



OSCE PA Autumn Meeting

Geneva, Switzerland

3 October 2014

Introduction by OSCE PA President Ilkka Kanerva

SESSION 1: DEBATE ON THE CRISIS IN UKRAINE

Let me first welcome this opportunity to discuss the crisis in and around Ukraine. From the outset, I would like to give a short summary of the positions and action of the OSCE PA in regard to the crisis.

Last February at our Winter Meeting, the PA held a vigorous debate on the situation in Ukraine and on ways to de-escalate the situation on the ground.

Our diplomatic efforts continued through the spring, with high-level visits to Moscow, Kyiv, Donetsk, Odessa, Lviv and other Ukrainian cities to promote de-escalation and to prepare the observation mission to the May 25th presidential election.

The observation mission was a major accomplishment, with more than 100 parliamentarians deploying across Ukraine.

Last July in Baku, the Annual Session of our Assembly expressed grave concern about the situation in Ukraine. It emphasized the role of the OSCE in engaging all parties in a constructive dialogue, monitoring and supporting the implementation of all OSCE principles and commitments on the ground.

The Assembly also underlined the respect for the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity, peaceful settlement of disputes, equal rights and self-determination of peoples, as stated in the Helsinki Final Act. It called on the Russian Federation to reverse the annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine.

In Baku our Assembly “called for the creation of an inter-parliamentary liaison group on Ukraine in order to de-escalate the situation on the ground and support the country out of the crisis”.

Since the Baku Session I have held talks, as President of the PA, with many fellow parliamentarians in the region, including Russian Federation and Ukraine.

I consider it important that regardless of the crisis we communicate with each other and keep networks of contacts active in order to plan ahead. Drawing back and delivering disapproving statements is not an option.

But in spite of all efforts the crisis is still going on. However, some important steps have been taken to stabilize the situation in Ukraine.

The work of the Trilateral Contact Group and the signing of the Minsk Protocol were very positive steps forward. The Protocol and the related Minsk Memorandum provide basis for moving towards a political process which aims at resolving the crisis.

It is my understanding that our main role is to promote dialogue and facilitate finding sustainable diplomatic solutions to the conflict in and around Ukraine. We should be able to bring the parliamentary dimension to the demanding process.

It is important that we as Parliamentarians can lend our support to the work of the Trilateral Contact Group and to the full implementation of the Protocol and the Memorandum. This is needed urgently in the light of new outbreak of violence.

As a next step we need to reinforce the Special Monitoring Mission to its full strength, to 500 monitors. We need to mobilize more resources, both human and financial, so that the Mission can provide maximum support to the implementation of the Minsk agreements. As Parliamentarians, we can call for more resources and political will from our Governments to this effect.

Ukraine will hold parliamentary elections on 26 October. The OSCE parliamentary observers will deploy to polling stations across Ukraine, working closely with long-term observers from ODIHR and in co-ordination with colleagues from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and the European Parliament. Noting the expertise of the OSCE PA in election related activities, it is important that we do our utmost to make these elections succeed.

Upon my recommendation, Minister Burkhalter has designated OSCE PA Vice-President Kent Harstedt as Special Co-ordinator to lead the short-term OSCE observer mission. Vice-President Doris Barnett will serve as Head of the OSCE PA Delegation. I am sure that both of these leaders will ensure a successful observation mission, and I sincerely hope that under these extraordinary circumstances, Ukraine's institutions and voters will rise to the occasion, as they did during the presidential election earlier this year.

For the needed reforms and stabilization of the state, it is vital that Ukraine lives up to all of its OSCE commitments, including on elections.

On that note, I will hand the floor over to our two keynote speakers today, Simon Lunn of the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces and Astrid Thors, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. Thank you both for being here today to share your expertise with us all.