OSCE PA
VANCOUVER 2023
JUNE 30 TO JULY 4
30 JUIN AU 4 JUILLET

# The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's 30th Annual Session

**2023**

**30 June to 4 July**

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**OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's**
**30th Annual Session**

**Vancouver, Canada**
**30 June - 4 July 2023**

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# Summary

The OSCE PA's 30th Annual Session opened with speeches on 30 June by OSCE PA President Margareta Cederfelt (Sweden), Speaker of the Canadian Senate Raymonde Gagné, Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons Chris d'Entremont, and Head of the OSCE PA's Canadian Delegation Hedy Fry. It culminated on 4 July with the adoption of the Assembly's Vancouver Declaration.

Focusing heavily on the Russian Federation's war against Ukraine, the Vancouver Declaration also addresses such diverse topics as plastic pollution, migration and nuclear weapons. It deals extensively with institutional challenges facing the OSCE, expressing deep concern about "increased attempts to misuse the OSCE consensus rule to block" the organization's functioning.

More than 225 members of parliament from 50 countries participated in the Annual Session.

Pia Kauma (Finland) was elected Assembly President on 4 July, along with three Vice-Presidents: Daniela De Ridder (Germany), Mykyta Poturaiev (Ukraine), and Kyriakos Hadjiyianni (Cyprus). Johan Büser (Sweden) was elected Treasurer. In the First Committee, Richard Hudson (United States) was re-elected Chair, Costel Neculai Dunava (Romania) was re-elected Vice-Chair, and Laurynas Kasciunas (Lithuania) was re-elected Rapporteur. The Second Committee re-elected Azay Guliyev (Azerbaijan) Chair, Artur Gerasymov (Ukraine) Vice-Chair, and Gudrun Kugler (Austria) Rapporteur. Three new officers were elected to the Third Committee: Chair Lucie Potuckova (Czech Republic), Vice-Chair Sargis Khandanyan (Armenia), and Rapporteur Malik Ben Achour (Belgium).

On the sidelines of the Annual Session, the PA's Ad Hoc Committee on Migration met to review implemented activities, and the Network of Young Parliamentarians, chaired by David Stögmüller (Austria), heard from Special Representative on Youth Engagement Farah Karimi (Netherlands) and Guido Almerigogna, Special Advisor of North Macedonia's OSCE Chairmanship, who shared examples of youth engagement in the OSCE.

The OSCE PA's Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism met on 3 July. Chaired by Reinhold Lopatka (Austria), the meeting featured a presentation by Prof. Jason Blazakis. Discussing Russia's Wagner Group, Blazakis noted that it has committed many human rights abuses including summary executions, rape, torture, and child abductions. The CCT meeting also included a review of implemented and upcoming activities. Other side meetings during the Annual Session focused on nuclear threats, antisemitism, and war crimes in Ukraine.

OSCE PA Special Representative and Head of Canada's Delegation Hedy Fry welcomed participants to the Working Lunch on Gender Issues on 2 July. Held under the theme "Gender-related considerations in armed conflicts: A parliamentary perspective," the gender lunch featured presentations by representatives of the Canadian parliament, academia and civil society. Also meeting was the Silk Road Support Group, an informal network to support economic co-operation.

Meeting on 30 June, the OSCE PA's Standing Committee unanimously approved a proposal to establish a new parliamentary working group devoted to addressing the Russian Federation's ongoing war against Ukraine.

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VANCOUVER 2023
JUNE 30 TO JULY 4
30 JUIN AU 4 JUILLET
Welcome
Bienvenue
Bienvenidos
Benvenuto
Willkommen
Добро пожаловать

OSCE PA

# Opening Plenary Session

Chaired by President Margareta Cederfelt (Sweden), the plenary session on 30 June featured addresses by Raymonde Gagné, the Speaker of the Senate of Canada; Chris d'Entremont, the Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons; Hedy Fry, the Head of the Canadian Delegation; and a video address by Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada. In addition, a supplementary item on the OSCE's credibility in regards to the Russian Federation's war against Ukraine was considered.

# Opening Plenary Session

## Raymonde Gagné, Speaker of the Senate of Canada

Speaker Gagné warmly welcomed the participants and thanked Hedy Fry for her important role in organizing this event. She expressed Canada's continuous support for Ukraine and underlined Russian aggression as a major challenge to the OSCE's founding principles.

"This Annual Session is a unique opportunity to have an open and fruitful exchange of views on issues that matter to Europe, and indeed to the world," said Gagné. "As we explore the role of the OSCE PA and parliamentarians in strengthening regional security by fostering democratic and inclusive societies, I certainly look forward to engaging with you all throughout the session."

## Chris d'Entremont, Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons

Chris d'Entremont outlined communication and diplomacy as critical tools for achieving security goals. He expressed support towards Ukrainian citizens and stressed the importance of parliamentary democracy as "a core component of multilateralism and international co-operation."

D'Entremont reiterated the role of the OSCE PA as a platform to build inter-parliamentary dialogue: "The resolutions and declarations that we debate, negotiate, vote on and finalize at this Assembly, become guiding tools for parliamentarians and governments to build policies that advance human rights and security for their counties."

# Opening Plenary Session

**Dr. Hedy Fry, Head of the Canadian Delegation**

Hedy Fry welcomed participants to her home city of Vancouver, highlighting its commitment to diversity and multiculturalism. She celebrated the pursuit of democracy and emphasized the importance of implementing OSCE values throughout the region. "Building secure, democratic institutions," Fry said, "is at the heart of what we want to do here." She emphasized that the Assembly's focus continues to be Russia's war against Ukraine, reiterating her solidarity with the Ukrainian people.

> Building secure, democratic institutions is at the heart of what we want to do here.
>
> - Hedy Fry

Expressing hope that the session would address critical security challenges for the world, Fry emphasized the importance of open and civil debate. "We are going to disagree, as we often do, and we disagree some-

times very passionately," she said, "but at the end of the day we share the same visions, we share the same dreams, we want the same things." Dr. Fry concluded by highlighting the common aspiration of all OSCE parliamentarians – to live in a peaceful environment, transcending differences in the collective pursuit of peace and stability.

### Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada

In his video address, Prime Minister Trudeau confirmed Canada's steadfast support for Ukraine's courageous fight for freedom, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. He underscored Canada's commitment to standing firmly against this unlawful war, emphasizing the need for continued international condemnation of such actions. Calling upon the Assembly to remind the Russian government of its international commitments, Trudeau expressed hope for a return to the common values that the Russian Federation once respected and shared with the world.

### Margareta Cederfelt, President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

In her speech, OSCE PA President Margareta Cederfelt (Sweden) highlighted Russia's war against Ukraine as a top priority on the Assembly's agenda. "Ukraine is heroically defending its country, safeguarding our common values and preserving the rule-based international order," President Cederfelt said. She stressed the importance of fostering regional co-operation in Central Asia to address common threats, with a particular focus on the evolving situation in Afghanistan. She spotlighted climate change and underscored the significance of preserving the Arctic as a zone of co-operation, rather than confrontation.

Cederfelt expressed her belief that, working together, the Assembly can overcome the current crisis and build upon five decades of co-operation achieved by the OSCE, setting the course for a more secure future. "There is a need for the OSCE to continue its work," she concluded. "Without comprehensive security, there is no true security; without meaningful dialogue, there is no ground for mutual trust."

### Supplementary Items

The supplementary item "OSCE and OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Credibility in the Face of Continued Russian Aggression Against Ukraine," principally sponsored by Mykyta Poturaiev (Ukraine), was agreed to by a majority in the plenary session.

The resolution underscores the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's continued condemnation of Russia's aggression toward Ukraine. It applauds Ukrainian resilience in defending its sovereignty, criticizes Russia's disregard for international norms, and highlights the devastating impact of the conflict on civilians. It calls for sanctions against countries that violate another state's sovereignty, urges the OSCE Ministerial Council to disregard Russian dissent on Ukraine-related decisions, proposes measures like visa bans on Russian parliamentarians, and supports the establishment of an OSCE PA ad hoc committee on Ukraine. Lastly, the item calls for the creation of a special tribunal to hold Russian officials accountable for their actions in Ukraine.

# Standing Committee Meeting

The meeting of the Standing Committee on 30 June began with introductory remarks by President Margareta Cederfelt, in which she presented her report. Underlining the importance of unifying the Assembly and addressing the challenging dynamics of Vienna's Winter Meeting in February 2023, Cederfelt reaffirmed the need for OSCE parliamentarians to speak as one against Russian aggression.

The President shared details on the time she spent in Central Asia over the course of her term, recalling participation in the election observation mission to Kazakhstan and her attendance of high-profile meetings in the process. Cederfelt similarly reflected upon her visit to Turkmenistan, meeting state officials and civil society in an effort to build trust and co-operation between government and people. Focusing on the demographics of the Parliamentary Assembly, Cederfelt underscored her advocacy for greater youth and women's participation in national parliaments and international organizations, praising contributions made by Hedy Fry (Canada), Special Representative on Gender Issues. In concluding her report, Cederfelt reiterated the role of the OSCE PA in terminating Russian aggression toward Ukraine, upholding international law and strengthening the security of the OSCE region.

OSCE PA Treasurer Peter Juel-Jensen (Denmark) presented his report, providing an overview of the financial situation and the status of annual contributions. Juel-Jensen noted that the Russian Federation will not pay their contribution for this year, which he said requires careful attention toward the assignment of expenses, and the need to implement further cost-saving measures. Throughout the open debate, delegates discussed the OSCE PA budget, contributions, expenses and business auditing. Following the report's presentation and the open debate, both the budget and its extra funding were adopted for the 2023-2024 financial year.

OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella presented his report, emphasizing significant challenges faced by the OSCE PA, as well as the OSCE more broadly, especially with regards to the mandates that will need consensus to be renewed. Highlighting the difficulties faced by the OSCE due to the abuse of the consensus rule, Montella stressed that one of the OSCE PA's strengths is that it adopts resolutions by majority vote, which enables it to speak out on issues such as the Russian Federation's war against Ukraine.

This was followed by the presentation of Vice-President Pascal Allizard (IFrance), Chair of the Sub-Committee on the Rules of Procedure and Working Practices, and consideration of proposed amendments to the Rules of Procedure to ensure gender representation in the OSCE PA. The principal sponsor of the amendments, Irene Charalambides (Cyprus), insisted upon strengthening gender balance in appointments made by the President and to ensure gender representation in the OSCE PA delegations. Parliamentarians strongly supported the amendments which were adopted.

The Assembly considered the creation of a new ad hoc committee to streamline efforts

# Standing Committee Meeting

to assist Ukraine. The President supported this proposal, while emphasizing the need for a structured coalition of members to ensure effective co-ordination of PA actions to support Ukraine. The proposal was approved and the President explained that the committee's formal designation, leadership, membership and work plan will be determined under the next President of the Assembly.

During the open debates on current international political issues, the complex nature of challenges related to war in Ukraine dominated the discussion. Delegations expressed the need for continued solidarity with Ukraine and for unity among the OSCE PA.

The meeting concluded with a discussion on the next Autumn Meeting, to take place in November 2023, and consideration of the invitation from Armenia to host it, which was approved by the parliamentarians.

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# General Committee on Political Affairs and Security

Committee Chair Richard Hudson (United States) opened the meeting of the Committee on Political Affairs and Security on 1 July. Expressing the need for unequivocal condemnation of Russian aggression against Ukraine, Hudson insisted upon active discussion with the Ukrainian people to keep the fight for freedom through dialogue alive.

The committee also considered supplementary items on The Wagner Group's Terroristic Nature and Actions, Clarifying the Consequences of Russia's Aggression against Ukraine in Terms of Adherence to the OSCE Principles, Future Generations, and The Republic of Moldova.

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# General Committee on Political Affairs and Security

Stresssing the need to maintain sustained focus on the war in Ukraine, Chair Richard Hudson welcomed the work of Special Representative on Eastern Europe Daniela De Ridder (Germany) and Special Representative for Parliamentary Dialogue on Ukraine Reinhold Lopatka (Austria). Hudson also thanked his committee officers, Vice-Chair Costel Neculai Dunava (Romania) and Rapporteur Laurynas Kasciunas (Lithuania).

## Report and Resolution

Rapporteur Kasciunas began his report to the Assembly by highlighting developments in Ukraine, specifically referencing the destruction of the Kakhovka Dam. The Rapporteur expressed deep concern for the evolving situation of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, creating a high risk of nuclear and natural disaster. In appreciation of the gravity of the conflict, Kasciunas asked the Assembly to duly validate the Russian Federation's actions against Ukrainians as crimes against humanity and genocide. To this end, he stressed the need to document such crimes, and welcomed the work of John Whittingdale as Special Rapporteur on War Crimes in Ukraine.

Kasciunas underlined the breaching of Ukrainian, Moldovan and Georgian borders, urging the withdrawal of territorial Russian forces and the release of the OSCE staff still detained by the Russian Federation. Finally, the Rapporteur called to make full use of the comprehensive security framework and tools of the OSCE network, created first and foremost to prevent war through dialogue.

The committee resolution passed with an overwhelming majority voting in favor after consideration of 29 amendments, of which 28 were adopted.

# General Committee on Political Affairs and Security

## Supplementary Items

The first supplementary item discussed was entitled "Clarifying the Consequences of Russia's Aggression against Ukraine in Terms of Adherence to the OSCE Principles," principally sponsored by Daniela De Ridder (Germany). It reaffirmed that the obligations of the Paris Charter, as well as other principles and values of the OSCE, remain precepts of political action for all OSCE participating States. The item recommended the introduction of necessary sanctions for national delegations into the PA Rules of Procedure to enact upon those found to be violating these core principles. Eight amendments were considered for the supplementary item and all of them were adopted. The item was endorsed with an overwhelming majority.

The second item on "The Republic of Moldova," principally sponsored by Dan Barna (Romania) and Veronica Rosca (Republic of Moldova), underlined the main goal of the Transnistrian Conflict Settlement Process to be the attainment of a comprehensive, peaceful and sustainable resolution, and reaffirmed full support of the outstanding work done by the OSCE Mission to Moldova, which, given the current geological climate, is of utmost importance. One amendment was proposed and adopted to the item. The supplementary item was unanimously adopted.

The third supplementary item on "The Wagner Group's Terroristic Nature and Actions," principally sponsored by Reinhold Lopatka (Austria) and Marc Veasey (United States), stated that the actions of the Wagner Group on behalf of the Russian government can rightly be characterized as terroristic in nature and intent, and urged OSCE participating States to make full use of all domestic and international instruments to thwart the malign presence of the Wagner Group, its affiliates its and successors. Four amendments were proposed and adopted and the supplementary item was unanimously agreed to.

The fourth and final supplementary item "Future Generations," principally sponsored by Farah Karimi (Netherlands) and Askar Shakirov (Kazakhstan), urged participating States to intensify their efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and to initiate discussions regarding the sustainability agenda beyond 2030 with respect to the interests of future generations, while preserving the vital link to the ongoing needs of present generations. The supplementary item was adopted unanimously without any amendments.

## Election of Officers

Chair: Richard Hudson (United States)
Vice-Chair: Costel Neculai Dunava (Romania)
Rapporteur: Laurynas Kasciunas (Lithuania)

# General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment

Committee Chair Azay Guliyev (Azerbaijan) chaired the four sessions of the General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment. Members considered the report and the draft resolution proposed by Gudrun Kugler (Austria) and three supplementary items on Microplastic and Nanoplastic Pollution, Greater Exploitation of the Potential of Science Diplomacy for International Co-operation and Active Peace Policy, and a Structured Set of Rules for a Regular Performance Audit.

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# General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment

In his opening remarks, Committee Chair Guliyev highlighted the threats posed by climate change, including extreme weather events, air-water-soil pollution, deforestation, desertification, water scarcity and land erosion. He condemned the sabotage of the Nord Stream pipeline and the destruction of Kakhovka dam, expressing concern about environmental repercussions such as connectivity disruptions, energy instability, food insecurity, and environmental degradation across the region.

The Chair noted that "we must be protagonists of change," and that there are four "revolutions" that need to be mastered in order to survive and thrive as a human society – namely a technological, a green, an environmental and an energy revolution.

> The war in Ukraine has triggered economic distress, energy instability, food insecurity, and environmental degradation across the OSCE region.
>
> - Second Committee Report

## Report and Resolution

Rapporteur Gudrun Kugler (Austria) presented her report and resolution, touching upon a wide range of topics including the need for sustainable economic development, clean energy transition, women's empowerment and digitalization. Her resolution covers issues like corruption, migration, plastic pollution, water protection, human trafficking, the use of AI, and demographic challenges, and encourage collaboration, research, and policy convergence to address these issues.

Kugler emphasized that pollution is not restricted by borders and that in solving this problem all countries must work together. She highlighted the importance of reducing the digital divide and improving a collective approach towards AI and data management against minimizing energy dependence on Russia and promoting the peaceful economic development in the Arctic. Security and stability in the fields of economics, environment, technology and science is crucial.

The Rapporteur expressed concern for the negative consequences of Russia's aggression against Ukraine and noted that transition to clean energy is needed, not only in the interest of slowing climate change but also for geopolitical reasons.

Dozens of parliamentarians took to the floor

to debate the resolution, emphasizing issues related to environmental impacts of the war in Ukraine, consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, a gender sensitive approach to environmental issues, alternative gas supplies to Europe, the importance of hydro and solar energy, and regional co-operation. Following discussion and debate with over 18 submitted amendments, the resolution was adopted unanimously.

## Supplementary Items

Irene Charalambides (Cyprus) presented the supplementary item she authored, "A Structured Set of Rules for a Regular Performance Audit of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly", which recognizes the organization's commitment to combating corruption and promoting transparency, accountability, and integrity. It emphasizes the need to expand the scope of independent audits to include performance audits, alongside financial audits, in order to assess the efficient use of the organization's budget. The resolution was adopted with overwhelming support.

Committee members considered the supplementary item "Greater Exploitation of the Potential of Science Diplomacy for International Cooperation and Active Peace Policy", principally sponsored by Daniela De Ridder (Germany), which emphasizes the need for collaboration within the international community to address the challenges of climate change, pandemics, poverty-induced diseases and armed conflicts. The resolution recommends developing strategies for internationally effective science diplomacy with evaluation mechanisms to ensure transparency and effectiveness. The item was adopted unanimously.

The committee also took up the item "Microplastic and Nanoplastic Pollution", sponsored by John Aldag (Canada) which reaffirms the OSCE PA commitments related to environmental protection and recognizes the presence and impacts of microplastics in marine and atmospheric environments. The item stresses the need for collaborative and transnational efforts to address such pollution and emphasizes the role of scientific research in understanding the presence, concentration, fragmentation, and potential risks of microplastics. It calls for measures to prevent the entry of microplastics into the air and oceans, including better waste management systems, models of circular economies and improved product design standards. The item was adopted unanimously with six amendments.

## Election of Officers

Chair: Azay Guliyev (Azerbaijan)
Vice-Chair: Artur Gerasymov (Ukraine)
Rapporteur: Gudrun Kugler (Austria)

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# General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions

The Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions, chaired by Nikoloz Samkharadze (Georgia), held four meetings during the Vancouver Annual Session, on 1-3 July. Delegation members deliberated the report and the draft resolution presented by Johan Büser (Sweden), and considered the adoption of 24 proposed amendments and six supplementary items. The debate focused on violations of human rights and humanitarian law in the context of Russian aggression toward Ukraine, as well as issues related to media freedom, civil society, vulnerable groups, democracy and socio-economic challenges in the OSCE region.

FARAH KARIMI

# General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions

In his opening remarks, Chair Nikoloz Samkharadze (Georgia) recalled work throughout his mandate with the Vice-Chair and Rapporteur, and their engagement in a constructive and open dialogue with human rights defenders, analysts and state authorities. A significant moment was the visit to Georgia in January, where they witnessed the security, political and socio-economic threats arising in Russian occupied territories. The Chair also noted that the committee's leadership had been consistently vocalizing areas of concern, reaffirming its responsibility to speak out in the face of persistent and grievous problems.

In her remarks, Committee Vice-Chair Farah Karimi (Netherlands) focused on the dramatic challenges facing OSCE internal processes and functions, most notably budget constraints and appointments of key officials. She recalled how those challenges would affect the OSCE institutions required for the work of the committee, including the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the Representative on Freedom of the Media. She therefore urged fellow parliamentarians to put pressure on their governments to preserve the effectiveness of the OSCE and its institutions.

## Report and Resolution

Rapporteur Johan Büser (Sweden) focused on five main topics: easing the suffering of those impacted by war, the recession of faith in political and democratic processes, the protection of vulnerable groups, the impact of modern technologies on human rights, and the weakening of the OSCE itself.

In the debate, parliamentarians raised concerns over the effects of the war in Ukraine, including mass displacement and the targeting of civilians, with some calling for the establishment of an international war crimes tribunal. Concerns were also rasied about the human rights situation in Karabakh, gender equality and women's rights, national minorities and LGBTQI+ people, migrants, freedom of media, political prisoners, NGOs and civil society, and environmental degradation.

Members discussed 24 proposed amendments to the resolution and, upon request, submitted oral amendments. The committee eventually adopted 23 amendments, including one oral amendment. The resolution as amended was adopted with a unanimity of the votes.

# General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions

## Supplementary Items

The first supplementary item "Adopting Effective Mechanisms to safeguard Ukrainian Women and Children from Abuse, Exploitation, and Human Trafficking", sponsored by Chris Smith (United States), was presented by co-sponsor Joe Wilson (United States). Wilson highlighted the vulnerabilities of children and women to human trafficking and the lack of effective anti-trafficking mechanisms. The supplementary item was adopted without amendments.

Björn Söder (Sweden) presented the supplementary item on "Condemnation of the Desecration of Polish Graves in Belarus", emphasizing the great cultural value of the graves for the Belarusian Polish minority and the inaction of the authorities against vandalism. The supplementary item was adopted with two amendments. "Support for Democratic Belarus", was proposed by Siv Mossleth (Norway). Following a debate, the supplementary item was adopted with three amendments.

The supplementary item, "The Consequences of Russia's aggression against Ukraine with regard to Women and Children", was presented by the sponsor Radoslaw Fogiel (Poland). Fogiel expressed shock at the level of violence committed by Russian armed forces, including sexual violence. The committee adopted the supplementary item with no amendments. Subsequently, Renata Alt (Germany) invited the committee members to support the supplementary item "Penalizing the Deportation of Ukrainian Children, Ensuring their Return, and Prosecuting the Perpetrators", which was approved without amendments.

The last supplementary item, "The Role of National Parliaments in Enhancing Participation of Civil Society in Parliamentary and Decision-Making Processes" was sponsored by Kyriakos Hadjiyianni (Cyprus). He stressed the contribution of civil society towards the development of a better society and called for citizens' empowerment in the decision-making process. Following a debate, the resolution was adopted with one oral amendment.

## Election of Officers

Chair: Lucie Potuckova (Czech Republic)
Vice-Chair: Sargis Khandanyan (Armenia)
Rapporteur: Malik Ben Achour (Belgium)

# Working Lunch on Gender Issues

Every year at the Annual Session, a working lunch is held on the margins to bring OSCE parliamentarians together for a focused discussion on gender issues in the OSCE area. The event typically features presentations by local and national figures, followed by a thematic discussion by participants.

OSCE PA Special Representative and Head of Canada's Delegation Hedy Fry welcomed participants to the Working Lunch on Gender Issues on 2 July. Held under the theme "Gender-related considerations in armed conflicts: A parliamentary perspective," the lunch was well-attended and featured a lively discussion. Dr. Fry focused on gender-based and sexual violence, stressing the need to take stock of how data-aggregated research and best practices can help advance prevention and mitigation efforts in Ukraine. There is much to be learned from efforts in preventing and addressing gender-based and sexual violence in other armed conflicts, she said. Special Representative Fry also mentioned that she has authored a resolution on this topic, "The Gendered Consequences of Armed Conflicts," which would be considered in the plenary session on 3 July.

> Women and girls who are in Ukraine, and those who have fled the war and are hosted in other countries, face specific challenges with regards to food security, economic hardship, and accessing health care, including mental health services.
>
> - OSCE PA Gender Report 2023

The working lunch also included remarks from President Margareta Cederfelt (Sweden); Dr. Lauryn Oates, Executive Director of Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan; Ya'ara Saks (MP, Canada), Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development; and Dr. Katharina Coleman, associate professor of Political Science at the University of British Columbia, who spoke about the participation and important role of women in peace-making processes, the challenges faced by women in conflicts, and particularly in Ukraine. They also highlighted the multiple ways of keeping gender high on the parliamentary agenda.

During the discussions, parliamentarians considered what sorts of concrete actions parliaments and governments can take to ensure that their countries' international

assistance policies are gender-sensitive, as well as the challenges OSCE participating States face when trying to integrate a gender perspective into the support they provide to those affected by conflict situations. Emphasis was also placed on how women and girls – both those who are in Ukraine, as well as those who have fled the war – face specific challenges with regard to food security, economic hardship, and access to health care, including mental health services. To respond to these complex challenges, OSCE participating States must incorporate intersectional gender perspectives into their humanitarian support for Ukrainians, it was stressed.

# Ad Hoc Committee on Migration

On the sidelines of the Annual Session, the PA's Ad Hoc Committee on Migration met on 1 July to review implemented activities and to discuss upcoming work. New members were welcomed to the committee, with an emphasis on building teamwork and pursuing a common approach. The ongoing unrest in France was highlighted as a particularly challenging migration-related issue, with Committee Chair Mark Pritchard (United Kingdom) expressing concern over the violence and voicing solidarity with the French people. He also thanked the Members who had participated in the offsite visit to the settlement organization "SUCCESS" on 30 June.

The Chair shared his insights regarding the field visit to Moldova on 9-10 March 2023, emphasizing that it had been a highly interactive visit with discussions about the access of Ukrainian refugees to education, employment, social protection. The Chair also drew attention to the situation in the Mediterranean and North Africa in particular, underlining the need to better co-ordinate responses.

In the discussion, Vice-Chair Gudrun Kugler (Austria) who took part in the Moldova visit, shared her positive assessment of the programme which was intense but very useful for her work as an Austrian parliamentarian. She noted in particular how she had appreciated that such a poor country had responded to the challenge.

Another participant in the visit, Vice-Chair Kyriakos Hadjiyianni, expressed his support for the draft report of the visit and stressed that the current situation in Moldova is critical as the country is in the first line of influx. Vice-Chair Hadjiyianni also recommended delving into the issue of human trafficking as he suspects that there are more cases than officials acknowledge.

President Cederfelt thanked the Chair for his leadership and the committee for its important work, also acknowledging the support provided by the International Secretariat. She reiterated her special concern for unaccompanied minors and noted the importance of membership in the committee by the United States and Canada.

Member Gwen Moore (United States) expressed concern over the increasing number of people on the move due to the negative effects of climate change, breakdown of governments, and criminal activity. Referring to the issues faced by her country, she recalled the invitation which had been extended to the committee to visit the United States by fellow committee member Sheila Jackson Lee.

Regarding upcoming activities, the Chair emphasized the importance of understanding what is happening in Sub-Saharan Africa and the need for early intervention to avoid states becoming failed states.

Other proposals put forth for the next visit included the Türkiye-Greece land border or African countries serving as points of departure for boats towards Europe. A visit to the USA was also raised, as was a proposal to also look at refugees driven by climate change.

Member Valerie Boyer (France) raised the ongoing riots in France that were impacting not only the capital but also smaller cities and underlined the need to find a solution to the difficult situation which the country is facing.

# Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism

Chairing the meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism (CCT) on 3 July, Reinhold Lopatka (Austria) welcomed members and underlined the important work conducted by the committee, especially in concluding field visits and in co-ordinating the efforts of all parliamentary assemblies around the globe. He underlined how the Russian Federation's war against Ukraine has fueled instability in and around the OSCE region. In this regard, he emphasized the complementarity of international humanitarian law and counter-terrorism legislation and pointed out that terrorists increasingly engage in criminal activities to finance their activities.

The expert guest speaker at the meeting was Jason Blazakis, Director of the Middlebury Institute of International Studies Center on Terrorism, Extremism, and Counterterrorism. Blazakis detailed important trends of terrorism, including the increasingly online nature of violent extremism, the rising rate of deaths caused by terrorism, the Sahel region as the new hotspot, and rising right-wing extremism in the West. Finally, he underlined that the Wagner Group is a new phenomenon, exemplary of the relationship between armed conflict and terrorism.

Noting his belief that Wagner Group is a terrorist organization, Blazakis welcomed the OSCE PA resolution designating it as such. He called Wagner the "new face of terror" and highlighted the importance of terrorist designations in order to effectively counter financial activities. Noting that the Wagner Group exists to advance Russian interests and not just as a profit-making entity, Blazakis expressed his expectation that the Wagner Group's entities will continue to exist and stressed that it is prudent for governments to take steps towards sanctioning this organization.

Lopatka reported that the official CCT visit to Switzerland was very fruitful in terms of important exchanges and conversations with international and national organizations. He explained that the committee learned about counter-terrorism trends and challenges like artificial intelligence, as well as the Swiss national prevention strategy, among others. He also reported of the bilateral meeting with the OSCE Action against Terrorism Unit (ATU) and the upcoming ATU event in Mongolia in September.

Lopatka also informed members about the upcoming Fourth Coordination Meeting of Parliamentary Assemblies and the Parliamentary Policy Dialogue in Vienna in October, organized jointly with UNOCT. Finally, the Chair informed about a potential CCT event upcoming in Türkiye, organized with the support of Vice-Chair Kamil Aydin.

# Plenary Sessions

Chaired by President Margareta Cederfelt, the second plenary session was held on 3 July and featured addresses by candidates for President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, consideration of supplementary items, reports by chairs of ad hoc committees, reports on OSCE PA activities, and a general debate.

The closing plenary on 4 July included a report of OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella, Adoption of the Vancouver Final Declaration, remarks by OSCE PA President Margareta Cederfelt, and the announcement of election results for Assembly Officers.

## Supplementary Items

Ben Cardin (United States), Special Representative on Antisemitism, Racism, and Intolerance, presented the supplementary item he sponsored entitled "Rising Anti-Semitism in the OSCE Region". The supplementary item expressed deep concerns regarding an alarming rise in antisemitic attacks and rhetoric, as well as Holocaust denial and distortion, across the OSCE region. It called upon participating States to provide the OSCE with the appropriate resources to continue its work to combat antisemitism and to promote tolerance and non-discrimination. The item was adopted unanimously without amendments.

The last item, on "The Gendered Consequences of Armed Conflicts", principally sponsored by Hedy Fry (Canada), urged participating States to ensure the availability of health care services for victims of sexual and gender-based violence and underlined the high risk of human trafficking for women. The supplementary item was unanimously adopted by the PA without any amendments.

## Report by the Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration

The report by the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration Chair, Mark Pritchard (United Kingdom), provided an overview of the committee's activities, with mention of the second field visit focusing on the situation of Ukrainian refugees in the Republic of Moldova. The report called for education and social protection for the displaced Ukrainian population, urging further investment into the child protection system and into managing the risks faced by unaccompanied and separated children. The report raised the issue of migrant deaths in the Mediterranean, demanding political attention toward establishing management mechanisms to control the spread of criminal people-trafficking networks and to minimize deaths.

> The war of aggression waged by the Russian Federation against Ukraine has brought new terrorism-related risks to the OSCE area.
>
> - Reinhold Lopatka

## Report by the Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism

Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism Reinhold Lopatka (Austria), introduced the main points of his report as the abuse of artificial intelligence and social media by terrorist groups as a disinformation strategy. Lopatka welcomed the adoption of the resolution on the Wagner Group. He concluded his statement by underlining the worrying rise of far-right ideology spreading internationally.

## Special Representatives

Daniela De Ridder (Germany), Special Representative on Eastern Europe, recounted her visit to the Moldova where she was able to meet with Ukrainian refugees. De Ridder presented her report advocating attention toward developments in Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova. Special Representative on Central Asia, Pia Kauma (Finland), thanked her colleagues from the delegation, insisting on the challenges and crucial role of women in politics in Central Asia.

Special Representative on Fighting Corruption Irene Charalambides (Cyprus) identified cooperation between national and international stakeholders as a key element within the field, sharing her responsibilities in this position. In this regard, she informed the assembly on the World Bank Global Partnership program.

In her capacity as the Special Representative on Youth Engagement, Farah Karimi (Netherlands) encouraged participants to join the Working Group on Youth, Peace and Security, with her report focusing on youth involvement in decision-making. Karimi warmly welcomed the positive developments of the Network of Young Parliamentarians.

Oscar Mina (San Marino), Special Representative on Disinformation, Fake News and Propaganda, reported on transnational disinformation and propaganda as a powerful weapon to disturb international order and peace. He also expressed concerns regarding the salient issue of disinformation in the war in Ukraine.

The heads of recent PA election observation missions presented the main findings of their activities pertaining to the election situation in Kazakhstan and Türkiye in March and May 2023, respectively.

## Open Debate

The closing plenary session on 4 July began with an open debate. During the discussion, members emphasized the role of national parliaments in ensuring the full implementation of OSCE commitments which, along with their active support, is essential for seeing an end to the conflict in Ukraine. With this precedent, parliamentarians placed importance on fostering constructive dialogue within the Parliamentary Assembly. Beyond seeking an end to the conflict itself, participants also emphasized the need for Ukraine's successful reconstruction, taking into account the desperate ecological situation in the aftermath of the Kakhovka dam disaster.

OSCE parliamentarians debated a range of critical topics, such as gender equality, safeguarding freedom of the press and protecting the rights of minorities. Other discussions centred on strategies to enhance youth participation both within the constraints of the OSCE PA and on the broader political spectrum. Furthering concerns for electoral processes, the threat of disinformation circling on the internet and social media was discussed and too was ranked highly on the agenda.

Many delegations stressed the importance of mitigating the challenges posed by hybrid warfare to sovereignty, expressing strong con-

cerns for safeguarding political freedoms and the rights of political prisoners. The nuclear threat was also a topic of discussion among the parliamentarians.

## Adoption of the Vancouver Declaration

Following the open debate, a voting procedure was conducted to approve the resolutions from the three committees and the 16 supplementary items, together constituting the Vancouver Declaration. The Declaration garnered strong support and was adopted by an overwhelming majority of parliamentarians.

## Video Address of Bujar Osmani, 2023 OSCE Chairman-in-Office

In his video address, Bujar Osmani conveyed appreciation for the diligent work of OSCE committees, informal networks, and Special Representatives. He emphasized the importance of increasing the OSCE's presence in national parliaments to promote comprehensive engagement, leveraging parliamentary diplomacy as a powerful tool for advancing diplomatic efforts within the OSCE region, and fostering political will among participating States to overcome existing challenges, collectively.

Osmani reaffirmed the commitment to uphold the organization's vital mandates and emphasized the importance of ensuring its continued function despite ongoing tensions. He also called for an immediate ceasefire by the Russian Federation, underscoring the urgency of promoting peace and stability in the OSCE region.

## Address by Matteo Mecacci, Director of the OSCE/ODIHR

Matteo Mecacci, the Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, underscored the necessity of ensuring full accountability for any human rights violations within the OSCE region.

He emphasized effective dialogue as a key means for conflict resolution and the protection of human rights. Mecacci also highlighted the initiatives and activities undertaken by ODIHR in Ukraine, showcasing the organization's commitment to supporting the protection of human rights in challenging environments, stressing ODIHR's dedication to its mission of promoting democracy and human rights throughout the OSCE area.

## Report of the Secretary General

The OSCE PA Secretary General, Roberto Montella, welcomed the adoption of the Vancouver Declaration, emphasizing its significance as a comprehensive expression of the organization's goals and values. He noted the unified and resolute stance of parliamentarians regarding the Russian Federation's aggression in Ukraine, highlighting the clear position taken by the Assembly through its majority voting process.

He also expressed his gratitude to the Standing Committee for their dedicated efforts in successfully passing its budget, relaying the importance of fiscal responsibility and its role in advancing the OSCE PA's mission and initiatives.

## Announcement of Election Results for Assembly Officers

The election results for OSCE PA President, Vice-Presidents and Treasurer were announced at the closing plenary session. Pia Kauma (Finland), a former Vice-President of the OSCE PA, Special Representative, and Rapporteur of the General Committee on Political Affairs and Security, was elected President. Additionally, three new Vice-Presidents were announced: Daniela De Ridder (Germany), Mykyta Poturaiev (Ukraine) and Kyriakos Hadjiyianni (Cyprus). Johan Büser (Sweden) was elected Treasurer.

## Closing Remarks

The closing plenary session included addresses by Head of the Canadian Delegation Hedy Fry, outgoing President Margareta Cederfelt (Sweden), and incoming President Pia Kauma (Finland).

In her closing remarks, Fry expressed gratitude toward the participants and extended a warm welcome to the incoming President, Vice-Presidents and Treasurer, recognizing their roles in shaping the future of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. She also highlighted the establishment of a new ad hoc committee on Ukraine, and encouraged parliamentarians to be active in their engagement of the Vancouver Declaration within their individual national parliaments, emphasizing the importance of collective action on critical OSCE matters.

> The OSCE is at a crossroads but I strongly believe that our organization is worth all our efforts. Together we are stronger and only together can we solve common challenges.
>
> - OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President Pia Kauma

OSCE PA President Margareta Cederfelt expressed her appreciation for the contributions and the dedication of Committee Officers, Vice-Presidents, Special Representatives, the Treasurer, the Secretary General and the International Secretariat, acknowledging their collaborative efforts in advancing the organization's objectives. She also expressed her wishes for her successor to have an effective and successful presidency.

Upon her election, President Kauma gave an inaugural speech that focused on the need for deeper and more meaningful co-operation, and pledged to work hard over the next year to advance OSCE values.

"The OSCE is at a crossroads but I strongly believe that our organization is worth all our efforts," she said. "Together we are stronger and only together can we solve common challenges."

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# Vancouver Declaration

The Vancouver Declaration contains three general committee resolutions, plus 16 supplementary items dealing with a wide range of topics, including climate change, growing geopolitical tensions in the Arctic, and the Russian Federation's war against Ukraine. Expressing deep concern for the human suffering caused by the war, it calls for "the Russian Federation's withdrawal of its forces" and reiterates "unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity." The Assembly also expressed support for the work of multilateral organizations in addressing the war.

In addition to the war in Ukraine, the PA addressed the situation in the South Caucasus, underlining support for diplomatic efforts in facilitating dialogue and building confidence between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Focus is also paid in the Declaration to Belarus and Moldova.

OSCE parliamentarians raised concerns about nuclear escalation, encouraging all OSCE participating States "to redouble international efforts to achieve the global elimination of nuclear weapons within a timebound framework." The Declaration stresses the need to "analyze and compare the effectiveness of different measures implemented by OSCE participating States to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic," urging OSCE countries to "reconsider the use of 'gain-of-function' virology, and tighten security standards."

"Affirming that the activities of the Wagner Group are terroristic in nature, as they are characterized by premeditated violence committed against non-combatants in the pursuit of political objectives," the Vancouver Declaration calls on OSCE participating States to take action against the Wagner Group including by implementing sanctions.

The OSCE PA raised alarm over the rising number of microplastic and nanoplastic particles found in ecosystems and urged more research on this phenomenon and its effects on health. Regarding climate change, the Assembly called for reducing greenhouse gas emissions according to the Paris Agreement, and for "OSCE participating States to facilitate, within their respective societies, open and fact-based debate." It also stresses the need to "develop ambitious strategies for the clean energy transition."

On artificial intelligence, the Declaration "encourages multidisciplinary efforts to evaluate the impact of ChatGPT and similar new technologies on democracy, education and privacy, as well as possible risks to cybersecurity, and develop the appropriate regulatory frameworks."

The Vancouver Declaration deals extensively with institutional challenges facing the OSCE, expressing deep concern about "increased attempts to misuse the OSCE consensus rule to block" the organization's functioning. It calls for all OSCE participating States to "support full funding of the OSCE" and recognizes "the added value of close co-operation between the OSCE PA, the OSCE Secretariat, OSCE institutions and field operations."

In addition, the Declaration addresses energy security, political prisoners, migration, economic security, good governance and fighting corruption, and civil society participation in parliamentary decision-making processes.

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