

News from Copenhagen

PA President addresses Ministerial Council, holds bilateral meetings in Milan



George Tsereteli addresses the Ministerial Council, in Milan, 6 December 2018.

Addressing the opening session of the 25th OSCE Ministerial Council in Milan on 6 December, OSCE PA President George Tsereteli (Georgia) stressed that it is up to governments to strengthen the OSCE, pursue meaningful dialogue, and demonstrate good faith in implementing commitments.

“What the OSCE needs from all of us is political support and the necessary resources to carry out its mandate,” Tsereteli said. “We in the Parliamentary Assembly are always happy to discuss the challenges of our region, to develop common approaches that deliver results, and to explore ways to strengthen this unique organization.”

Tsereteli regretted that instead of focusing on resetting relations, much of the focus was instead on the escalation of tensions in the Kerch Strait between the Russian Federation and Ukraine. “It is deeply worrying to hear news about shootings and blockades, instead of receiving information

about successful efforts to end this grave European crisis,” he said.

The President also cited economic and environmental challenges, including climate change, and declining human rights standards as threats to comprehensive security. He noted that countries are abandoning international agreements that have served as cornerstones of stability and embarking on new arms races. He urged adjustments to the consensus rule and a strong OSCE presence in the field in order to increase the organization’s effectiveness.

Also speaking at the opening session were OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Enzo Moavero Milanese and OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger. The PA was represented at the Ministerial by members of the Bureau, who participated in plenary sessions and side meetings. The Bureau met on 5 December for discussions on OSCE-related work, hearing reports from President Tsereteli, Treasurer Doris Barnett (Germany), Secretary General Roberto Montella, and Italian Deputy Foreign Minister Guglielmo Picchi.

While in Milan, President Tsereteli held a series of bilateral meetings with the foreign ministers of Turkey, the Russian Federation, Albania, and Moldova and the Head of Delegation from Morocco. He also held a number of informal conversations on the sidelines of the Ministerial Council with ministers and ambassadors, including representatives from Italy, the United States, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Azerbaijan, Montenegro, Sweden and France.

Observers note broad public trust in Armenian parliamentary elections



Peter Osusky and Nahima Lanjri at the post-election press conference in Yerevan, 10 December 2018.

The 9 December early parliamentary elections in Armenia were held with respect for fundamental freedoms and enjoyed broad public trust that must be preserved through further electoral reforms, observers concluded in a preliminary statement issued in Yerevan on Monday. Open political debate contributed to a vibrant campaign, although cases of inflammatory rhetoric were of concern, the statement says.

The general absence of electoral malfeasance, including of vote buying and pressure on voters, allowed for genuine competition, the observers said. Despite the shortened timeframe, the elections were well administered, although the integrity of campaign finance was undermined by a lack of

regulation, accountability and transparency.

“Democracy cannot proceed without trust, so I am pleased that broad public trust was the central characteristic of this election,” said the OSCE PA’s Peter Osusky, who served as Special Co-ordinator of the short-term OSCE observer mission. “Now that voters have delivered their message, it is up to the political leadership of Armenia to ensure that this momentum is maintained, and that further reforms are implemented to fully consolidate the positive assessment we are making today.”

Nahima Lanjri, head of the OSCE PA delegation, said: “Politics has historically been a man’s world but, as women are more than half of the population, this should be reflected in politics as well. I hope to see reforms that will encourage more women in politics and to ensure that the next elections are fully representative of both men and women.”

The OSCE PA deployed a 46-member delegation, which worked closely with colleagues from the OSCE/ODIHR, European Parliament, and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. It was the 11th time the PA deployed an election observation mission to Armenia since 1995.