

REPORT

OSCE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY 16TH WINTER MEETING VIENNA, AUSTRIA



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REPORT ON THE 2017 WINTER MEETING OF THE OSCE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

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Summary



The OSCE PA Winter Meeting is held every February at the OSCE's headquarters in Vienna.

Since February 2002, the OSCE PA has held an annual Winter Meeting at the Hofburg Congress Centre in Vienna. The second largest event in the OSCE PA calendar, the Winter Meeting provides an opportunity for the three General Committees to hold discussions on timely issues and to be briefed by high-level OSCE officials.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's 16th Winter Meeting – consisting of meetings of the three general committees, two joint sessions, a Standing Committee meeting, and a number of side events – took place at the Hofburg Congress Centre in Vienna on 23-24 February 2017, and included the participation of some 250 OSCE parliamentarians.

The inaugural joint session of the three general committees was opened and chaired by OSCE PA President Christine Muttonen and included addresses by President of the National Council of Austria Doris Bures and OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues Hedy Fry (Canada).

The three general committees met over two days to hear from senior OSCE officials and debate issues related to political and security affairs, economics and the environment, and human rights and humanitarian questions. Each committee also heard presentations by committee rapporteurs regarding their ideas and intentions for the reports and draft resolutions to be prepared for the 26th Annual Session in Minsk in July.

Chaired by Roger Wicker (United States), the General Committee on Political Affairs and Security heard a presentation by Rapporteur Margareta Cederfelt (Sweden) who focused on issues including protracted conflicts, terrorism, cybersecurity and women in peacebuilding. The General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment was chaired by Nilza Sena (Portugal) and included a presentation by Rapporteur Marietta Tidei (Italy), touching on issues such as climate change, green growth and clean energy.

Ignacio Sanchez Amor (Spain) chaired the General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions, which heard a report from Rapporteur Kyriakos Kyriakou-Hadjjiyianni (Cyprus), focusing on the need to protect human rights during periods of heightened security concerns, including by strengthening the OSCE's human rights enforcement mechanisms.

"We will continue to defend OSCE principles and values, co-operate for security and stability, promote democracy and fundamental human rights."

OSCE PA President Christine Muttonen

The OSCE PA's Standing Committee of heads of national delegations met on 23 February to hear reports by President Muttonen, OSCE PA Treasurer Doris Barnett (Germany), and Secretary General Roberto Montella,

and approved a set of amendments to the Assembly's Rules of Procedure. OSCE PA Special Representatives, leaders of recent election observation missions and the chairs of ad hoc committees also presented reports to the Standing Committee.

The closing joint session on 24 February featured a special debate on protecting human rights in times of crisis. Following introductory remarks by Muttonen, Sanchez Amor and ODIHR Director Michael Georg Link, dozens of interventions by members of parliament from more than 20 OSCE participating States addressed issues related to counter-terrorism, radicalization, and protracted conflicts.

Parliamentarians also heard addresses during the closing joint session by OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Austria Sebastian Kurz and OSCE Secretary General Amb. Lamberto Zannier, who noted the valuable contribution of the Parliamentary Assembly to the objectives of the OSCE.

Opening Joint Session of the General Committees



Doris Bures



Christine Muttonen

Opening the meeting on 23 February, President of the National Council of Austria Doris Bures and OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President Christine Muttonen spoke about the work being conducted in parallel with the Austrian Chairmanship of the OSCE to advance the Organization's commitments in addressing common challenges. Also speaking at the opening session was OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues Hedy Fry (Canada) who focused on the gender aspects of the refugee and migrant crisis.

Doris Bures, President of the National Council of Austria

In her remarks, Bures noted that "isolation and nationalism" are not the path to a peaceful and more secure future. She urged the assembled parliamentarians to instead strive for dialogue and co-operation. "We must seek solutions that embrace the ideals of our community: peace, security, prosperity and the guarantee of democratic values in the OSCE area on both sides of the Atlantic," Bures said.

She also noted that "one of the biggest challenges facing us in the era of violent extremism and radicalization is the safety and security needs of all people." She stressed the importance of not succumbing to fear in tackling the terrorist threat, but instead addressing common challenges in a rational way.

Bures emphasized that the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship was focusing on three priorities for 2017: defusing existing conflicts in the OSCE area, joining forces in fighting radicalization and violent extremism, and fostering the re-

establishment of trust and confidence between OSCE participating States.

Bures noted that the parliamentarians of the OSCE represent more than one billion people from Vancouver to Vladivostok and called upon members of the PA to work together for the sake of peace.

Christine Muttonen, President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

President Muttonen opened the meeting by welcoming participants and specifically the delegation of Uzbekistan, which was attending its first OSCE PA meeting in a number of years. She spoke about the work being conducted in Vienna to advance the OSCE Chairmanship's priorities.

Muttonen raised concerns over several crises in the OSCE area, highlighting in particular Ukraine, the deteriorating situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, and the ongoing threat of terrorism throughout the OSCE region. In addressing these crises, she stressed the need to uphold human rights and fundamental freedoms through a comprehensive approach to security. "We will continue to defend OSCE principles and values, co-operate for security and stability, promote democracy and fundamental human rights," she said.

The President urged parliamentarians to address root causes that lead to violent extremism and reiterated the gravity of the challenges facing the OSCE area. "We are an organization for security and co-operation, which means we need to build bridges, provide a platform for dialogue, and furthermore we need to cultivate partnerships," she said.

Opening Joint Session of the General Committees



Hedy Fry

Hedy Fry, OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues

Presenting her report, Hedy Fry stated that although the OSCE's Hamburg Ministerial Council in December produced a decision on migrants and refugees, the document regrettably lacked a gender component. She therefore urged the OSCE executive structures to consistently conduct gender-based analysis as they continue working on migration and refugee issues as called for at the Ministerial Council in Hamburg.

Fry noted that the gender aspects of the refugee and migrant crisis are multifaceted, noting the unique challenges that women and girls face during the migration process. It is especially important, she stressed, that integration into host communities takes into account the special needs of female refugees and migrants.

"If we want to build secure societies we need to be sure that newcomers are integrated and feel secure," she said, emphasizing in particular language training and health care as priorities. In response to the refugee and migrant crisis, Fry urged parliamentarians to implement gender mainstreaming at the governmental level by ensuring that best practices are applied. She called for greater investment in programmes that promote inclusivity and laws against discrimination based on religion, race and national origin.

Fry pointed out that good planning and communications are required to prepare host communities for the arrival of new people with different values, beliefs, and ways of understanding the world. "The social integration piece is not simply in the interests of refugees and migrants. To have safe and functioning communities, everyone must feel that they are a part of society and have opportunities," she said.

Statements

"If we want to build secure societies we need to be sure that newcomers are integrated and feel secure."

OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues Hedy Fry

In their remarks, parliamentarians raised a number of issues, with one delegate noting that the aging population of many OSCE countries means that migrants represent an essential demographic, underlining the importance in this regard of effective integration. Social isolation can lead to increased radicalization and violent extremism, it was pointed out. Another member drew attention to the mutual responsibility of host countries and migrants in facilitating integration.

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General Committee on Political Affairs and Security



Roger Wicker chairs the First Committee meeting.

Chair Roger Wicker (United States) opened the session of the Committee on Political and Security Affairs on 24 February noting that the OSCE is arguably facing the most serious security crisis since the end of the Cold War. He emphasized the need to step up support for the OSCE field operations and underlined the importance of confronting terrorism, highlighting the tragic human consequences of violent extremism in the OSCE area. He also introduced the first speaker, Margareta Cederfelt (Sweden).

Margareta Cederfelt, Rapporteur of the First Committee

Cederfelt noted that although citizens throughout the OSCE area generally live in peace and prosperity, ongoing crises are contributing to rising insecurity. Cederfelt discussed the new challenges that cybersecurity is creating for participating States as well as the need to develop confidence-building measures to make cyberspace more predictable, manageable and to de-escalate tensions. The Rapporteur went on to discuss the threat of terrorism in the OSCE area. She noted the increasing threat to security posed by terrorist attacks and stressed the importance of countering radicalization of young people, as well as the financing of radical groups throughout the OSCE region.

Cederfelt additionally underlined the issue of women in peacebuilding. She noted that enhancing women's political, social and economic empowerment in armed conflict and disaster settings is a priority for the OSCE's work in implementing UN resolution 1325. The OSCE's role in peacebuilding is an ideal platform to push for gender equality and to increase the participation of women



Margareta Cederfelt presents her report.

in parliamentary diplomacy, she said. The Rapporteur condemned Russia's actions in Ukraine including its annexation of Crimea, noting that the Ukraine crisis can only be solved through constructive and inclusive dialogue.

Finally, Cederfelt discussed the role of the OSCE in protracted conflicts, stressing that the most recent violations of the line of contact in territories around Nagorno-Karabakh represented the most serious escalation of the conflict since 1994. She emphasized that the OSCE should utilize its full toolbox – including the Parliamentary Assembly – to stabilize the situation and work towards a comprehensive peace agreement. Cederfelt underlined that parliamentarians have a key role to play in reaching a long-term settlement in the Transdniestrian settlement process as well as in the peace process concerning territorial disputes in Georgia.

Steffen Kongstad, Chair of the OSCE Permanent Council's Security Committee, Permanent Representative of Norway to the OSCE

Amb. Kongstad presented the activities of the OSCE Security Committee and its ongoing discussions about transnational threats and security sector reform. He stated that OSCE participating States should intensify co-operation to combat transnational threats, particularly organized crime. He noted that the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security and the work of its field operations play a key role in this matter, emphasizing that the fight against violent extremism and radicalization is one of the main priorities of the Security Committee. Finally, he talked about the

General Committee on Political Affairs and Security

importance of women in peace and security and the need to advance gender equality as a cross-dimensional issue.

Christian Istrate, Chair of the Forum for Security Co-operation, Permanent Representative of Romania to the OSCE

Amb. Istrate briefed the parliamentarians about the priorities of the Forum for Security Co-operation. The Romanian Chairmanship, he said, will focus on the crisis in and around Ukraine, protracted conflicts in the greater Black Sea region, the CFE Treaty, the Vienna Document, and transnational threats such as cybersecurity. He noted that it is pursuing a two-dimensional approach to security – both geographic and thematic. He talked about his intention to organize two security dialogues focusing on two regions of direct interest: the Balkans and the Black Sea. Finally, Amb. Istrate discussed the various events that he hosted in the FSC, notably on non-proliferation, the role of military chaplains and the political-military activities of OSCE field missions.

Henrik Villadsen, Director and Officer in charge of the Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities

Villadsen started off by saying that the past year has been a watershed for the institution and reminded participants that it has been without a High Commissioner since 20 August 2016. He noted that the institution's mandate – as the

OSCE's primary early warning mechanism – was designed in the wake of the Balkan wars. He stated that diversity is deeply rooted in Europe and underlined the importance of OSCE tools to defuse ethnic tensions. He talked about the role of education in promoting respect for minorities and praised Novi Sad University for being the first truly multilingual and multiethnic university in southern Serbia. Finally, he noted that next year will mark the 20th anniversary of the Oslo Recommendations regarding the Linguistic Rights of National Minorities.

Debate: “Transnational security in the OSCE area: confronting terrorism”

The debate was opened by Rasa Ostrauskaite, OSCE Co-ordinator of Activities to Address Transnational Threats, who emphasized the need for strengthening collective action against terrorism, including through the work of parliamentarians.

The assembled parliamentarians raised a number of ongoing challenges, including violent extremism, the Ukraine crisis and protracted conflicts. A number of MPs stressed the importance of the work of the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine and of enhancing the level of dialogue as key to ensuring a comprehensive peace in Ukraine. Concerning terrorism, members stressed that education, intercultural dialogue and the settlement of conflicts in the Middle East region are essential to secure social cohesion and to reduce the threat of terrorism in the OSCE area.

Side events address range of issues during Winter Meeting



Finnish side event on 23 Feb. 2017.

Important discussions took place on the margins of the Winter Meeting, including a number of bilateral meetings between President Muttonen and heads of PA delegations, as well as thematic side events dealing with a range of issues. The President participated in a side event organized by the Finnish Delegation and OSCE PA Special Representative on Mediation Ilkka Kanerva entitled “The Human Security Dimension in Peace Mediation.” Other side meetings taking place in Vienna included one on energy security, organized by Ukraine, and an event organized by the United Kingdom

on the theme “Relevant, Responsive, Responsible Democracy,” which tackled issues such as how to safeguard the integrity of democratic institutions in times of rising populism and growing authoritarian tendencies.





General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment



Rapporteur Marietta Tidei presents her report to the Second Committee, 23 Feb. 2017.

Committee Chair Nilza Sena (Portugal) opened the meeting by welcoming the participants, presenting the agenda and introducing the speakers. Marietta Tidei (Italy) delivered a presentation of her preliminary ideas for the report and draft resolution to be considered at the Annual Session in Minsk on 5-9 July. Ambassador Kairat Sarybay and Halil Yurdakul Yigitguden also addressed the Second Committee.

Marietta Tidei, Rapporteur of the Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Tech- nology and the Environment

In her remarks, Tidei presented the main issues that her report and draft resolution for the Annual Session will cover, namely climate change and migration. On climate change, despite the acceptance of commitments in the Paris Agreement at the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP21), Tidei noted that many countries have not managed to achieve substantial developments in addressing the issue. The Rapporteur underlined that, under international commitments accepted at the COP21, every government should pursue economic development in an environmentally friendly way. In this regard, industrialized countries have a special obligation to assist less developed countries in pursuing development taking into account environmental concerns. The Rapporteur expressed appreciation for the German OSCE Chairmanship, which in 2016 included "greening the economy" as one of its priorities.

This issue is closely related to migration, Tidei said, noting that many migrants leave their homes following environmental disasters. Underlining the right for everyone to live in dignity, the Rapporteur stressed that migrants can contribute to the growth and the health of host countries, but only if they are provided with proper tools, including education opportunities.

Ambassador Kairat Sarybay, Chair of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Committee

Amb. Sarybay welcomed the OSCE Ministerial Council Decision "Strengthening good governance and promoting connectivity" and presented the work plan of the EEC, underlining that it will fully align with the Austrian Chairmanship priorities.

The EEC is organizing 12 meetings for 2017, Sarybay said, nine of which will be thematic addressing issues like good economic governance, water management, disaster risk reduction, energy security, renewable energy, facilitating transportation in the OSCE region and hazardous material safety.

The ambassador closed by recalling the fundamental role of green growth for sustainable development, security and stability.

Halil Yurdakul Yigitguden, Co- ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities

Yigitguden presented a brief summary of the first preparatory meeting of the OSCE's

General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment

25th Economic and Environmental Forum and provided an overview of priorities for 2017.

The Co-ordinator underlined the importance of the Ministerial Council Decision “Strengthening good governance and promoting connectivity,” which, he said, enhances the OSCE’s work in the economic and environmental dimension.

Fighting corruption was identified as a priority going forward, which Yigitguden said undermines the trust of people in institutions. States need to enact and enforce legislation to eradicate corruption and the OSCE PA will continue to provide assistance to implement anti-corruption laws. For this purpose, the translation work of the handbook against corruption is continuing, with the Russian version to be published this year.

Yigitguden also focused on combating money laundering through a continuous exchange of information, the sharing of experience and best practices and facilitating the publication of national reports on money laundering.

Further priorities of the office include the harmonization of customs and border crossing procedures to improve international trade; to ensure a sound climate and promote economic prosperity and sustainable development; and to conduct visits to inspect migration management.

On the environment, Yigitguden focused on strengthening the early warning capacity in disaster risk reduction, enhancing the role of the Aarhus Centres in promoting an expedited transition to a green economy, and increasing the resilience of critical infrastructure, including electrical grids.



Nilza Sena

Debate: “Managing natural resources, addressing water security and combating climate change”

The Vice-Chair of the Committee, Artur Gerasymov (Ukraine), opened the debate stating that water security is an internationally recognized fundamental right and an essential element for human development in all its forms. Therefore, a fair and equitable distribution of this resource and the benefits that come from it is needed. Yigitguden also delivered opening remarks reaffirming the need to tackle climate change, which, he pointed out, is a primary contributor to water insecurity.

During the debate, it was noted that many people around the world still die from contaminated drinking water, so attention must be focused also on sanitation. The availability of pure drinking water is affected by pollution, which, according to one delegate, is an issue that must be addressed. The scarcity of water could lead to future conflicts, thus requiring an increase of the so-called “hydro-diplomacy”, as a tool to avoid future wars for water.

According to the Paris Agreement on climate change, not only must developed nations comply with CO₂ reduction commitments, but they must also help the most vulnerable countries to face climate change, it was pointed out. A number of delegates highlighted projects in their home countries that are developing innovations and solutions to challenges related to climate change and water resources.



Committee Vice-Chair Artur Gerasymov consults with Deputy Secretary General Semyon Dzakhaev.





General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions



Ignacio Sanchez Amor chairs the Third Committee.

Opening the meeting of the Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions on 23 February, Chair Ignacio Sanchez Amor (Spain) outlined his recent activities and described some of his main areas of concern regarding human rights in the OSCE region. He stressed the importance of avoiding double standards when criticizing abuses of human rights, pointing out that human rights challenges exist in all countries of the OSCE.

The Chair highlighted the continued humanitarian challenge posed by the refugee and migrant crisis, and expressed solidarity with Turkey following the coup attempt in July 2016. However, he stressed the need for Turkey to uphold the rule of law in responding to challenges.

Kyriakos Hadjiyianni, Rapporteur of the Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions

Kyriakos Hadjiyianni (Cyprus) outlined his ideas for his report and draft resolution to be considered at the 26th Annual Session in Minsk. He indicated that his report would focus on the idea of protecting human rights in times of heightened security threats and stressed the importance of the OSCE's Human Dimension Committee for the Organization's comprehensive approach to security. He outlined how emergency measures and restrictions on some rights can be warranted in times of crisis, but emphasized that such crises must not evolve into a pretext for protracted repression and undermine stability, becoming part of the



Kyriakos Hadjiyianni presents his report.

problem rather than the solution.

He also noted the need for governments to take necessary measures to protect their citizens in the face of terrorist attacks, which are themselves attacks on the most fundamental of human rights – the right to life. He further outlined other priorities for his report, including pushing for prioritizing the human dimension in the OSCE, and calling for participating States to work co-operatively in responding to the refugee and migrant crisis.

Ambassador Sian Macleod, Chairperson of the Human Dimension Committee of the OSCE Permanent Council and Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the OSCE

Amb. Macleod spoke of her plans for the year, noting that she would take as a starting point the priorities of OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Sebastian Kurz, and would work with the Austrian Chairmanship to strengthen the human dimension within the OSCE. She argued that at no time since the establishment of the Human Dimension Committee were human rights issues so much in need of attention, and that it was a challenge to sift through competing national priorities. Fundamental rights and freedoms would remain in the spotlight under her chairmanship of the committee.

Stressing her desire to build closer links with the PA in work on human rights issues, Macleod cited the side event on democracy which she participated in during the Winter Meeting along with Chair Sanchez Amor as a positive example. She also mentioned that she currently had nine

General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions

meetings of the Human Dimension Committee planned, and that these meetings would focus on issues including freedom of expression, torture, gender and democracy, and hate crime. She noted that she would be inviting contributions from all the OSCE Institutions for these meetings, and stressed that the absence of a topic from her provisional programme did not mean that it would not receive attention.

Michael Georg Link, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Director Link emphasized the value of the co-operation between ODIHR and the Parliamentary Assembly on activities including election observation, and also stressed the importance of the human dimension to the work of the OSCE as a whole. He noted that human rights and security need not be contradictory, but in fact are complementary. He discussed the value of election observation missions promoting OSCE values, highlighting in particular the final reports that are issued, which serve as an analytical basis for action and dialogue for participating States and civil society organizations.

Link went on to mention several other areas of co-operation between the OSCE PA and ODIHR, including on Roma and Sinti issues, noting the participation of OSCE PA Vice-President Isabel Santos (Portugal) in a recent event on this topic in Berlin. He also highlighted the work of Senator Ben Cardin and Rep. Chris Smith (United States) in tackling anti-Semitism

and human trafficking. He finished his remarks by noting the visibility and credibility that comes from joint election observation missions between the OSCE PA and ODIHR, and thanked PA members for taking time to take part in observation missions.

Following Link's remarks, he took questions from the MPs on matters such as the status of Crimea, the situation in Turkey and election observation methodology.

Debate: "Protecting human rights amid growing populism"

The debate that followed featured a range of opinions on the issue of protecting human rights amid growing populism. Delegates highlighted that polarization has grown across Europe, calling common values into question, and that there is a growing tendency toward isolationism. This has seen States close their borders in dealing with the refugee and migrant crisis.

Concerns were also raised over the perception that some countries were backsliding on human rights commitments, often amid rising populist movements in those countries. There was general agreement on the point that there was a growing sense of disillusionment with the status quo in many countries of the OSCE region, but hope was expressed that the situation could be reversed if governments remained committed to protecting human rights and fundamental values.

OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Migration meets in Vienna

The OSCE PA's Ad Hoc Committee on Migration, chaired by Swiss parliamentarian Filippo Lombardi, met on 22 February at the French Embassy in Vienna. The informal working meeting featured a report by Lombardi on recent migration-related briefings in Brussels and Geneva. Amb. Claude Wild, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the OSCE and former Chair of the Informal Working Group Focusing on the Issue of Migration and Refugee Flows, briefed the Ad Hoc Committee on the outcomes of the 2016 OSCE Ministerial Council in Hamburg and Hedy Fry (Canada), Member of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration and OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues, presented a report. Ad Hoc Committee Vice-Chair Alain Neri (France) submitted an update on the situation following the closure of the Calais camp in France.







Closing Joint Session of the General Committees

The final session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's 16th Winter Meeting on 24 February featured a special debate on protecting human rights in times of crisis. Dozens of interventions by members of parliament from more than 20 OSCE participating States addressed issues related to counter-terrorism, radicalization, protracted conflicts in the OSCE region, and challenges to state authority, emphasizing the importance of upholding fundamental rights during periods of heightened security concerns.

The OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sebastian Kurz, and OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier, also spoke at the closing session.

Christine Muttonen, President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Opening the debate, OSCE PA President Christine Muttonen noted that in the current security environment where threats to stability and public safety are all too real, there is growing anxiety and expectation among citizens that their governments take action to keep them secure. She stressed, however, that "hyper-securitization of our countries" is not a realistic or effective solution.

Muttonen noted that upholding shared values and OSCE commitments is essential to countering violent extremism and establishing comprehensive security. Rejecting calls from leaders across the OSCE area for restricting rights, Muttonen said that "we must instead find a comprehensive, effective and sustainable way to uphold security."

The OSCE is well-suited to address this issue because of its comprehensive approach to security, she said. "The strength of our input is the fact that it is multi-dimensional – touching on hard security, economics, environmental challenges, human rights and humanitarian questions," Muttonen said.

Michael Georg Link, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Director Link delivered remarks in which he stressed that any assessment of human rights



in the OSCE must begin by recognizing that in recent years there has been a decline in democratic freedoms. "As is unfortunately the case in times of crisis, human rights are among the first victims," Link said. He warned that the system of multilateralism based on democratic ideals is at risk.

Link also pointed out that, across the OSCE area, there is a trend toward growing executive power, as well as increasing distrust and rising populism. "But no majority government is above the law," he reminded parliamentarians. Link argued that "in these times our organization needs voices willing to speak out in defence of OSCE commitments," and noted in this regard the importance of developing close co-operation between the Parliamentary Assembly and ODIHR.

Ignacio Sanchez Amor, Chair of the Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions

Sanchez Amor warned against security being used as an excuse for a lack of progress on democratic development, noting that democracy means much more than holding elections.

"Putting a ballot into a box isn't sufficient in establishing a country as a democracy. Democracy is what happens between elections," Sanchez Amor said. He urged a high standard for human rights across the OSCE area, stressing that parliamentary systems and presidential systems alike should guard against authoritarian trends. He also argued that multilateral diplomacy must place human rights high on the agenda.

Special Debate on Human Rights in Times of Crisis



The panel of the closing joint session of the general committees on 24 February.

Special Debate: “Protecting human rights in times of crisis”

In the debate, parliamentarians discussed a wide range of issues, expressing concerns over restrictions to freedom of speech and freedom of association, as well as the importance of defending equality and developing effective approaches to countering radicalization and violent extremism. Minority and language rights were stressed as important to uphold across the OSCE area, while countering anti-Semitism was also highlighted as a priority.

Kyriakos Hadjiyianni (Cyprus) argued that to respond to declining human rights it is necessary to strengthen the OSCE’s human dimension enforcement mechanisms.

Hedy Fry (Canada) stressed the value of the OSCE’s comprehensive approach to security and noted that the OSCE model provides an opportunity to respond to crises in an organized manner, as well as to develop long-term approaches to address trends before they develop into crises.

The situation in Turkey was highlighted as a concern by a number of members, with Soren Sondergaard (Denmark) noting that an alarmingly high number of journalists are imprisoned in the country. Steve King (United States) stressed that Turkey faces serious security threats, including terrorism and challenges to state authority, but expressed concern over the response by the Turkish government.

Ismail Karayel (Turkey) responded by emphasizing the high level of the threat in Turkey and said that all individuals detained in Turkey are suspected of serious crimes and that their legal

rights are respected.

The refugee and migrant crisis was also raised, with Greek members pointing out that OSCE countries need to share the responsibility for hosting those fleeing violence and ensure that terrorists are not able to exploit the crisis. Delegates also exchanged views on the crisis in and around Ukraine and its related human rights challenges.

OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Foreign Minister of Austria Sebastian Kurz

Minister Kurz commended the valuable role of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. “As representatives of the people, you contribute in an impressive manner to defend, protect and implement the values and aspirations of the OSCE. Democratic feedback as well as dialogue through complementary channels of communication are indispensable for our Organization and can contribute to building trust and confidence,” he said.

OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier

Amb. Zannier noted the importance of making full use of all opportunities to promote security, highlighting the role of the PA in this regard. “By engaging in parliamentary diplomacy and in their national capacity, members of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly strongly contribute to the Organization’s objectives,” he said. “As a central forum for dialogue between our 57 participating States, the OSCE PA provides a vital link towards a more secure future.”

Standing Committee Meeting



The Standing Committee consists of the OSCE PA's Heads of National Delegations and members of the Bureau. Meeting three times a year – at the Winter Meeting, Annual Session and Autumn Meeting – the Standing Committee guides the work of the Assembly, approves its budget and elects the Secretary General.

OSCE PA President Christine Muttonen opened the Standing Committee meeting on 23 February with a report on her activities since the Parliamentary Assembly's previous meeting in Skopje. She welcomed the new heads of delegations, with a special recognition of Uzbekistan's return after a period of non-participation in the Assembly.

The President mentioned her recent addresses to the OSCE Permanent Council and the Ministerial Council in Hamburg, which she described as an important opportunity to maximize co-operation with the governmental side of the Organization. She outlined her role as Special Co-ordinator for the election observation mission in the United States and her visit to UN headquarters in New York in November 2016. The President also discussed recent visits to the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom, as well as her address to the Inter-Parliamentary Union's summit of women speakers of parliament in December 2016.

The Chair of the Sub-Committee on the Rules of Procedure, Lord Peter Bowness (United Kingdom), outlined the recent work of his committee. Standing Committee members unanimously approved suggested rules changes related to various working procedures of the Assembly, including Annual Session amendments and supplementary items procedures.

The Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration, Filippo Lombardi (Switzerland), reported on the briefings held in Brussels and Geneva, where the members of the committee met with the stakeholders of the main international organizations involved in migration. He underlined the need to develop a long-term strategy based on improved co-operation.

Treasurer Doris Barnett (Germany) provided

an update on the PA's finances, affirming that the budget complied with and reflected the efforts of national legislatures to minimize expenses and to limit use of taxpayers' money. The PA's activities used all of the allocated expenditures, she said, commending the International Secretariat for promoting efficiency, as well as its work in developing new financial rules and regulations. She also noted that the finances had been positively assessed by the Assembly's external auditors.

"Our efforts to strengthen co-operation with our traditional partners has yielded results in several fields in recent months."

Secretary General Roberto Montella

OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella described his efforts to enhance the International Secretariat's capacities and thanked PA members for their contribution to election observation activities. He

highlighted the need to increase engagement with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation through visits to the region and possible election observation. Regarding the upcoming elections for a number of key positions in the OSCE, Montella noted that although the PA has no role in selecting leaders of other OSCE Institutions, the Assembly has consistently called for filling these positions with high-level political figures.

The Standing Committee also heard reports from Special Representative on Anti-Terrorism Nikolay Kovalev (Russian Federation), Special Representative on Mediation and President Emeritus of the OSCE PA Ilkka Kanerva (Finland), the Chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Belarus Kent Harstedt (Sweden) and the Chair of the Parliamentary Team on Moldova Arta Dade (Albania). Leaders of recent election observation missions to Montenegro, Moldova, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, and the United States also briefed the Standing Committee on their findings.







**PROGRAMME OF THE 16th WINTER MEETING
OF THE OSCE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY**
Vienna, 23-24 February 2017

Thursday, 23 February 2017

- 09.00 – 11.45 **Standing Committee Meeting** (*Ratsaal, 5th floor*)
- 12.00 – 13.15 **Joint Session of the three General Committees:** (*Neuer Saal, 2nd floor*)
Address by the President of the National Council of Austria, Ms. Doris Bures
Address by the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Ms. Christine Muttonen
Report of the OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues, Dr. Hedy Fry, followed by a debate
- 13.15 – 15.15 Lunch Break
- 15.15 – 18.00 **General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions**
(*Neuer Saal, 2nd floor*)
- 15.15 – 18.00 **General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment** (*Ratsaal, 5th floor*)

Friday, 24 February 2017

- 09.00 – 11.45 **General Committee on Political Affairs and Security** (*Neuer Saal, 2nd floor*)
- 11.45 – 13.30 Lunch Break
- 13.30 – 16.30 **Joint Session of the three General Committees:** (*Neuer Saal, 2nd floor*)
Address by the Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Austria, Mr. Sebastian Kurz, followed by a question & answer session
Address by the Secretary General of the OSCE, Ambassador Lamberto Zannier, followed by a question & answer session

Special Debate: "*Protecting Human Rights in Times of Crisis*"
Closure by the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Ms. Christine Muttonen

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Secretary General
Roberto Montella

The OSCE PA International Secretariat provides administrative support for the Assembly in its various activities. The Secretariat organizes the meetings of the Assembly and provides support for election observation projects, special missions and Presidential activities. Its work is carried out in co-operation with other OSCE Institutions and international parliamentary organizations. The Secretariat, which is hosted by the Danish Parliament, is headed by Secretary General Roberto Montella, and has a staff of 17, including three staff members at the Liaison Office in Vienna.



Deputy Secretary
General
Gustavo Pallares



Deputy Secretary
General
Semyon Dzakhayev



Special
Representative
Andreas Nothelle



Chief of the
Executive Office
Andreas Baker



Head of Document
Services
Dana Bjerregaard



Deputy Director of the
Vienna Liaison Office
Marc Carillet



Presidential Advisor
Maria Chepurina



Programme Officer
Farimah Daftary



Executive Assistant
Anna Di Domenico



Head of Confer-
ence Services
Odile LeLarge



Senior Advisor
(consultant)
Kurt Lerras



General Services
Manager
Bo Hjorth Nielsen



Chief Political
Advisor
Francesco Pagani



Head of Communi-
cations and Press
Nat Parry



Chief ICT
Stephen Paul



Programme Officer
Loic Poulain



Finance Advisor
(consultant)
Predrag Radjenovic



Head of Administration
for Election Observation
Iryna Sabashuk



Bringing together 323 parliamentarians from across the 57-nation OSCE region, the OSCE PA provides a forum for parliamentary dialogue, leads election observation missions, and strengthens international co-operation to uphold commitments on political, security, economic, environmental and human rights issues.

Recognized as a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, the OSCE is a primary instrument for early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation in its area. The Parliamentary Assembly, originally established by the 1990 Paris Summit to promote greater involvement in the OSCE by national parliaments, is the oldest continuing OSCE Institution.

The basic objectives of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly are:

- To assess the implementation of OSCE objectives by participating States;
- To discuss subjects addressed during meetings of the Ministerial Council and the summits of Heads of State or Government;
- To develop and promote mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflicts;
- To support the strengthening and consolidation of democratic institutions in OSCE participating States;
- To contribute to the development of OSCE institutional structures and of relations between existing OSCE Institutions.

To pursue these objectives, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly employs a variety of means:

- A Final Declaration and a number of resolutions and recommendations are adopted each year at the Annual Session in July;
- Committee work addresses important contemporary international issues;
- Programmes and seminars are designed to develop and strengthen democracy including an extensive election observation programme;
- Special parliamentary missions are deployed to areas of latent or active crisis.



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

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