouver, and that another meeting of the Bureau would be held on 30 November in Skopje. The venue and dates for the 2023 Autumn Meeting had yet to be set, the President reported.



Ad Hoc Committee on Migration Meeting



The Ad Hoc Committee on Migration, which consists of 17 Members from 13 different countries, met on 23 February with a focus on the Ukrainian refugee crisis. The Chair, Vice-President Mark Pritchard (United Kingdom), recalled the mandate of the committee, noting that it aims to identify both good practice as well as areas where further attention is needed.

Sheila Jackson Lee (United States) emphasized the need to focus on vulnerable refugees, especially children, and on countering risks of trafficking in human beings, especially online. Referring to a recent survey published by ODIHR on the Safety and Security of Women Refugees from Ukraine, she underlined the need for proper vetting of providers of housing as well as better identification of trafficking victims, with a proposal to utilize Russian assets seized abroad to support victims.

Hedy Fry (Canada) shared best practice from Canada, underlining that it not only takes in displaced persons but also seeks to attract migrants to fill in labour market gaps. Canada offers a fast track to citizenship as a means of integration, she emphasized. Dr. Fry underlined in particular the need to ensure the access of Ukrainian refugees to sexual and reproductive health.

Vice-Chair Gudrun Kugler (Austria) shared her observations from Austria's experience, not-

ing that it is addressing the specific needs of refugees by dividing them into different age groups, with a special focus on helping children finish school. Dr. Kugler highlighted the need to address inter-generational trauma as a consequence of the war in Ukraine.

The committee also discussed its visit to the Czech Republic last December. Acting Head of the Czech Delegation Lucie Potůčková thanked the committee for highlighting the efforts of her country to welcome nearly half a million refugees, stressing that the unprecedented influx had led to a change of mindset. She underlined that fears that the large number of refugees would represent a great burden and lead to an increase in criminality did not materialize. Taking note of the observations included in the committee's report, she remarked that implementation was dependent on human and financial resources.

Vice-Chair Kyriakos Hadjiyianni (Cyprus) suggested looking at forced displacement not only as a consequence of war but also natural disasters such as the tragic earthquake that struck Türkiye and Syria at the beginning of February. Members agreed to reconsider the feasibility of a field visit to the region in the second half of 2023. Committee members also discussed an upcoming visit to Moldova, which, it was pointed out, will be reported on at the Annual Session in Vancouver.

Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism Meeting



Opening the meeting, Committee Chair Reinhold Lopatka (Austria) described the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism (CCT) in co-ordinating efforts of parliamentary assemblies around the globe. He also introduced Irfan Saeed, Head of the Action Against Terrorism Unit, from the OSCE's Transnational Threats Department, as the CCT's guest speaker. President Margareta Cederfelt and Secretary General Roberto Montella thanked all CCT members for their active engagement, underlining the important results achieved by the committee since its establishment in 2017.

Irfan Saeed gave a brief overview of the work of the OSCE in countering terrorism and in particular its role in combating the financing of terrorism. The contribution of the OSCE in this context is vital, as the organization is conducting continuous research and delivering targeted capacity-building programmes to all relevant actors, ranging from governments to law enforcement agencies. Against this backdrop, he said, the role of parliamentarians is instrumental to adapt modern counter-financing legislation, oversee its implementation, make sure national resources are used efficiently and promote international co-operation.

In response to a question from CCT member Pia Kauma (Finland) about how aware social media platforms are about the dangers of financing

terrorism, Saeed noted that they have paid more attention to these issues in recent years, but stressed that there is much work still to be done. When asked about main achievements on countering terrorism, Saeed explained that the united reaction that brought down ISIS/ISIL/Daesh represents a clear achievement of the international community.

In a review of implemented activities, Lopatka reported that he had the privilege to chair the Third Coordination Meeting of Parliamentary Assemblies in Doha in late January 2023 and emphasized that working hand-in-hand with 16 assemblies from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Arab world is a unique opportunity for the OSCE PA.

Additionally, Lopatka informed members about the exchanges and outcomes of the Parliamentary Policy Dialogue, organized on 31 January 2023 in co-operation with the United Nations Office on Counter Terrorism, and previewed upcoming activities, including an official visit in March to Geneva and Berne.

Finally, Lopatka informed members about the plan to organize the Fourth Meeting of the Co-ordination Mechanism of Parliamentary Assemblies and a new Parliamentary Policy Dialogue in Vienna, possibly in early June 2023.











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