

Middle East dominates plenary session, with MPs outlining way forward



President Pia Kauma chairs the plenary session on 2 July.

Chaired by President Pia Kauma (Finland), Tuesday's plenary session featured a special debate on the situation in the Middle East, along with reports on OSCE PA activities, including ad hoc committees on migration, counter-terrorism and Ukraine, as well as recent election observation missions.

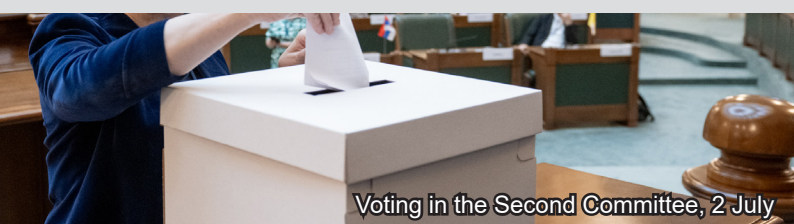
Some 30 OSCE PA delegates took part in the Middle East debate, with several noting the implications of the Israel-Gaza conflict on the OSCE region and beyond. Opening the debate, Ram Ben-Barak (Israel) spoke about the imperative of defeating the threat posed by radical

Islam, which he stressed is essential for promoting security.

Parliamentarians highlighted the need to stand together in the efforts against aggression and warned against antisemitism in the OSCE area. MPs also highlighted the importance of proportionality, limiting collateral damage and abiding by international law. It was stressed that civilians suffer the most in war, and therefore humanitarian aid must continue and the conflict must come to an end. The plight of the Israeli hostages still held by Hamas was highlighted, with parliamentarians calling for their immediate release.

The Assembly considered the supplementary item "Artificial Intelligence and the Fight against Terrorism," principally sponsored by Emanuele Loperfido (Italy). The SI expresses deep concern about the potential misuse of AI by terrorist organizations and urges OSCE participating States to enhance their national legal frameworks to regulate the development and use of these technologies in line with international standards. The resolution was adopted unanimously without amendments.

General Committees complete work and elect leaders for 2024-2025



Voting in the Second Committee, 2 July

The First Committee on Tuesday took up the supplementary item on strengthening support for Ukraine. Principally sponsored by Didier Paris (France) and introduced by Stephane Demilly (France), the SI was amended and adopted. The Third Committee amended and adopted three supplementary items: "Ending the Scourge of Antisemitism in the OSCE Region," principally sponsored by Ben Cardin (United States), "The Role of Civil Society in Fostering Democratic and Inclusive Societies," principally sponsored by Hedy Fry (Canada), and "Navigating Contemporary Journalism and Gender-Related

Challenges," principally sponsored by Daniela De Ridder (Germany).

The following Members were elected to lead the PA's three general committees:

- First Committee Chair Birgir Thórarinnsson (Iceland)
- First Committee Vice-Chair Costel Neculai Dunava (Romania)
- First Committee Rapporteur Tobias Winkler (Germany)
- Second Committee Chair Azay Guliyev (Azerbaijan)
- Second Committee Vice-Chair Artur Gerasymov (Ukraine)
- Second Committee Rapporteur Paula Cardoso (Portugal)
- Third Committee Chair Lucie Potuckova (Czechia)
- Third Committee Vice-Chair Sargis Khandanyan (Armenia)
- Third Committee Rapporteur Carina Odebrink (Sweden)

Side events focus on antisemitism, climate, disinformation and human trafficking

Side events on Tuesday focused on issues such as ending antisemitism, the effects of climate change in Central Asia, combating Russian disinformation campaigns, freedom of expression, and trafficking in human beings.

Organized by OSCE PA Special Representative on Anti-Semitism, Racism and Intolerance Ben Cardin (United States), the event "Ending the Scourge of Antisemitism" included participation by OSCE PA Vice-President Daniela De Ridder (Germany), representatives from the Romanian government, and Director of American Jewish Committee's EU Office Daniel Schwammenthal. Participants offered practical recommendations for action by parliaments, governments and international organizations to combat antisemitism.

The event "Combatting Russian disinformation

campaigns – challenges and best practices," hosted by the PA's German Delegation, featured remarks by members of several PA delegations. Organized by Special Representative on Central Asia Farah Karimi (Netherlands), the event on climate change included interventions of OSCE PA delegations of Central Asian participating States and closing remarks by Special Representative on Climate Change Pere Joan Pons (Spain). Organized by Malik Ben Achour (Belgium), the event "Voices Unsilenced" included the participation of several NGOs.

A side event organized by the Office of the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings focused on promoting legislation to close gaps in current laws on the use of technology to facilitate human trafficking, and to improve enforcement measures.