

**Report by Jürgen Klimke, Member of the Bundestag,  
OSCE PA Special Representative for the Baltic Sea Area,  
for the OSCE PA 2016 Winter Meeting**

In July 2015, the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA), Ilkka Kanerva, appointed me as the Assembly's Special Representative for the Baltic Sea Area.

I was very pleased to accept this position, as the Baltic Sea area is close to my heart; I have a close connection with it both because I come from Hamburg, and because of my work in Hamburg's parliament and since 2002 in the Bundestag. In addition, I have been a member of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly for more than six years, and for almost two years I have served as deputy head of the German delegation and spokesman for its CDU Members.

Looking beyond my mandate, I see my role as going beyond security policy in the narrower sense. It is important to me that exchange and dialogue, particularly youth exchanges, and encounters between people are also on the agenda of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

In the current situation, the conflict over Ukraine and perhaps also other conflicts relating to Syria are ensuring that the topics of security, disarmament and confidence-building measures, as well as encounters between people, are also featuring on the Baltic Sea area's agenda to a greater extent. This range of issues, with which the OSCE is actively engaging, contributed to the decision to give the Baltic Sea its own dimension within the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

It is important to me that my work as the OSCE PA Special Representative should not weaken or duplicate existing security structures, on the one hand, or Baltic Sea structures, on the other. My aim is instead to use the competences and strengths of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to boost regional cooperation, and to help to ensure that the Baltic Sea area remains and makes further progress as an area of enhanced cooperation.

As a first step, in order to learn how the Baltic Sea countries view the situation, I have now held talks with the ambassadors of these countries in Germany. This also helped in defining the topics I will deal with as the OSCE PA Special Representative for the Baltic Sea Area. In December 2015, I organised a joint meeting of all ambassadors representing the Baltic Sea countries. It was already clear during these discussions that there are differing assessments of the situation in the Baltic Sea area and differing expectations of an OSCE PA Special Representative for the Baltic Sea Area.

In early November, I also attended the meeting of the Standing Committee of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference in Riga, at the invitation of President Janis Vucans. This not only gave me the opportunity to introduce myself; I was also able to discuss the work of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC). Last year, the BSPC also adopted a resolution about security in the region. Against this background, I consider it important to maintain close links with the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference, and with other institutions dedicated to cooperation in the Baltic Sea area. For example, I also had a discussion with Jan Lundin, the Director General of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), and here too our cooperation is to continue.

Despite all the different assessments of the situation, I have sensed one common thread in the talks I have held so far: namely, the generally positive assessment of the OSCE and the OSCE PA in the current situation. I have also found that all stakeholders see the Baltic Sea area as an area of enhanced cooperation, as a unifying force. Differences of opinion exist with regard to the security situation's impact on cooperation in general, and with regard to the position of a Special Representative for the region.

This year, I plan to go further by visiting the countries concerned, where I hope to speak to experts on subjects such as security, arms control, human rights, as well as youth exchanges and the economy in the Baltic Sea area.

My first trip took me to Riga in January 2016, and in March I am planning to hold talks in Moscow. Further visits to Russia, Poland and Scandinavia are currently being organised.

In addition to allowing me to gather information, these visits are also preparation for a joint conference which is to be held on the island of Bornholm on 14 June 2016. This conference is open to members of the OSCE PA from the Baltic Sea countries and members of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference. The aim is to adopt a joint resolution on security and cooperation in the Baltic Sea area and to prepare a supplementary item for the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

I will set out my findings from these visits and conferences in my regional report and at a Baltic Sea panel at the OSCE PA 2016 Annual Session or this year's Autumn Meeting.