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**REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL
OF THE OSCE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY**

Mr. Roberto Montella

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

LUXEMBOURG, 4-8 July 2019

Report of the Secretary General
of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly
Roberto Montella
Luxembourg, July 2019

We meet in Luxembourg in order to focus our attention on some of the most pressing issues facing our societies. **Sustainable development** is at the heart of our discussions in this Annual Session, allowing OSCE PA members to take a long-term perspective on what is a priority for the world's population. I am honoured to convey the **collective thanks of the OSCE PA to the delegation of Luxembourg headed by Eugene Berger** and to the entire Luxembourg Chamber of Deputies for the hospitality and for providing our Members with this opportunity.

Our discussions in Luxembourg come following an exceptionally eventful spring season, which saw parliamentarians active all across the OSCE region. The International Secretariat has been pleased to support a wide range of this work on topics as vital as countering terrorism, strengthening parliamentary oversight, and examining the humanitarian impact of the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

Activities of the International Secretariat in support of Members

Since we met for our Winter Meeting in Vienna last February, our office has supported the **deployment of more than 250 observers for elections in the OSCE area**. Within the past year we have observed **11 elections** across the OSCE region. We are grateful to the members of parliament who have taken the time to serve, thereby supporting and promoting OSCE principles.

President George Tsereteli led in February the **Moldova election observation mission** with **Vice-President Kari Henriksen**. This was soon followed up by elections in **Ukraine** at the end of March in which **President Emeritus Ilkka Kanerva and Treasurer Doris Barnett** led our teams for the first round, with President Tsereteli contributing as leader of the team for the important second round of elections. Simultaneous with this second round in Ukraine, **Sereine Mauborgne and Reinhold Lopatka** provided leadership to the observation of the presidential election in **North Macedonia**, which also required a second deployment in early May. **President Tsereteli** also served as Special Co-ordinator for the short-term OSCE observer mission to the early presidential election in **Kazakhstan** in June, along with **Head of Delegation Margareta Kiener Nellen**. The Secretariat has been pleased to support all of these efforts and provide the necessary support so that OSCE parliamentarians can continue to provide leadership in this field. **Election observation clearly remains a flagship activity for the Assembly** and it is my intention to further strengthen the Election Department of the OSCE PA with additional resources in order to face the increasing activities in this sector.

President Tsereteli has kept a **high pace of activities**. His **visit to Luxembourg** to sign the host agreement for the meeting that brings us all together this July served as an opportunity to be updated on the excellent preparations being made by our hosts and to meet with the entire leadership of this country. Immediately following his leadership of the Moldovan election observation effort, he continued on to **Kyiv for a Presidential visit** that also served the purpose

of kick-starting our election observation in that country. Tsereteli also paid a **Presidential visit to the Netherlands** to meet with the Speakers of Parliament and lend support to the work of the **OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Lamberto Zannier**. Since that time, he has also continued with visits which included exchanges with Speakers of Parliament and government Ministers in a number of countries including **Cyprus, together with 3rd Committee Rapporteur Kyriakos Hadjiyanni and Head of Delegation Irene Charalambides, and in Norway together with 2nd Committee Chair and Rapporteur Nilza de Sena and Elona Gjebrea Hoxha and Vice-President Kari Henriksen and Head of Delegation Siv Mossleth**. Following the visit to Oslo and Svalbard in the High North of Norway, President Tsereteli appointed **Torill Eidsheim as a new Special Representative on Arctic Issues** to lead Assembly engagement in this field and specifically on the effects of climate change on society and security. The President's many visits have been effective in maintaining high-level dialogue on the OSCE throughout the region.

OSCE PA Members have also been **active** in numerous other fields. The **Leinsweiler seminar** provided another important opportunity for a large number of Members to discuss issues related to economics as an instrument in conflict prevention in an informal setting, with President Tsereteli participating actively and **Treasurer Barnett and the German parliament generously hosting our seminar once again**. The Assembly's high-level engagement on **migration** has continued with our **ad hoc committee Chaired by Nahima Lanjri visiting Brussels** in early April for a series of meetings, including with **EU institutions and civil society**, focused particularly on migrant returns policies.

Similarly, the OSCE PA's **Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism** continued to expand our engagement and visibility through targeted contributions at the 2019 OSCE-wide Conference on Countering Terrorism in March in Bratislava and at the high-level counter-terrorism forum hosted by the **Interparliamentary Assembly of the CIS** in April in St. Petersburg. **Chair Makis Vouridis** and a range of other Members took the opportunity to share the OSCE PA's experience in the field with other international actors and strengthen existing partnerships. Our countering terrorism committee, in co-operation with colleagues in the OSCE Secretariat, is also finalizing work on its oversight initiative, engaging no less than 20 Parliaments in holding their respective governments accountable for the implementation of international commitments related to border security & information sharing. Finally, on 2 July, **Lisa Chambers from Ireland** will showcase the OSCE PA's dedicated efforts at the first-ever briefing before the **United Nations Security Council's Counter Terrorism Committee** on the role of parliamentarians in the fight against terrorism. The very fact that we are increasingly invited to contribute to such distinguished fora demonstrates that our work is generally perceived as timely and relevant.

The Chair and Rapporteur of the Assembly's human rights committee have also continued that committee's active work to highlight particularly the humanitarian difficulties caused by the conflict in Ukraine. **Margareta Kiener Nellen and Kyriakos Hadjiyanni travelled to Kyiv**, holding meetings with Ukrainian authorities and international humanitarian actors, as well as to the **contact line in the east of the country** where they witnessed the harsh conditions impacting people in the region. Their efforts particularly to draw attention to the need for demining efforts and the challenges to freedom of movement in the conflict affected areas were co-ordinated closely with the **OSCE Special Monitoring Mission**, which continues to do excellent work.

Strengthening the OSCE PA's functioning and new Media tools

The Secretariat has been pleased to support **the work led by Vice-President Lord Peter Bowness to improve the proceedings and efficiency of Assembly work.** Results have already been noted during our most recent meetings in Bishkek and Vienna, with Members welcoming the more integrated approach to our meeting agendas, and the Secretariat will continue to explore options to further improve Assembly proceedings. **The amendment to our Rules of Procedure, adopted in February, will also help to clarify procedures during our Annual Session.**

We have just launched the new **“OSCE PA Events” mobile application¹**, which I hope OSCE PA Members and staff will make full use of. By unveiling this new tool for phones and tablets we become the first inter-parliamentary assembly in the region to have such a dedicated app. In developing this special tool, we aim to ensure that **all those participating in OSCE PA-organized events have full and easy access to all relevant information.** Dynamic maps of premises, biographies of speakers, resolutions and agendas are only a few of the options that Members will find at their fingertips if they download and explore this app. I also want to stress that in developing this tool we have taken care of selecting a firm with a strong track-record on security and privacy concerns. **Anna Di Domenico** from our Secretariat has been **leading the development of this exciting new application**, and I encourage OSCE PA Members and Staff to stay in touch with her on any questions related to the app.

Our communications team, headed by Nat Parry, has developed a media strategy to guide our public communications work that we hope will improve our outreach and ultimately our real-world impact. This strategy, requested by Assembly leadership, builds on tools included in our newly designed website which was launched earlier this year.

I take this opportunity to thank Treasurer Doris Barnett for her work in putting together the draft budget that is presented to the Standing Committee this July. The additional resources that are requested in this proposal will enable us to build on our successes so far, including particularly through enhanced support in the public communications field. I am confident that these additional resources will make a substantive contribution to Assembly work. **Our thanks also go to the Danish parliament** for their continued support by hosting our headquarters in excellent facilities in the centre of Copenhagen, representing a major contribution to Assembly finances in real terms. Similarly, the support of the **Austrian government to our Vienna Liaison Office, and Italian and German governments through secondments of staff** help to ensure that we can maintain professional support to the increasing number of PA activities at very low cost.

Members will have seen the **new proposed guidelines for election observation**, distributed recently. These will contribute to the OSCE PA's longstanding recognition as a leader in the field of election observation. **The work of Ambassador Andreas Nothelle** to develop this

¹ The app can be downloaded on

iTunes App Store: <http://itunes.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewSoftware?id=1463542021&mt=8>

Google App Store: <http://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=mobile.appHAJpL96VBc>

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effective set of guidelines puts the Assembly in an excellent position to continue to provide leadership in this critical field. These new guidelines provide clear procedures and accountability mechanisms that will further strengthen the PA's credibility in this field. Under the President's guidance, the International Secretariat will monitor the practical implementation of the guidelines and assess if any adjustments may be necessary.

We have recently welcomed our first **Junior Professional Officer, Stephanie Koltchanov**, to the International Secretariat in Vienna and **Executive Advisor Guido Almerigogna** in Copenhagen.

Co-operation within the OSCE and with partners

I am pleased to also report that our co-operation with the Executive Structures and with OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger, continues to be excellent. The OSCE PA Vienna Liaison Office is key in ensuring that, whenever appropriate, the position and the work of the Assembly is upheld vis-à-vis the Permanent Council and the OSCE Executive Structures and Institutions. The brief bi-weekly report by Ambassador Nothelle also serves as an important way for Members to follow what happens in the OSCE Permanent Council and Secretariat.

The daily interaction that OSCE PA staff have with participating States' representatives and OSCE colleagues in Vienna has been supplemented on a number of occasions recently. For example, **2nd Committee Chair Nilza de Sena participated in a Security Days event** organized by OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger in early June, contributing an Assembly perspective to governmental discussions on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. **Special Representative on Central Asia Roman Haider, supported by Farimah Daftary from our Copenhagen office, also travelled to Ashgabad** and participated in a meeting of regional heads of OSCE field missions and met with senior officials in Turkmenistan. Similarly, **Ambassador Nothelle travelled to Tirana**, where he worked closely with the OSCE presence and the Albanian parliament to hold a workshop to lend practical support to the incoming Albanian 2020 OSCE Chairmanship. Secretariat staff have also participated in numerous other events with OSCE colleagues on topics as varied as gender and communications.

The OSCE PA supported a conference organized by the **OSCE/ODIHR together with the Georgian Parliament, in Tbilisi in June. President Tsereteli, Vice-President Azay Guliyev and 3rd Committee Rapporteur Kyriakos Hadjiyanni**, along with other OSCE PA Members, contributed to a substantive examination of topics associated with parliamentary oversight. My colleagues and I were pleased to also host **ODIHR Director Ingibjorg Gisladdottir** and a number of her senior staff for a meeting in **Copenhagen** to explore opportunities to build on our already strong ties. I believe that our constructive discussion will yield **results in co-operation in the fields of rule of law and democratization, communications and election observation** and I would like to thank **Andreas Baker** for actively exploring ways to expand our co-operation with the ODIHR beyond election observation.

President Tsereteli addressed the **NATO Parliamentary Assembly in June** and consolidated our co-operation with this partner assembly. In May, it was also a pleasure for me to participate in a **high-level conference in San Marino on the topic of 'fake news'**, meeting also with

Head of the OSCE PA delegation Luca Santolini and other officials for interesting discussions on the ability of small States to contribute to policy promotion at the international level.

Upcoming events

The OSCE PA President is expected to travel immediately after the closure of our Luxembourg session to an **informal Ministerial meeting hosted by the Slovak OSCE Chairmanship in the High Tatras examining the theme ‘From past action to future prevention: the OSCE’s niche in fostering stability in Europe and beyond’**. Such meetings are an important opportunity for OSCE foreign ministers to meet in a less formal setting, and high-level representation by the OSCE PA will be important. This meeting will also serve as an initial opportunity to inform Ministers of the OSCE PA’s recommendations contained in the Luxembourg Declaration. We will also deploy a major observation mission to the **early parliamentary elections in Ukraine** in July.

In October we will **hold a statutory meeting beyond the borders of the OSCE region (first time ever!), kindly hosted by the Moroccan parliament in Marrakech**. We are also moving forward swiftly with preparations to hold the **2020 Annual Session in Vancouver, in the hometown of the Head of the Canadian Delegation, Hedy Fry**.

We anticipate continued close work **with colleagues in the OSCE/ODIHR and partners from the Council of Europe PA, NATO PA and European Parliament on election observation**. To this end, in August we will be hosting another informal meeting to follow up on previous work among Secretariats to brainstorm about how best to continue with and improve our work in this field. Upcoming elections that we anticipate observing include Belarus and Uzbekistan in 2019.

In the framework of our continued counter-terrorism efforts we also expect to soon sign a dedicated Memorandum with the United Nations intended to provide a strong framework for our goal-oriented co-operation in this field.

Let me conclude by saying that we are very pleased to be joined at this Annual Session by **Steny Hoyer, who is a founding member of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly** and currently serves as House Majority Leader in the United States Congress.

The participation of Mr. Hoyer is the first in what **we hope will become a tradition – for previous members of the Assembly to come and speak to the Assembly at OSCE PA meetings**. The idea is to promote continuity and strengthen institutional memory while also preserving the important networks and relationships that have been developed over the years between OSCE parliamentarians.

Dear Members, dear Friends,

What we deliver to OSCE PA members is the result of **teamwork**. I would like to recognise the contribution of my colleagues including our research assistants and interns and I thank all OSCE PA Members for your confidence in our work. See you all soon in Luxembourg!