

*Check against delivery.*

Remarks by OSCE PA President Christine Muttonen

European Conference of Presidents of Parliament,

Strasbourg, 15 September 2016

Mr. President,

Secretary-General,

Dear Colleagues,

The Roman poet Horace once said, “It is your concern when your neighbour’s wall is on fire”.

Indeed, our lives, our well-being, or “weal and woe” so to speak, do not depend only on us but also on our neighbour’s “weal and woe”. No state is able to guarantee its citizens’ safety and security single-handedly or by going it alone. Most of the challenges can in fact only be managed successfully in cooperation, in dialogue and by making compromises – by also taking into account the interests of other states.

The migration of hundreds of millions of people worldwide is indeed one such challenge.

And yet, we are witnessing the exact opposite around the globe. Instead of cooperating, many states seek to isolate themselves and go for national solutions. Xenophobia and racism vis-à-vis migrants and refugees are on the rise. Wherever you look, support for so-called “strong men and women” continues to grow. They proclaim:

‘I have the quick, the simple, the egoistic, the national solution for all of your problems. No need for discourse. No need for compromises’.

We can only stop this dangerous trend by cooperating. We must show people that there is an alternative – which does, however, not involve a quick and simple fix, but rather generates a sustainable, peaceful solution that is based on solidarity.

- a solution that takes states’ security concerns seriously while at the same time taking account of migrants’ need for protection.
- a solution that is geared towards inclusion and integration and fights extremism and xenophobia.
- a solution that focuses on the root causes of flight and migration and that in particular supports the neighbouring countries of Syria, which have taken in the vast majority of refugees fleeing the war.

Countries, which themselves are facing huge domestic policy challenges and are struggling to maintain political stability.

One month ago, for instance, I together with a delegation from the OSCE PA, had the opportunity to visit Turkey. We met government representatives, members of the opposition and colleagues from parliament to talk about the terrible putsch attempt, this attack on democracy, on parliament itself and to also discuss the subsequent government reactions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Colleagues,

Let me assure you that the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly will continue to do its utmost and to make every effort to contribute towards implementing sustainable and peaceful solutions that are based on solidarity. And we are indeed already active in this area. In the past two years we have undertaken a number of fact-finding missions, including to the Turkish-Syrian border and to Sicily, for instance.

We have set up a committee on migration where we share and pool the experiences from our 57 participating States. Our initial findings have already been submitted in a number of proposals to our participating States.

We are pleased to share these proposals, the information we collect and our wide range of experiences not only with governments, but of course also with national parliaments.

Let me thus take this opportunity to invite you all to come to our conferences, to visit us and to contribute to our debates – thus adding new momentum to inter-parliamentary exchange.

You are most warmly welcome to join us.

I look forward to our continued cooperation. Thank you.