

News from Copenhagen

In Vienna, President Tsereteli calls for more support to OSCE



President Tsereteli, with Ambassador Nothelle, expressed appreciation for the work of the PA Liaison Office in Vienna

On 25 January President George Tsereteli was in Vienna to address the OSCE Permanent Council, calling on the Organization's participating States to ensure the effective functioning of the OSCE.

"We live in very volatile times. Security needs to be regained every day. We see a growing amount of confusion, also among our citizens, regarding the benefits of the values of liberal democracy. We see the reappearance of the ugly heads of intolerance, racism, xenophobia, aggressive nationalism and populism. In these times, how could we do without the OSCE?" asked Tsereteli. "Let us continue to join our efforts in making it stronger and more effective."

To this end, the President urged a rapid adoption of the OSCE's budget, so the organization can live up to the taskings and expectations of OSCE countries. The President pledged the support of the OSCE PA for co-operation in all fields with the Organization's executive side. He particularly encouraged further support for and use of OSCE field operations.

Tsereteli also stressed the importance of the broadest possible contribution from non-governmental organizations to OSCE work, to ensure a full and unrestricted exchange of information and opinions. Individual governments, he said, should not be able to veto their participation.

President Tsereteli took the opportunity to update the Ambassadors of all OSCE countries on planned activities of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in the coming year. The President's address to the Permanent Council was followed by a detailed exchange of views with many representatives of OSCE countries.

Meeting with the OSCE's Representative on Freedom of the Media, Harlem Desir, on 25 February, President Tsereteli reiterated the Parliamentary Assembly's support for the Representative's office. The two discussed opportunities for further co-operation and ways to strengthen the impact of the OSCE's work in the field of media, including related to strengthening of legislation and protection of journalists.



President Sobotka (left) and President Tsereteli

In Vienna, the President also met with the newly elected President of the Austrian Parliament, Wolfgang Sobotka, for talks that focused on challenges to the OSCE area and Austria's contributions to the OSCE and the Parliamentary Assembly. Tsereteli expressed the Assembly's gratitude to the Austrian government and parliament for its ongoing support, including through supporting the International Secretariat Liaison Office in Vienna. Contributions such as this make Austria one of the largest contributors to the Assembly in real terms, the President noted.

Presidents Tsereteli and Sobotka also discussed issues related to the crisis in and around Ukraine, unresolved conflicts in the South Caucasus, humanitarian concerns, migration and terrorism, with President Tsereteli highlighting the work being done within these fields by OSCE parliamentarians. Sobotka particularly underlined the importance for parliaments of defending the rule of law in an environment characterized by a populist personalization of politics.

ODIHR Director visits PA headquarters

On 22-23 January the Director of the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Ingibjörg Gísladóttir, paid her first visit to the International Secretariat in Copenhagen since being appointed in July 2017. The visit provided an opportunity for Director Gísladóttir and PA Secretary General Montella and their teams to discuss ongoing activities and opportunities for further co-operation.

