

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Remote Session



2021
30 June - 6 July

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Summary

Hundreds of OSCE parliamentarians gathered in a hybrid format for the OSCE PA's 2021 Remote Session from 30 June to 6 July.

The OSCE PA's Standing Committee met and heard reports by the PA's President, Treasurer, and Secretary General. The Assembly adopted the budget proposed by Treasurer Peter-Juel Jensen without objection. The Standing Committee meeting, like the plenary, was held in hybrid format, with some members participating in Vienna, and others joining via Zoom. The PA's three general committees met virtually to discuss reports offered by committee rapporteurs dealing with issues such as the social and economic repercussions of the pandemic, sustainable migration management, post-COVID multilateral diplomacy, protracted conflicts in the OSCE area, the impact of the pandemic on transnational threats, and access to health care.

Presenting his report to the First Committee, Rapporteur Laurynas Kasciunas (Lithuania) reminded colleagues that COVID-19 will not be the only unexpected challenge that the international community faces in the years to come. Therefore, he stressed that it is necessary to ensure that principles are upheld with actions. In the Second Committee, former Rapporteur Elona Gjebrea Hoxha (Albania) highlighted how COVID-19 has upended lives for billions of people, underlining the need for co-ordinated efforts in addressing a multitude of complex related issues.

The Third Committee featured debate on the report put forward by outgoing Rapporteur Kari Henriksen (Norway), with parliamentari-

ans stressing that as the world's largest security organization, the OSCE can and must play a key role in a renewed focus on human-centered conflict resolution in a post-COVID era.

The closing plenary featured speeches by outgoing OSCE PA President Peter Lord Bowness and Swedish Foreign Minister and OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Ann Linde. OSCE PA Members adopted three items of urgency dealing with matters related to Belarus, Ukraine, and rising hate and intolerance in the OSCE region. The plenary also included reports by leaders of recent election observation missions, as well as Chairs of OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committees and Special Representatives. Members heard about the PA's work on migration, counter-terrorism, Arctic issues, climate change, gender issues, human trafficking, and more.

The Remote Session concluded with the announcement of election results. Former PA Vice-President Margareta Cederfelt (Sweden) was elected Assembly President, and new Vice-Presidents were elected including Pia Kauma (Finland), Daniela de Ridder (Germany), Askar Shakirov (Kazakhstan), Reinhold Lopatka (Austria), and Irene Charalambides (Cyprus). Also newly elected were Pere Joan Pons (Spain) and Gudrun Kugler (Austria) to serve as Chair and Rapporteur of the Second Committee, and Sereine Mauborgne (France) and Johan Buser (Sweden) to serve as Chair and Rapporteur of the Third Committee.

Upon winning the election, Cederfelt pledged that she would work as President for principles of accountability, inclusion, and respect for every country.



General Committee on Political Affairs and Security

Ongoing threats to security and attacks on multilateralism demonstrate the need to strengthen and uphold the international system, participants said at a virtual meeting of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Committee on Political Affairs and Security on 2 July. With millions of people enduring the violence and displacement of protracted conflicts, rising threats associated with cyber/ICT warfare, the proliferation of non-state actors and hybrid warfare, and OSCE values increasingly being called into question, what is needed is a bold and decisive international response, OSCE parliamentarians said.



Guli...



TUR - OSCEPA



UZB Ravshan ...



USA Richard Hudson



charalambides

General Committee on Political Affairs and Security

Richard Hudson,
Chair of the First Committee

In his opening remarks, Chair Richard Hudson (United States) praised the continued engagement by parliamentarians during these difficult times and provided a brief overview of recent activities, including his co-operation with the Forum for Security Co-operation and hosting of a Parliamentary Web Dialogue on the Role of the OSCE in Transparency and Predictability in Military Affairs.

He especially emphasized the critical role of the of the OSCE PA's Committee on Political Affairs and Security in working towards a free and peaceful OSCE area in which all participating States fully implement the fundamental principles agreed to under the Helsinki Final Act.

Laurynas Kasciunas,
Rapporteur of the First Committee

Rapporteur Laurynas Kasciunas (Lithuania) offered his insights into relevant developments and recommendations for future action, calling on colleagues to hold their governments to account and defend OSCE commitments.

Kasciunas noted that lack of respect for essential OSCE obligations had resulted in mounting tensions between participating States and outbreaks of violence. Relevant examples ranged from eastern Ukraine and Nagorno-Karabakh, where the past year had seen active fighting, to protracted conflicts in Georgia and Transdnestria. In his view, the resurgence of such hostilities was linked to the dereliction of established security structures due to the absence of consensus.

Kasciunas raised the issue of cyber/ICT security, observing that the digital domain was becoming an increasingly important aspect of all types of modern warfare. Highlighting the need for further harmonized international regulation, he encouraged all participating States to make full use of the OSCE's elaborate set of confidence-building measures to reduce the risk of conflict stemming from such technologies.

Kasciunas discussed the evolution of transnational threats during the COVID-19 pandemic, outlining the shifting patterns of organized criminal groups' illegal conduct. He reminded colleagues that COVID-19 will not be the only unexpected challenge that the international community faces in the years to come. "It is only if all of us defend the spirit of Helsinki that we



Laurynas Kasciunas

can ever jointly and soundly weather future crises and ensure the comprehensive security of our constituents," Kasciunas said. He regretted that major security threats continue to impact the OSCE area, from military aggression against neighbouring countries, occupation, and illegal annexation of territory to violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. "This is what we witness, regretfully, every day," Kasciunas said. Finally, Kasciunas denounced the exploitation of the COVID-19 pandemic to weaken parliamentary oversight and pursue the repression of political opponents, independent media, human rights advocates and peaceful protesters, decrying the detention of prominent opposition figures in Belarus and Russia.

Debate

In the ensuing debate, more than 20 parliamentarians shared their perspectives, experiences and concerns on political and security-related topics raised in the report. Participants included parliamentarians from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Canada, Cyprus, France, Georgia, Germany, Kazakhstan, Norway, Romania, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic had only served to reinforce the need for multilateralism and enhanced co-operation, parliamentarians said. Some Members warned that the crisis must not be used as a pretext to undermine OSCE principles and commitments.

In view of the deteriorating arms control architecture within the OSCE region, there was a need for full adherence and implementation of existing instruments as well as for the modernization of the Vienna Document in order to ensure long-term military transparency and predictability, participants said. In a similar vein, OSCE partici-

pating States were encouraged to ratify the Arms Trade Treaty, with the goal of preventing the illicit trade and diversion of conventional arms.

Protracted conflicts in eastern Ukraine, Nagorno-Karabakh, Georgia and Transdniestria continued to cause concern, with several Members underscoring the prolonged human suffering stemming from the violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms taking place within these regions.

The recent surge in military activity in eastern Ukraine, Crimea and the Black Sea region as well as the denial of OSCE Special Monitoring Mission access to these areas presented an increasing threat to regional peace and stability.

The ongoing tension and humanitarian crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh required the immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of war as well as the urgent commencement of demining activities.

The intensified "borderization" process and human rights violations taking place within Georgia's occupied territories must cease, it was stressed, with a view towards fully restoring Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Furthermore, full respect for Moldova's sovereignty and territorial integrity must also be restored within the 5+2 format and with a special status for Transdniestria.

The violent crackdown on peaceful protestors as well as the recent forced diversion and landing of a civilian flight in Belarus were grounds for increased concern, MPs stated.

General Committee
on Political Affairs and Security





Hudson



Cederfelt

General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment

In a virtual meeting of the OSCE PA's General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment, more than 30 parliamentarians debated the report put forward by Rapporteur Elona Gjebrea Hoxha (Albania) on the subject of reinforcing multilateralism in times of global crisis, stressing that the international community should learn from the COVID-19 experience to handle future similar crises and adequately protect the planet through more responsible policies.



General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment

Doris Barnett, Chair of the Second Committee

Opening the meeting on 1 July, Chair Doris Barnett (Germany) highlighted public health, corruption, money laundering, terrorist financing, climate change, and environmental pollution as among the world's greatest threats. The pandemic, she said, has revealed how socio-economic dynamics can affect security and stability.

Elona Gjebrea Hohxa, Rapporteur of the Second Committee

In her presentation, Rapporteur Hoxha highlighted how COVID-19 has undermined the economy and upended lives for billions of people around the globe, underlining the need for co-ordinated efforts in addressing a multitude of complex related issues. The pandemic has exacerbated existing economic challenges, she said, which, if not addressed responsibly, will continue to hamper security and development in the OSCE region.



We should expedite the low-carbon energy transition [and] promote a more responsible economy that treasures environmental sustainability.

- Rapporteur Elona Gjebrea Hoxha

"The ongoing health crisis has also made apparent that we must act as a global community to successfully respond to global challenges," she said, urging that short-sighted, partisan national interests be put aside for the common good. "In doing so, we should make the best possible use of science, technology, and innovation to shift the world onto a more sustainable and resilient path."

In this regard she noted that the rapid development of COVID-19 vaccines would have never been possible if all countries had not realized the stakes at play and co-operated to find a common solution to a global problem, arguing that the same logic should be applied to other global challenges.

She emphasized that parliamentarians must play a leading role in forging a new, post-COVID world order that effectively addresses development needs while fully safeguarding the planet. She noted that policy and social adjustments are urgently required to recover and build resilience against future similar shocks. Environmental protection must be at the very core of the security agenda, Hoxha said.

Hoxha urged greater efforts towards shaping a sustainable development model in which economic, social, environmental, and public health factors are given equal attention. "I firmly believe we should expedite the low-carbon energy transition," she said, "promote a more responsible economy that treasures environmental sustainability and harness the opportunities offered by the digital revolution."



GER Doris Barnett

Debate

In the debate, parliamentarians raised issues such as migration management and the need to vaccinate all migrants regardless of legal status. The increased levels of violence against women during the pandemic was raised as a particular concern, as well as the heightened risks of human trafficking and smuggling.

net for radicalization and how social media was used to rally Islamists to kill French schoolteacher Samuel Paty.

OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues Hedy Fry (Canada) spoke about challenges facing women, including the economic impact of pandemic on young people.

This is what our citizens demand from us – to be vigilant against corruption.

- Special Representative Irene Charalambides

Members highlighted corruption, money laundering and terrorist financing as key concerns, as well as the use of the internet for radicalization, the economic impact of pandemic on young people, and the need to support small and medium-sized enterprises to reduce unemployment. Prioritizing the fight against corruption was emphasized as particularly important to protect public resources from illicit practices in the context of emergency spending related to the pandemic.

Special Representative on Fighting Corruption Irene Charalambides (Cyprus) urged prioritizing the fight against corruption, money laundering and terrorist financing. "This is precisely what our citizens demand from us," Charalambides said, "to be vigilant against corruption and to protect public resources from corrupt and illicit practices." She stressed the urgency of ensuring that strong transparency safeguards are in place and fully operational while governments are called upon to respond to the ongoing health and economic crisis through emergency spending related to the pandemic.

Members also highlighted climate change as an urgent priority including the importance of utilizing tools for carbon pricing. It was noted that the climate crisis is now very much on the agenda of the OSCE PA, but there should be a more structured portfolio on the issue. Members also touched on the use of the inter-

Committee Vice-Chair Artur Gerasymov (Ukraine) raised the environmental impacts of the conflict in eastern Ukraine as an issue that the international community must pay attention to.



ALB Elona Gjebreja Hoxha



General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions

Focused on issues such as the state of multilateral discussions on the human dimension, intolerance and discrimination, and the role of health care in contributing to the enjoyment of human rights, the meeting of the OSCE PA's Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions featured a wide-ranging debate in which more than two dozen parliamentarians from across the OSCE area participated.



Norway

General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions

Kyriakos Hadjiyianni, Chair of the Third Committee

In his opening remarks, Chair Kyriakos Hadjiyianni (Cyprus) highlighted the tragic impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had over the past year and a half, not the least of which being its effects on democratic institutions.

“We have all become used to the daily tragedies and complications caused by the pandemic, but the societal consequences are also significant,” Hadjiyianni said. “COVID profoundly impacts our democratic functioning but doesn’t necessarily impede it. The distinction between these two comes from the political will to overcome the challenges.”



Kyriakos Hadjiyianni

Kari Henriksen, Rapporteur of the Third Committee

Presenting her report, Committee Rapporteur Kari Henriksen (Norway) said that many OSCE countries have experienced increases in authoritarianism, restrictions on freedom of the media, attacks on journalists, surging domestic violence cases, and “a virtual pandemic of hate speech towards minorities, refugees and migrants and other people made vulnerable.”

She stressed the importance of multilateral diplomacy in reviving faith in institutions. “Unilateral approaches are often easier in the short-term, but they fail to provide sustainable solutions,” she said. “We must reinforce dialogue, even in an online format, centered around delivery of humanitarian goals and communities’ interests, if we want lasting fixes. We can all benefit from each other’s experiences and advice through the OSCE PA platform.”

Henriksen also encouraged all parliaments to utilize the other tools that the OSCE has at its disposal, including expert legislative review through the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, as well as recommendations offered by the OSCE’s High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Representative on Freedom of the Media.

Henriksen drew particular attention to the consequences of unresolved conflicts in the OSCE region, including by referencing the massive humanitarian impact of the conflict in eastern Ukraine and the illegal annexation of Crimea, as well as the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. “We see from other areas, such as in Georgia, that the humanitarian impact continues even long after

the guns have fallen silent," she said. "To this end, I urge parliamentarians to demand that their governments find the political will for mutually beneficial resolutions to these conflicts."



We can all benefit from each other's experiences and advice through the OSCE PA platform.

- Rapporteur Kari Henriksen

Debate

In the debate on Henriksen's report, parliamentarians stressed that as the world's largest regional security organization, the OSCE can and must play a key role in a renewed focus on human-centered conflict resolution in a post-COVID era. Several parliamentarians voiced their concerns about the human rights situation in Belarus and the Russian Federation, including the ongoing imprisonment of opposition figures.

Committee Vice-Chair Michael Georg Link (Germany) spoke about election observation, noting the difficulties that the pandemic has posed to this important OSCE activity. Link urged colleagues to participate in future missions and stressed the importance of

follow-up to ensure that OSCE recommendations are duly considered by participating States.

Members highlighted the scapegoating of Asians for the COVID-19 pandemic, the rise in domestic violence, the issue of universal health care as a human right, freedom of the media, and the situation of migrants and refugees in the OSCE area.

It was emphasized that the human dimension is one of the main pillars of OSCE's concept of comprehensive security, and when it comes to human rights, the pandemic has had effects that we are still trying to comprehend. It is important to strike the right balance between respect for individual rights with concern for public health, Members said, and ensure that government responses to the pandemic are proportional.

It would be wise, parliamentarians said, to already begin preparing for future pandemics and drawing conclusions on how this one has been handled. An international treaty was floated as an idea for improving the response to the next global public health crisis.

Standing Committee Meeting

The Standing Committee of the OSCE PA, consisting of the heads of national delegations and members of the Bureau, met on 5 July 2021 both online and in person in Vienna to hear reports and discuss ongoing Assembly work.

OSCE PA President Lord Bowness (United Kingdom) opened the meeting by introducing several urgency items proposed by Delegations. The first urgency item dealt with the rise of hate crimes and intolerance. The second urgency item focused on the repression of dissent in Belarus, placing emphasis on inhumane detentions and continued reports of torture and ill-treatment in the country. The last urgency item underlined the destabilizing military build-up by the Russian Federation on the border with Ukraine.

Address by Former President of the OSCE PA, George Tsereteli

Former President George Tsereteli (Georgia) addressed the Standing Committee and commended the OSCE PA leadership and staff for their efforts to carry on with activities during the pandemic, stressing that the OSCE PA remains relevant and vocal.

He cited electoral fraud, human rights violations and corruption as pressing issues affecting the OSCE region, also expressing his concern over the partial occupation of Georgia and the political situation in Belarus. Noting his addresses to several Ministerial Councils had aimed at increasing attention and support of the OSCE during his tenure, former President Tsereteli praised the PA's Call for Action – Helsinki +50 initiative, welcoming the efforts to strengthen political support of the OSCE.

Tsereteli concluded by stressing the importance of maintaining strong relations with the OSCE Chairmanship and with other OSCE institutions.

Report of the President of the OSCE PA, Peter Lord Bowness

Peter Lord Bowness (United Kingdom) in his report thanked the International Secretariat for the efforts undertaken since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic to adapt the work of the Assembly to this unprecedented challenge, as well as the Bureau for the important discussions and collegial work in recent months. He noted the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to impact the Assembly's calendar of activities until 2022 as it will not be possible to organize the next Autumn Meeting in person in Dublin. However, he expressed his gratitude for a number of Delegations for their partnership and co-operation in hosting future annual and autumn meetings over the next three years.

The President praised the OSCE PA for continuing to be a platform for dialogue on political issues and commended the work of the Assembly's general and ad hoc committees as well as its work on election observation despite the challenges caused by the pandemic.

He highlighted the importance of maintaining dialogue through diverse communications channels and of mediating discussions between stakeholders. Recalling the vital need to keep the OSCE on national agendas, the President underlined the need for parliamentarians to raise OSCE concerns with heads of states within their national governments. He also stressed the role the



Parliamentary Assembly can play in improving the work and operations of the OSCE. He concluded by thanking the Assembly for the support he received upon taking over the leadership of the OSCE PA at the end of 2020.

Report of the Treasurer of the OSCE PA, Peter Juel-Jensen

Peter Juel-Jensen (Denmark) expressed his satisfaction with the healthy state of the OSCE PA's finances despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. He indicated that resources saved will be used as an extra contribution from the Secretariat to the OSCE PA budget, thereby allowing the Assembly to freeze national contributions reverting to the same

amounts as the 2019/2020 financial year.

Additional costs in the proposed budget concern medical coverage and dependent allowance for OSCE PA employees, new premises for the Vienna Liaison Office, the purchase and implementation of a new online registration system, activities of the Call for Action – Helsinki +50 initiative, and the upgrade of the Junior Professional Officer Programme. The Treasurer recalled that his goal for the management of the OSCE PA budget was to reflect efforts in limiting contributions from taxpayers. He concluded by thanking the Standing Committee and all members of the OSCE PA for their support.

Standing Committee Meeting

Report of the Secretary General of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Roberto Montella

Roberto Montella shared an overview of the activities of the OSCE PA since the beginning of the pandemic, noting that the Assembly has hosted over 70 online meetings with parliamentarians under different formats and has deployed over 300 parliamentarians for election observation in several countries despite additional difficulties related to COVID-19.

He highlighted the launch of the Call for Action – Helsinki +50 initiative to revive political attention to the OSCE at the highest levels. He also noted the Assembly strengthened its technological capacity through the implementation of a new online registration system and electronic voting system, and the introduction of bilingual products and creation of a Russian version of the OSCE PA's website to improve the Assembly's reach and visibility.

Montella underscored the strengthened co-operation between all OSCE institutions. He praised the work of the PA's staff and emphasized the need to further foster the engagement of youth and ensure gender balance within the Assembly. Environmental security and gender equality were also cited as issues that will require increased focus within the Assembly. Montella expressed his appreciation in particular for the work of the Assembly and his eagerness to work with the new President and Bureau.

Debate

Parliamentarians stressed the vital need to continue ongoing activities focusing on election observation, praising the Assembly for its successful deployment of several missions during the pandemic. Members of the OSCE PA commended the International Secretariat for its work during a difficult period, noting in particular the helpful nature of online meetings in strengthening dialogue and engagement within the Assembly.

The various armed conflicts in the OSCE region involving Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan were raised, as well as the political crisis in Belarus. Freedom of the media, hate and discrimination against minority groups including women and LGBT, youth and education, and environmental security were also mentioned as important issues for the Assembly to focus on. Appreciation was expressed for the launch of the Call for Action – Helsinki +50 initiative and its mission to revive political interest in the OSCE and for the engagement of the OSCE PA leadership in fostering fruitful relations with other heads of OSCE institutions.

During the debate, speakers voiced their concerns over the security and humanitarian challenges affecting Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as Ukraine. The serious environmental crisis in Cyprus and increasing political tensions with Turkey were raised. Speakers underlined the crucial role the OSCE plays in the fight to protect human rights and ensure free and fair elections.

Reference was also made to the political and human rights crisis in Belarus, and the strong role women have had in fighting for democracy in the country. Speakers reasserted their engagement within the OSCE PA and their support for the Assembly's activities.



Closing Plenary Session

In a hybrid plenary session on 6 July, the OSCE PA elected a new President along with several new Bureau members. The Assembly heard an address by outgoing OSCE PA President Peter Lord Bowness, as well as Swedish Foreign Minister and OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Ann Linde. PA Members adopted three items of urgency and heard reports by leaders of recent election observation missions. Chairs of OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committees and Special Representatives reported on activities related to migration, counter-terrorism, Arctic issues, climate change, gender issues, and human trafficking.

Address by OSCE PA President Peter Lord Bowness

President Bowness said that COVID will continue to impact the world and the activities of the PA in the months and years to come. It has been an unprecedented period, the President pointed out, but the PA has adapted well. He noted that informal online leadership meetings are now a regular occurrence, expressing gratitude to the International Secretariat for acquiring the necessary technical expertise to ensure the PA's adaptation, including through new electronic voting procedures.

President Bowness said that the COVID-related adaptations will continue to serve the Assembly well in the years to come but stressed that traditional meetings cannot be replaced. He noted the disadvantage of not being able to speak face to face, or having the opportunity to gauge the atmosphere in the room when delivering a speech, or to discuss contentious matters one on one. These constraints of virtual meetings are a reminder of how limited online activity is, the President said.

He also underlined the need to protect the rights of parliaments during the pandemic and to ensure that normal legislative processes resume as soon as possible. It would be all too easy for executives to continue to derogate from normal process of making laws. Democratic progress means that we must defend our role as parliamentarians, Bowness said.

We must channel all our political energy, including by being vocal within our national parliaments and with our governments, to support the work of the OSCE and the implementation of commitments," Bowness said."

He also took the opportunity of his final speech as PA President to advocate for the holding of an OSCE Summit in the near future.

Address by the Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE and Foreign Affairs Minister of Sweden, Ann Linde

In her address to the plenary session, Foreign Minister Linde praised the Assembly as a source of invaluable knowledge and networks that add an important perspective to the work of the OSCE. "As Chairperson-in-Office I have seen first-hand the important contributions made by the Parliamentary Assembly in support of the OSCE's common commitments," said the CiO. Pointing out that parliamentarians are an indispensable link to the people of the OSCE area, she noted that she looks forward to continued close co-operation with the PA.

Linde also stressed the importance of working closely with civil society and highlighted the OSCE's field presence as one of the truly valuable features of the organization. Whenever she has visited field operations as CiO, she has included meetings with OSCE parliamentarians on her itinerary, Linde noted.

The CiO expressed her hope for a better and more secure future, noting that she has seen the challenges the OSCE area is facing up close in field visits to Ukraine and elsewhere. Over the past year, she said, it has become all too clear that the

OSCE is needed more than ever, stressing the need to intensify efforts for conflict resolution. In conflict-affected countries such as Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, she highlighted difficult humanitarian situations and stressed the need to provide access to basic human needs. Regarding Nagorno-Karabakh, Linde welcomed steps such as the exchange of prisoners and beginning of the demining process, urging the sides to continue in this manner. There is a strong need for more confidence-building measures, she said.

Other priorities of the Swedish Chairpersonship, Linde pointed out, are media freedom and combating anti-Semitism. She also reported on a recent hearing of the U.S. Helsinki Commission that she participated in. She expressed regret that the US left the Open Skies Treaty last year, followed by the Russian Federation. All OSCE participating States must take responsibility for realizing OSCE principles, she said, and constructive engagement is needed by all.



Consideration of Urgency Items

Three questions of urgency were adopted by the plenary. "Addressing the Rise in Hate, Intolerance, Violence and Discrimination Across the OSCE Region," principally sponsored by US Senator Ben Cardin, urges OSCE participating States to adopt an OSCE Anti-Discrimination, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan, to build the capacity of law enforcement to counter discrimination and support civil society efforts to tackle extremism and discrimination.

"The General Approach to Dissent In Belarus," principally sponsored by Farah Karimi (The Netherlands), regrets the undermining of the right to peaceful assembly and freedom of the media in the country and urges Belarusian authorities to reconsider the restrictions on peaceful mass events and freedom of the media. It also calls on Belarus to release all political prisoners, engage with the opposition, and allow the holding of free and fair elections with observers from the OSCE.

"The Destabilizing Military Build-Up by the Russian Federation Near Ukraine in the Temporarily Occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol, Ukraine, the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov," principally sponsored by Mykyta Poturaiev (Ukraine), expresses concern over the conduct by the Russian Federation of large-scale no-notice military exercises near the border with Ukraine in April.

The item urges the Russian Federation to withdraw its troops, weapons, and military equipment from Crimea and to fulfil its commitments under the 2011 Vienna Document in good faith.

Election of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and General Committee Officers - Announcement of Results

At the end of the session, election results were announced. Former PA Vice-President Margareta Cederfelt (Sweden) was elected Assembly President, and new Vice-Presidents include Pia Kauma (Finland), Daniela de Ridder (Germany), Askar Shakirov (Kazakhstan), Reinhold Lopatka (Austria), and Irene Charalambides (Cyprus). Also newly elected were Pere Joan Pons (Spain) and Gudrun Kugler (Austria) to serve as Chair and Rapporteur of the Second Committee, with Artur Gerasymov (Ukraine) re-elected as Vice-Chair. Sereine Mauborgne (France) and Johan Buser (Sweden) were elected to serve as Chair and Rapporteur of the Third Committee, while Michael Georg Link was re-elected Vice-Chair.

Richard Hudson (United States), Costel Neculai Dunava (Romania), and Laurynas Kasciunas (Lithuania) were re-elected Chair, Vice-Chair, and Rapporteur, respectively, of the First Committee.

Upon winning the election, Cederfelt promised that she would work for principles of accountability, inclusion, and respect for every country. "I believe that the OSCE as a security organization is unique," President Cederfelt said. "The broad security perspective of the OSCE is a strength for us."

Cederfelt emphasized that elected parliamentarians have a huge responsibility in working for a secure region with respect for human rights, democracy, and every country's territorial integrity. She also highlighted climate change as one of her top priorities and expressed hope that the world will emerge stronger from the COVID-19 pandemic.









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