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REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE OSCE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

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**Twenty-Sixth Annual Session
of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly**

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Since being elected as President in July 2016, I have worked along the five priorities I had outlined during my campaign:

1. Enhance the contribution of parliamentarians to the activities of the OSCE family.
2. Broaden our external cooperation so as to nurture contacts with other relevant regional and international organizations.
3. Sensitize to the important role of women in confidence building, dialogue and conflict resolution, and facilitate greater convergence on key current challenges.
4. Give parliamentarians more room for discussion.
5. Enhance to the fullest the impact of our work, including at the field level.

It was a pleasure for me to re-appoint a number of Special Representatives to lead PA work in specific fields, as well as to appoint our first Special Representative on Mediation. Further information regarding my main activities is listed below. In addition to these primary activities, I have met on several occasions with OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier and ODIHR Director Michael Georg Link to improve co-ordination at headquarters and in the field.

July 2016

In the aftermath of the 15-16 July coup attempt, I followed the situation in Turkey with great concern. My first statement as president called for calm and restraint, and condemned in the strongest terms any attempts by parts of the military to overthrow the democratically elected government of Turkey by means of force. I underlined that it was of utmost importance to return to rule of law and respect for Turkey's constitutional order as soon as possible.

August 2016

On 16-17 August, I led a delegation to see the leadership in Turkey, as the first high-level delegation to visit following the coup attempt. There, we discussed subsequent government reactions. Our flexibility as a parliamentary team was important, allowing us to meet government, all opposition parties and civil society, deliver messages on behalf of the OSCE and offer support to Ankara in several fields.

September 2016

I participated on 1 September in an informal meeting of Foreign Ministers in Potsdam, where I urged intensified efforts at diplomacy and confidence-building, stressing that governments should make full use of the OSCE's instruments to address common challenges. I also urged all countries to look to the OSCE, its field missions and all of its institutions as valuable resources. I underlined in particular that the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has the unique ability to react rapidly to crises. I also used the opportunity of this informal ministerial meeting to describe the conclusions and impression from our high-level visit to Turkey to dozens of foreign ministers.





I addressed the OSCE/ODIHR Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw on 19 September to reiterate the Parliamentary Assembly’s support when it comes to implementing the human dimension commitments of OSCE participating States. In my remarks, I regretted that the absence of consensus at the ministerial level had rendered the OSCE unable to reach decisions in the third dimension and had prevented the development of a values-based and comprehensive response to the migrant and refugee crisis.

October 2016

During the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly’s Autumn, which took place from 30 September to 2 October, I met with the Heads of Field Operations in South East Europe to discuss political developments in the region and reaffirm the Parliamentary Assembly’s support for OSCE field missions. In Skopje, I also held talks with the delegation from Belarus to prepare this year’s Annual Session in Minsk and with the delegation from Kyrgyzstan regarding the organization of our 2018 Autumn Meeting in Bishkek.

On 27 October, I addressed the OSCE Permanent Council and urged governments of the OSCE area to enhance the level of international co-operation to reverse a deteriorating security environment. In particular, I raised concerns over the erosion of safeguards against the militarization of international politics, including the dangers of a new arms race, and pointed out that the OSCE is a useful forum to overcome crises in the security architecture. In Vienna, I highlighted the organization’s potential, but noted that greater co-operation is needed to achieve this potential. In this regard, I stressed that the Parliamentary Assembly is ready and willing to work closely with the OSCE’s governmental side in addressing common challenges. I also underlined the PA’s ability to promote mutual understanding through parliamentary diplomacy and dialogue.

November 2016

I served as Special Co-ordinator and leader of the OSCE short-term observer mission for the 8 November general elections in the United States. This was the first time a full-scale OSCE mission was deployed in the U.S., which comprised a total of 320 observers from 43 countries. This was also one of the largest OSCE PA election monitoring missions, with 104 parliamentarians and staff attending. With lots of talk about ‘election rigging’ before the vote, I wrote an opinion piece published by CNN offering perspective and highlighting a number of issues of concern related to elections in the United States. While in the United States to pay a visit to the United Nations headquarters in New York City on 10-11 November and meet Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman and Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka. I highlighted the Assembly’s



activities in a range of areas, including election observation, migration, gender, parliamentary diplomacy, mediation, and conflict prevention and resolution. Discussions focused on regional developments of shared relevance, notably in Central Asia, Ukraine, Turkey and Eastern Europe. Consideration was given to closer co-operation with the newly established post of UN Liaison for the OSCE in Vienna.

On 21 November, I addressed the NATO Parliamentary Assembly's 62nd Annual Session in Istanbul, focusing primarily on issues of parliamentary diplomacy and the core value of a comprehensive security approach.

I visited Moscow on 29-30 November and met with Federation Council Chairperson Valentina Matvienko and State Duma Deputy Chairman Petr Tolstoy, to discuss the follow up of the decisions put forward by the Assembly at its recent Annual Session in Tbilisi, Russian involvement in the work of the OSCE PA, the role of parliamentary diplomacy and developments in and around Ukraine.

December 2016

On 8 December, I addressed the OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting in Hamburg. I stated that a strong OSCE is needed to help to improve the security situation across North America, Europe and Central Asia. I also stressed that our Parliamentary Assembly stands ready to do its part working for a more effective organization, and noted that OSCE parliamentarians can help mobilize the political will needed for real results. I underlined the need to develop the OSCE's mediation capacity, to which the OSCE PA, with its Special Representative on Mediation, can make a viable contribution. On the sidelines of the Ministerial Council meeting, I also met with the foreign ministers of Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and the Russian Federation.



I participated in the Inter-Parliamentary Union's Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament on 12-13 December in Abu Dhabi. In my remarks, I emphasized the crucial role of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peace-building, and peace-keeping. I encouraged a shift towards the empowerment of women to create conditions for lasting peace and security. During my trip to the United Arab Emirates, I met once more with Russian Federation Council Chairperson Valentina Matvienko to discuss Russian engagement with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and joint projects with the Interparliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

January 2017



To begin the year 2017, I addressed the OSCE Permanent Council on 13 January and called for the immediate agreement on the extension of mandates of OSCE field operations, some of which were being held up by representatives of OSCE countries. I underlined that field missions have long been the crown jewel of the OSCE, both helping OSCE countries to live up to their commitments through practical project work and representing a vital element of the Organization’s outreach capacity.

On 24-25 January, I visited London to promote sustained British engagement with the OSCE. I emphasized the need for reinforcing European, Eurasian and transatlantic ties by utilizing all the tools offered by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, including its Parliamentary Assembly. During the visit, I met with House of Lords Speaker Peter Norman Fowler and members of the UK’s delegation to the OSCE PA to identify priority areas in the work of the OSCE PA that are of particular relevance to the United Kingdom.

February 2017

During the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly’s Winter Meeting, which took place in Vienna, on 23-24 February, I exchanged with several delegations, including from the Russian Federation, Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia, Montenegro, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Malta, and Israel. These meetings served to prepare upcoming PA activities, presidential visits, and statutory meetings, as well as to discuss political developments in the OSCE region.



March 2017

On 15-17 March, I traveled to Belarus to sign the Annual Session agreement and hold high-level talks with the country’s leadership. I welcomed the active engagement of Belarus in the OSCE PA and expressed gratitude for the intensive efforts deployed to host our Annual Session. In my meetings, I also encouraged the authorities to show greater restraint and respect the rule of law, and to ensure the rights of freedom of peaceful assembly and speech.



On 23 March, I hosted together with Speaker Doris Bures the conference on “OSCE Security Policy - Female Perspectives” at the Austrian Parliament. Our discussions explored issues such as the role of women in developing a new pan-European security architecture and prospects for gender mainstreaming in OSCE field work. I highlighted improvements in increasing the level

of women's overall involvement in public life and pointed out the need to improve the level of engagement of women in discussions on security, including conflict resolution and addressing violent extremism.

I participated on 28 March in a conference in St. Petersburg co-organized by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the Interparliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States focused on combating international terrorism. In my address, I emphasized the need for a proactive response to terrorism that recognizes the various underlying issues fueling radicalization and violent extremism, in particular poverty, political exclusion, human rights violations, discrimination and climate change. My visit to Russia was also the occasion to meet with the Speakers of the parliaments of the Russian Federation, Azerbaijan, Belarus and Kyrgyzstan to reinforce inter-parliamentary convergence on transnational threats.

April 2017

I travelled to Malta for talks on 4 April with the Speaker of the Maltese Parliament, the Head of Malta's OSCE PA Delegation, and the Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean to consider the work of the OSCE PA in the Mediterranean region.

The Bureau meeting which took place in Copenhagen on 28 April was the occasion for me to exchange with the Assembly's leadership on current political issues and prepare PA activities in the run-up to the Minsk Annual Session.

May 2017

I participated on 6 May in the third edition of the Leinsweiler seminar focusing on the "Renationalization of politics and the fight for geopolitical spheres of influences: Endangering Peace and Security." In my remarks, I noted that new tensions have arisen in the OSCE's recent past that threaten to erode safeguards in place to prevent major conflicts. I regretted that in recent years, there has been a tendency across the OSCE area to move away from co-operative decision-making and that powers are interfering outside their borders in attempts to establish spheres of influence.



Immediately after, I visited Uzbekistan to discuss the country's ongoing reforms and potential areas for co-operation with the OSCE and the Parliamentary Assembly. This was the first high-level contact for the OSCE PA in more than a decade. In my official meetings on 8 May, I exchanged views on a number of priority topics on the OSCE PA's agenda including engagement with national minorities, regional co-operation and combating terrorism. I also highlighted the effective work of the OSCE's full-time

presence in the country, the Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan, and encouraged the authorities to continue to make use of the office's capacities to promote experience-sharing dialogue in support of OSCE commitments. On 10 May, I participated in the OSCE's annual Central Asia Regional

Heads of Field Operations Meeting and took the opportunity to reiterate the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's full support to OSCE field operations.

On 29-30 May, I hosted a retreat on national minorities in Villach, where participants discussed how parliaments can promote adequate structures and a supportive environment for national minorities. The seminar explored ways to improve public support for national minorities in areas such as education, culture, and language. In my remarks, I noted that the reality of our multi-ethnic societies can be a source of conflict both within countries and between countries, but can also help expand perspectives and promote co-operation.



June 2017

In mid-June, I embarked on a trip to China and Kazakhstan to solidify the Asian dimension of our work. In Beijing, I discussed ways of enhancing possible future co-operation between China and the OSCE PA. Among topics of discussion were China's relations with the OSCE and with Europe, including in areas of mutual interest such as the economic and environmental dimension, and the fight against terrorism. I also met with representatives of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, for discussions that touched on prospects for future co-operation between the SCO and the OSCE on issues of common interest, including the fight against terrorism, radicalization and extremism also through the SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure in Tashkent.



In Kazakhstan, I met with Senate Chairman Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, and Mazhilis Chairman Nurlan Nigmatulin, and Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov. We discussed the security implications of climate change, Kazakhstan's role in international mediation, and regional convergences to fight transnational threats. In Astana, I also addressed the opening of the Second Preparatory Meeting of the Annual OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum, where I outlined the role of parliamentarians in supporting

the transition to a green economy. My trip to Kazakhstan also included a visit to Shymkent for discussions on democratic reforms at the local level.