

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

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Address to the General Committee on Political Affairs and Security of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

The Hague, 6 July 2026

Good morning, Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen.

More than 50 years ago, when the CSCE concluded the Helsinki Final Act, US president Gerald Ford urged its members to always keep in mind that history is made – and I quote:

‘not by what we say today, but by what we do tomorrow – not by the promises we make, but by the promises we keep.’

Guided by these words, the OSCE has long embodied a simple but powerful idea: real security is not only about military strength or borders. It’s about trust, respect for human rights, and opportunities for our citizens.

For decades, the Helsinki Principles guided us through the Cold War and the transitions that followed.

They helped manage tensions, and strengthened security and stability across our region.

Yet today, we face a more complex and contested security environment.

Across the OSCE region, we see growing geopolitical tensions. We see democratic backsliding. Shrinking civic space. Hybrid threats, such as cyberattacks, disinformation and interference in our democratic processes.

At the same time, trust between states is low.

Many of the arms-control and confidence-building arrangements that once helped to limit risks and increase predictability are eroding. Or no longer functioning as intended.

And this makes the OSCE’s role even more important.

Few organizations have a toolbox like the OSCE’s – from conflict prevention and election observation to support for the rule of law and media freedom.

In every part of our region, the OSCE adds value:

- by providing a forum for open discussion of difficult issues;
- by deploying missions to prevent tensions from escalating;
- and by supporting parliaments and civil society in building resilient, democratic institutions.

Time and again, the OSCE has shown that dialogue, transparency and cooperation are not signs of weakness. They are our strongest assets in protecting peace and stability.

This gives all of us a clear responsibility: to safeguard what the OSCE stands for. And to support its work in practice.

Now, Russia's war against Ukraine is the clearest example of how the foundations of our common security are being violated in the OSCE region.

That is why Ukraine needs and deserves our unwavering support.

We must show that aggression does not pay, that borders cannot be changed by force, and that our OSCE commitments still matter.

You, as parliamentarians, play a crucial role in this regard.

You can step up sanctions, close loopholes, and stop the flow of battlefield and dual-use goods to Russia. You can help tackle the shadow fleet, which threatens both our security and our marine environment.

Parliamentary diplomacy matters. Your leadership matters.

Now, one of the darkest aspects of this war is the fate of thousands of abducted Ukrainian children. Illegally deported or forcibly transferred to Russia or to occupied Ukrainian territories. Many of them remain unaccounted for.

Together – with Ukraine, the Council of Europe and the International Criminal Court – we must document these crimes, reunite children with their families and hold those responsible accountable.

Through its Moscow Mechanism and Support Programme for Ukraine, the OSCE plays a key role in these efforts. Both in seeking justice and in helping those affected by the war rebuild their lives.

The Netherlands will continue to support that work through our leadership on restoring justice for Ukraine.

There must be no impunity.

I would also like to take this opportunity to repeat my call for the immediate release of the three OSCE officials unjustly detained by Russia. Their detention is unlawful and must end.

Colleagues,

There are still many challenges ahead, but we are not powerless or without tools:

Through its election observation, the OSCE provides concrete support for stability and democratic resilience across our region.

In the Western Balkans, OSCE field missions work every day on minority rights, democratic institutions and reconciliation, in a region still marked by political tensions.

In the South Caucasus, Armenia and Azerbaijan have shown that progress is possible: their peace efforts demonstrate what political courage can achieve.

At the same time, the Moscow Mechanism's findings on Georgia remind us of the risks of democratic backsliding and the need to protect our shared values.

These examples show that the OSCE is not some abstract framework, but a practical instrument for preventing crises, supporting reforms and building trust on the ground.

As parliamentarians, you are the guardians of our shared values.

You shape laws.

You hold governments to account for their OSCE commitments.

And you represent the citizens who have placed their trust in you.

So I ask you to continue defending the OSCE framework on which our collective security depends, including through active parliamentary diplomacy:

- Support Ukraine.
- Support accountability.
- Support the OSCE, its autonomous institutions and its field operations.
- And protect democratic institutions, free media and civil society.

Ladies and gentlemen,

President Ford urged us to live up to our commitments.

For you, as parliamentarians, those commitments are not only judged by the words you speak, but by the votes you cast and the budgets and laws you approve.

The Netherlands stands ready to work with all of you to strengthen our shared security, and to ensure that freedom, law and human dignity prevail across the OSCE region.

Let history remember this Assembly as one that chose to keep its promises.