

Address by Christine Muttonen, President of the OSCE
Parliamentary Assembly, to the OSCE Permanent Council

Vienna, 27 October 2016

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Herr Vorsitzender, Excellencies,

I am happy to have the opportunity today to interact with you directly as the representatives of the participating States and Partners for Cooperation. I am, of course, particularly pleased to be able to do so in my own country, a few months before the start of the Austrian Chairmanship.

Analysis and statement of principles

You will not be surprised to hear that I believe strongly in the need for a strong and effective OSCE. This was a core reason behind my decision to run for the office of the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. How much optimism was created during the past 25 years - after the fall of the Iron Curtain, and the Arab Spring. Unfortunately now, the world experiences crumbling security architectures and the return of all the misery that war, nationalism, and fundamentalism bring to parts of Europe and wide areas of its neighborhood.

This deteriorating security environment cannot be allowed to continue – it requires efforts by all of us. Our citizens expect us, their elected politicians, their civil servants and experts, to put an end to this development and to reverse the trend. This is also what we – the 323 parliamentarians of the OSCE PA – expect from the OSCE and is why we want to enhance our co-operation with the Organization’s decision-making bodies and its executive institutions.

During my Presidency of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, I will also continue to put a priority particularly on expanding relations with the outside world, as well as pushing for increased awareness of gender, youth and minorities as an integral element of our policies and programmes. Being only the second female president of the Parliamentary Assembly I intend to strengthen and support the access and the active role of women in the whole security architecture.

True dialogue

At such a crucial time, the OSCE must continue to serve as a forum for effective dialogue. It is entirely natural and understandable that partners with different opinions will engage in dialogue that is at times controversial. A core foundation of this Organization is to hold each other to account to the commitments our governments have made to each other. It is my hope that we do not allow dialogue to turn into polarized debate or verbal attacks. Perceptions do matter, and if we hope to find a way out of our current difficulties, it must be together. A security architecture that is not perceived as granting security for everybody is not viable. Semantics play an important role, and so I hope that we can all contribute to constructive discussions; de-escalation is a communal effort and

should take place in all our meeting rooms, the governmental ones as well as in parliamentary conferences.

We must all remain focused on results. We cannot allow lack of progress in one area to stop progress in another – common sense results must prevail. Results will mean a Europe and a world that is effectively more secure.

The PA – and I, personally – remain committed to dialogue, even in the most difficult of times. When, for example, Russian and Ukrainian, or Azerbaijani and Armenian members of parliament speak constructively to each other on the margins of our meetings, I feel this people-to-people diplomacy is one step towards rebuilding confidence and resolving the crisis.

OSCE: achievements and remaining challenges

This organization has had many credits to its name. In particular, the OSCE continues to do valuable work through its missions and institutions. We all appreciate that it was possible to establish the Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine. Border-guard training, election observation, countering terrorist financing, application of security and confidence-building measures, are all contributing to our security. We thank all women and men doing a difficult job in difficult times for the OSCE in so many ways.

Yet the Organization has also not delivered as much as could have been hoped. Our tools of dialogue were not able to prevent the wars in Yugoslavia, Georgia, and Ukraine, nor did we manage to prevent or solve the internal conflicts in several other OSCE participating States. And today, we see an erosion of existing safeguards against the growing militarization of international politics, including the danger of a new arms race.

And there is more: OSCE commitments are not being fully implemented and even clearly violated by participating States. The occupation, and even annexation of a part of a sovereign state by another, rigged elections, a military coup and severe human rights violations, are but a few examples.

OSCE tools

Despite many reform efforts aimed at enhancing the work of the OSCE, the Organization's tools and services are still largely underutilized. We can all benefit from the OSCE's work, and I regret that many participating States do not take advantage of the many benefits that hosting an OSCE mission can produce particularly in terms of contributing to the security our citizens expect.

If we are to enable this Organization to deliver on expectations, we must find the political will to take the next steps and implement some reforms. I would welcome your comments on the recommendations made in our Declaration and the resolutions we passed during the recent Tbilisi Annual Session, and those adopted in previous years. I hope to see concrete progress on issues raised, such as the adaptation of the regulatory framework on arms control and confidence-building, in addition of course to finding political will to seriously improve respect for our populations'

human rights. Your comments on suggestions for a high-level coordinating body or thematic field mission on migration would be particularly welcome.

These are only some of the OSCE PA's concrete proposals to address the many challenges currently facing the OSCE. With only six weeks to the the next meeting of the Ministerial Council in Hamburg, I hope that similarly concrete measures that foster implementation of commitments and making the OSCE territory safer will be agreed.

Parliamentary contribution

As a political assembly, we in the OSCE PA have particular strengths that can be exploited to the benefit of the Organization:

- With multiple parties often represented in OSCE PA delegations, all – including opposition politicians – contribute to our work.
- We can speak out more clearly than a body that decides by consensus – and we have done so for instance by condemning - in clear terms - the breach or the non-implementation of commitments.
- We do not accept results stemming from the violation of fundamental commitments, like the respect for territorial integrity, or the commitment to seek peaceful solutions through dialogue instead of resorting to unilateral actions.
- But we can also stretch out our hands, creating opportunities for dialogue, and there are a number of practical contributions which we can make, which we have been making, and which we can develop further. Most importantly, we can act quickly, as we recently demonstrated with our visit to Turkey just weeks after the attempted coup d'état.

Strengthening co-operation

We in the OSCE PA stand ready to further enhance our co-operation to the benefit of the Organization. Significant steps have already been taken in this regard, and a lot of initiatives to blend our efforts more smoothly into the work of the OSCE as a whole have already yielded results. I look forward to continuing this good work, and would encourage you to consider, whenever you engage in practical work, to see whether we can join efforts in addressing the challenges that confront us. I was pleased to work closely with executive structures in relation to our visit to Turkey this summer, and would welcome further initiatives. Similarly, our enhanced and improved cooperation with the ODIHR over the past months can serve as a blueprint for the positive effects of close cooperation.

Cooperation on issues like the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Affairs, as we did during the recent conference in Berlin, as well as on gender, trafficking, terrorist threats and the many other topics the OSCE is dealing with are the real deliverables and are what our people expect. The OSCE PA is a reliable partner in all these areas.

In our efforts to address the conflict cycle, I have just appointed President Emeritus Kanerva as my Special Representative on Mediation as another offer from our side for a closer cooperation. In

addition, in Tbilisi, we passed a resolution calling for concrete steps in this field, based on an excellent paper that the OSCE Secretariat put forward several years ago.

Likewise, in the past, academic institutes have made concrete proposals for cooperative action by the PA and the ODIHR in human rights monitoring, and we are actually discussing how to develop joint action in the follow-up to recommendations stemming from OSCE election observation.

In conclusion,

Let me use this opportunity to thank the German Chairmanship, the Chairman-in-Office and all his staff, Secretary General Zannier, the heads of Institutions, in particular Director Link, the heads of missions, whose work we value highly, and also our own Secretary General Roberto Montella, and his staff for having made these enhancements possible.

I welcome any thoughts on the many issues before our Organization, as well as input particularly related to how we can co-operate better for the benefit of our organization and our citizens.

Vielen Dank, Herr Vorsitzender.