



REPORT OF OSCE PA PRESIDENT PERE
JOAN PONS SAMPIETRO



Annual Session
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Dear Colleagues,

Fifty years on from the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, the principles it enshrined — sovereignty, territorial integrity, human rights, and co-operative security — have never been more necessary or more contested. That anniversary is not a cause for celebration alone; it is a call to responsibility.

The past twelve months have been among the most turbulent in the history of the OSCE. We have witnessed the full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine entering its fifth year, major military operations against Iran conducted outside a United Nations mandate, in a context marked by serious concerns regarding Iran's regional role and internal situation, with significant humanitarian consequences and risks of wider regional escalation, and growing pressure on the sovereignty of OSCE participating States, particularly as it relates to Greenland. The situation of the Palestinian people, where prolonged conflict has caused immense and continuing suffering to civilians, further underlines that the principles we invoke for Ukraine must apply consistently wherever international law is violated and wherever civilians pay the price of political failure.

These are not isolated crises; they reflect a broader and deeply concerning shift in the way force is being used to settle disputes that should be resolved through dialogue and law. At the same time, there are signs that an alternative path remains possible, including a roadmap towards lasting peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan, alongside a broader process offering a new future for the South Caucasus.

The challenges to the Helsinki principles do not stop there. Disinformation and misinformation spread faster than truth. Artificial intelligence is reshaping both the opportunities and the threats to our security. Climate change is intensifying instability and displacement across our region. All of these

transcend national borders and demand collective responses that only institutions like ours can help to coordinate.

At the same time, we are also witnessing an increasingly concerning convergence of political, technological, and financial power that is giving rise to new forms of “pseudo-democracy,” where democratic processes risk being hollowed out or instrumentalized. Such trends illustrate a broader challenge: for some, democracy is no longer seen as the foundation of coexistence, but as an obstacle. This perception must be firmly countered, and this Assembly is one of the few institutions with both the mandate and the membership to do so.

At a time when trust is increasingly fragile and force too often replaces negotiation, principled dialogue remains one of the most powerful instruments available to advance security and prevent further division.

President Zelenskyy’s recent proposal for dialogue with President Putin reinforces our long-standing conviction that opportunities for principled dialogue, when they arise under the right conditions, should be pursued— always in full respect of international law, Ukraine’s sovereignty, and Ukraine’s right to determine the terms of any negotiation.



It is disappointing to note that there has been no meaningful follow-up to President Zelenskyy's letter to the President of the Russian Federation. These developments underscore how essential it is to preserve and nurture channels for principled engagement rather than allow them to narrow.

In this context, when and where conditions allow it to contribute meaningfully and without prejudice to fundamental principles, the Assembly should give due consideration to the broader implications of such an approach, including the potential role of parliamentary dialogue as part of wider international efforts. Such engagement would not be without precedent, including within the OSCE itself, where dialogue has been maintained, notably through the visit to Moscow by the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and the OSCE Secretary General in February 2026, as well as through the regular meetings of the Permanent Council.

This conviction was reinforced during our exchange with Pope Leo XIV in Rome in May, who reminded us of a simple but essential truth: in times of war, polarization and uncertainty, genuine dialogue is not a sign of weakness but a prerequisite for peace.



The Assembly must therefore be present wherever crises arise: not as spectators, but as a platform for parliamentary diplomacy and a voice for our shared commitments, firm when red lines are crossed and open when genuine opportunities for peace emerge.

A year of achievements under pressure

The past year has demonstrated both the resilience and the relevance of the Parliamentary Assembly. Despite political challenges and continued financial pressures affecting the wider OSCE framework, the Assembly has delivered meaningful political, diplomatic, and operational results. Support for Ukraine has remained at the center of the Assembly's work, with two meetings with President Zelenskyy and the honour of addressing the Verkhovna Rada, while sustained attention has been devoted to developments in the Middle East, to the defense of democratic standards through election observation and human-rights advocacy, and to the promotion of gender equality as an integral component of comprehensive security.

Together, we have worked to ensure that the voice of one billion citizens represented by our parliaments is heard clearly at the highest levels: in the OSCE Ministerial and Permanent Councils, in your national parliaments, and at major international conferences. Our thematic work has also remained strong. Through the work of our Ad Hoc Committees and Special Representatives, we have addressed key issues such as migration, climate change, disinformation, and the implications of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence. Climate change, in particular, has remained high on the Assembly's agenda as an increasingly important component of comprehensive security. The Regional Climate Conference in Astana highlighted the need to better integrate climate resilience into security policy, as well as the important role of parliaments in advancing co-operative and sustainable responses to shared challenges.

We have also continued to support democratic resilience across the OSCE area. Our official visit to Georgia in March reaffirmed the value of parliamentary dialogue and the importance of supporting democratic institutions, political pluralism, and public confidence in democratic processes, including the need to address concerns related to detentions in a manner consistent with due process and fundamental rights. Engagement in the Western Balkans has likewise remained a priority: visits to Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly to Srebrenica, and Serbia, including direct engagement with civil society organizations working on gender equality and women's political participation reinforced our conviction that security, equality, and democracy are inseparable goals.



These discussions made clear that further efforts are needed, both within our Assembly and across the region, to strengthen the link between security, gender equality, and the role of women in public life.

As a result, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly is now more present, more visible, and more actively engaged in shaping the political agenda of our region.

Standing with Ukraine

The Parliamentary Assembly has remained unequivocal in its support for a democratic, European and independent Ukraine. This support reflects not only solidarity with a participating State under attack, but also a defense of the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and international law upon which European security is built.

Ukraine continues to stand at the frontline of a broader struggle over the future of the European security order. We have therefore maintained sustained political and practical support for Ukraine's right to defend itself and to determine the conditions of a just and lasting peace.



The Parliamentary Support Team for Ukraine (PSTU) has continued to serve as a key mechanism for parliamentary engagement and coordination. Through regular high-level engagement and visits to Ukraine, we have ensured that our positions are anchored in the realities on the ground, not just in declarations adopted in meeting rooms far from the frontline.

Beyond our core support mechanisms, we have expanded our work on accountability and humanitarian protection. During the Autumn Meeting, the Assembly joined the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children. We have also maintained focus on securing the release of three OSCE officials – Dmytro Shabanov, Maksym Petrov, and Vadym Golda – unjustly detained for the “crime” of serving under our flag.

At the same time, the Assembly has consistently condemned the Russian Federation’s continued attacks on Ukraine’s critical and civilian infrastructure. This Annual Session is another opportunity to reaffirm that targeting civilian and energy infrastructure is a flagrant violation of international law and an assault on the broader security of the OSCE area. Since 2014, our message has been constant: Ukraine deserves peace, justice, and reconstruction – and our Assembly will remain engaged for as long as it takes.

The Middle East and wider regional crises

Comprehensive security does not allow for selective engagement. The Assembly cannot focus on one conflict while ignoring others that continue to generate instability, human suffering, and insecurity across our broader region. The horrors in Gaza and the wider Middle East are not separate from the war in Ukraine, but part of a broader shift in the global security order. Developments in the Persian Gulf continue to have direct implications for security in the OSCE region. Condemning the Hamas attacks of 7 October does not prevent us from speaking clearly about atrocities and potential acts of genocide in Gaza. In The Hague, we have the opportunity to reaffirm that international humanitarian law and international human rights law are never optional, and that accountability must be universal, without double standards.

The principles we invoke in defense of Ukraine must apply equally wherever civilians suffer, fundamental freedoms are violated, or international law is ignored. This includes our continued concern regarding developments in Iran, including the repression of peaceful demonstrations and actions that risk further escalation across the region, as well as the responsibility of all actors to uphold international law consistently and without exception.

Recent diplomatic efforts that have contributed to a de-escalation agreement involving Iran demonstrate that dialogue and diplomacy remain the only sustainable path to security. The Assembly welcomes all steps that reduce the risk of further conflict and create space for negotiated solutions. While the situation remains fragile, these developments show that even the most serious crises can be addressed through political engagement grounded in international law and multilateral co-operation. They also reaffirm a fundamental principle: lasting peace cannot be imposed by military means, but must be built through diplomacy, dialogue, and respect for international law.



Consistency is not only a moral imperative; it is essential to the credibility of our Assembly and the multilateral order we seek to defend. In our region as well, we have remained closely engaged on other unresolved or emerging conflicts and we will continue to speak out wherever the principles of the Helsinki Final Act are at risk. Our aim is to keep open channels for principled dialogue with all participating States, not to legitimize violations, but to insist that respect for our common commitments is the only durable basis for peace and security.

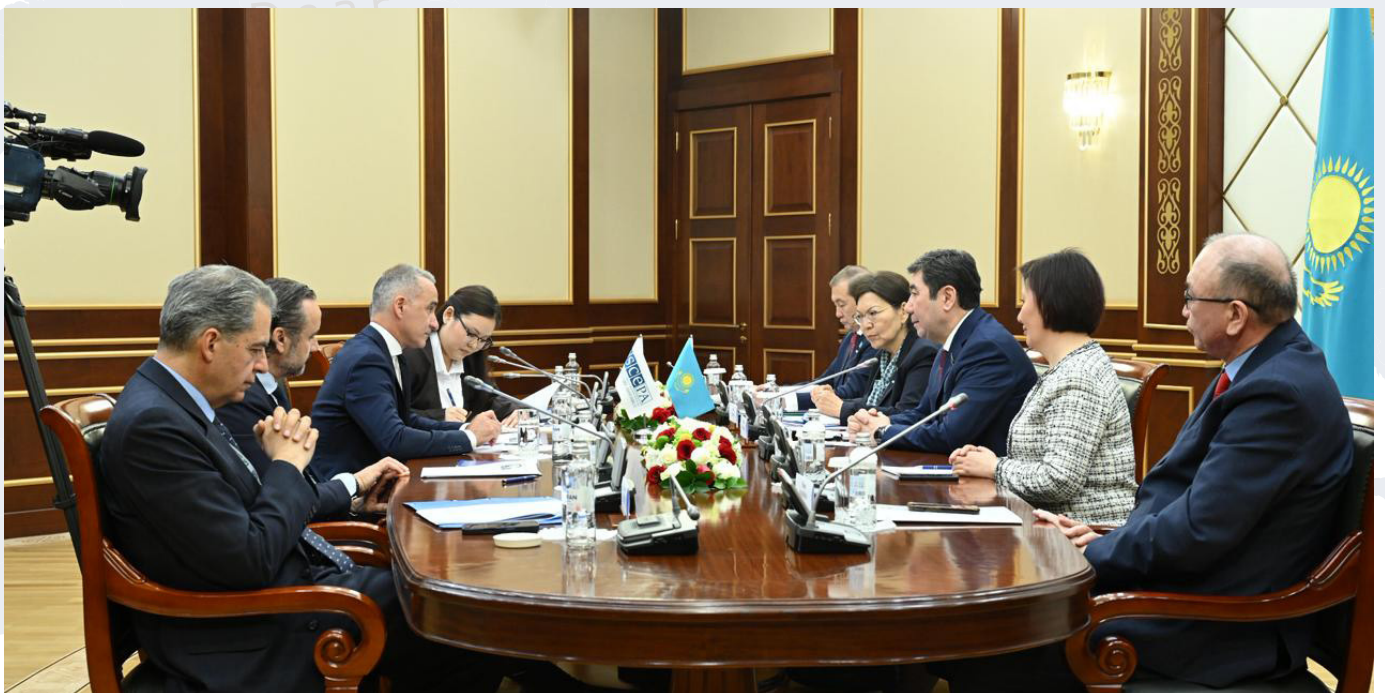
Democracy under pressure

The discussions held throughout the year have reaffirmed a central lesson: democracy, human rights, and security are inseparable. Restrictions on fundamental freedoms, shrinking civic space, attacks on independent institutions, and political repression are not solely domestic concerns; they are early warning signs of wider instability and, in some cases, of external aggression. Security without democracy is ultimately unsustainable, while democracy without security remains vulnerable.

Election observation has remained one of the Assembly's most visible and impactful activities and a key priority of this presidency. At a time when democratic institutions face increasing pressure, election observation is more than a technical exercise: our missions strengthen institutions, reinforce public trust, and contribute to improving the laws and practices that sustain democratic governance over time. Over the past year, we have seen record levels of participation in our election observation missions, with parliamentarians from across the Assembly demonstrating a renewed commitment to defending democratic standards. This growing engagement reflects the strength of our institution and the recognition that election observation remains one of the most effective tools available to support democratic

resilience, public confidence, and conflict prevention.

Our ambition remains clear: to observe every election where parliamentary engagement can make a meaningful contribution, with particular attention to the Western Balkans and Central Asia. This priority must be supported by adequate financial resources from participating parliaments. Robust election observation is not a luxury; it is one of the most cost-effective investments we can make in democratic governance, conflict prevention, and long-term stability.



Gender equality as a security priority

Gender equality is not a peripheral issue. It is a democratic imperative and a strategic investment in security. Experience across the OSCE area demonstrates that more inclusive societies and institutions are more resilient to conflict, polarization, and democratic backsliding.

Too often, however, women carry a double burden: discriminated against simply for being women, and then targeted again when they participate in politics, journalism, activism, or the pursuit of justice. This must change, and signs

are encouraging: gender parity is increasingly recognized across the OSCE area as a democratic standard, not merely an inspiration.

As we highlighted during the IPU Global Conference of Women Parliamentarians in Belgrade, progress must be measured through data. This progress is reflected in the Assembly itself: more than 60 per cent of presidential appointments since the beginning of this mandate have been women.

Yet, important gaps remain. Women represent only one third of Assembly members, and four national delegations still include no women at all. Addressing these imbalances remains essential to the credibility and effectiveness of our work.

The Assembly has continued to prioritize gender-based violence, women's political participation, and gender-responsive legislation. In parallel, the International Secretariat has finalized its first Gender Equality Action Plan for 2026–2029, strengthening gender-sensitive practices across its work.

The logic is clear: gender equality is not only a matter of representation or fairness; it is a matter of security. A gender-sensitive approach strengthens conflict prevention, crisis management, democratic governance, economic resilience, and human-rights protection. Sustained progress in this area is therefore one of the best investments that can be made in social cohesion, institutional trust, and long-term peace. A more gender-balanced leadership also makes the Assembly better equipped to address these challenges by bringing broader perspectives, greater representational legitimacy, and stronger credibility when encouraging governments to do the same.

Resourcing our ambitions

At a moment when conflicts are multiplying and democratic institutions are under pressure, the demand for what this Assembly does has never been greater. That is why the question of financial resources is, fundamentally, a political one. Investing in the Assembly means investing in security through dialogue rather than weapons, in the durability of multilateralism, and in the kind of democratic accountability that no military instrument can provide.

Our resources must therefore reflect our ambitions, and I want to keep being open with you about the pressures we face. Since the 2023–2024 financial year, the Assembly has not received financial contributions from the Russian Federation, representing every year approximately 6 per cent of our budget. In response to this exceptional situation, the Secretariat has ensured continuity through cuts to administrative costs and the measured use of reserves, as authorized by the political leadership. At the current rate of drawdown, reserves are not heading toward zero in the near term. The challenge is not imminent exhaustion: it is ensuring that we retain the liquidity needed to pre-finance our activities. This assumes that all other participating States continue to pay their assessed contributions in full and on time, and that the current level of operational activity and cost discipline is maintained.

At the same time, it is clear that this approach cannot constitute a long-term solution. We are therefore moving forward with a combined and forward-looking approach to ensure the Assembly's financial sustainability.

The Assembly has continued to undertake a growing volume of activities while the Secretariat has exercised strict discipline over costs and delivery. But this should be understood as an adjustment, not as the path we should choose for the future.

Our priority must remain sustained political engagement aimed at restoring full budgetary compliance, alongside a collective effort by participating States committed to the Assembly's role to reinforce its financial foundations. We will continue to press on both fronts, ensuring that our activities remain focused, effective, and politically impactful.

When I stood for election as your President in Porto, I committed to making this Assembly more visible, more engaged, more effective, and to advancing a renewed focus on governance. I cannot deliver on that commitment without your support. The times call for more, not less, and the political signal of parliaments investing in dialogue at a time of war and division would itself be a contribution to the security of our region.

The choice before us is not between options on a spreadsheet. It is a political choice about the kind of Assembly we want to be, and the kind of region we want to build. And I believe we can all agree on the need for an Assembly that is more present on the ground, with greater electoral observation capacity, and that is as diverse and plural as possible.

Unfinished work

Much work remains. War continues to threaten European security. Democratic institutions face growing pressure, while disinformation and geopolitical fragmentation undermine trust and challenge the multilateral order. Yet these challenges do not diminish the importance of the OSCE and its Parliamentary Assembly; they reaffirm it.

At a time when divisions deepen and confrontation too often replaces dialogue, parliamentarians must defend cooperation, accountability, and democratic values. The choice before us is clear: between dialogue and confrontation, between respect for international law and the normalization

of force. The Parliamentary Assembly must remain an active and determined voice in favour of the former, not because it is easy, but because it is necessary.

To do so, we must continue adapting our work to evolving challenges while remaining firmly anchored in the principles of the Helsinki Final Act. Meeting this responsibility will require determination and unity of purpose. It will require each of us to bring the same commitment to this Assembly that our citizens deserve from their parliaments.

I count on your engagement, your energy, and your conviction, here in The Hague, and in every parliament you represent.

President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Pere Joan Pons

The Hague, 4 July 2026



OSCE PA

List of activities OSCE PA President Pere Joan Pons

July 2025 - July 2026

| Date | Event | Location |
|--------------------|--|---|
| 2025 | | |
| 10 July | OSCE Youth Event | Vienna, Austria |
| 30 July - 1 August | 50th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act | Helsinki, Finland |
| 3 September | Working visit to the International Secretariat | Copenhagen, Denmark |
| 11 September | Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council | Vienna, Austria |
| 23 September | Meeting of the OSCE PA Bureau | Online |
| 6 October | Human Dimension Conference | Warsaw, Poland |
| 7-8 October | Presidential visit to Ukraine | Kyiv, Ukraine |
| 13 October | Meeting with OSCE PA Special Representatives and Chairs of Ad Hoc Committees | Online |
| 5-8 November | Field visit to Bosnia-Herzegovina | Sarajevo & Srebrenica, Bosnia-Herzegovina |
| 17-19 November | OSCE PA Autumn Meeting | Istanbul, Türkiye |
| 23-24 November | Fourth Parliamentary Summit of the International Crimea Platform | Stockholm, Sweden |
| 26 November | 10th Anniversary of the Safety of Female Journalists Online (SOFJO) Project | Vienna, Austria |
| 3 December | International roundtable: "25 years of Women, Peace and Security: Reflecting on Achievements, Responding to Increased Challenges, Imagining Future Objectives" | Vienna, Austria |
| 3 December | Meeting of the OSCE PA Bureau | Vienna, Austria |

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| 3 December | OSCE Parallel Civil Society Conference | Vienna, Austria |
| 4-5 December | OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting | Vienna, Austria |
| 5 December | Side event "Trafficking in human beings in times of crises: new challenges requiring new responses" | Vienna, Austria |
| 18 December | OSCE PA – ODIHR webinar: "Gender parity: why is it important and how to make it happen?" | Online |
| 2026 | | |
| 20 January | Visit to Denmark and to the OSCE PA International Secretariat | Copenhagen, Denmark |
| 22 January | Address to the OSCE Permanent Council | Vienna, Austria |
| 13-15 February | Munich Security Conference | Munich, Germany |
| 19-20 February | OSCE PA Winter Meeting | Vienna, Austria |
| 8-11 March | Visit to Georgia | Tbilisi, Georgia |
| 17 March | Signing of the Annual Session MoU | The Hague, the Netherlands |
| 31 March | Bucha Summit | Bucha, Ukraine |
| 14 April | Briefing - ODIHR's Public Ethics and Integrity Toolkit: Guidelines for Political Parties | Madrid, Spain |
| 22-24 April | Regional Climate Summit | Astana, Kazakhstan |
| 26-27 April | Meeting of the OSCE PA Bureau | Copenhagen, Denmark |
| 11 May | High-Level Meeting of the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children | Brussels, Belgium |
| 14-15 May | International Conference on Organized Crime | Rome, Italy |
| 26 May | Science Diplomacy online event for SEE delegations | online |
| 2-4 June | IPU Global Conference of Women Parliamentarians | Belgrade, Serbia |
| 30 June – 2 July | 9th World Congress Against the Death Penalty | Paris, France |
| 4-8 July | OSCE PA Annual Session | The Hague, The Netherlands |