



**Ilkka Kanerva**  
**President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly**

*Autumn Meeting*  
*Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia*  
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Dear Mr. President,  
Dear Mr. Chairman,  
Dear fellow parliamentarians,  
Dear friends,

It is a great honor for me to open the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's 2015 Autumn Meeting here in Ulaanbaatar.

For many of us – myself included – this is the first visit to this beautiful country. In the West, as some of my Mongolian friends are probably aware, even the name “Mongolia” has what we perceive as exotic associations. It evokes images of warriors on horseback and the vast Gobi desert.

But what many in the West do not know – at least not yet – is a reality that I and my fellow parliamentarians are celebrating at our Autumn Meeting this year: The Mongolia of today is a free, democratic, modern country that we all can learn from.

We know that Mongolians, themselves, are celebrating that this year. 2015 is a landmark anniversary here, for it marks 25 years since the end of communism and the founding of the Mongolian Parliament.

The bloodless and swift transition to a freer, more just way of life for Mongolia's people was **truly remarkable**. We, the members of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, **congratulate you on this very special anniversary**.

But to me, just as admirable as the peaceful introduction of democracy is the fact that Mongolia has not stopped there. Many in the international community have been highly impressed by Mongolia's eagerness to develop, to consolidate democratic gains, to improve governance and social and economic policies.

For such a new democracy – and a democracy that is located between China and Russia – Mongolia has impressively demonstrated its ability to lead on the international stage. Now, Mongolia is hosting our Autumn Meeting – just three years since joining the OSCE.

Doing so is a sign of the State Great Hural's dedication to supporting and promoting parliamentary dialogue, as well as OSCE standards and commitments. **We sincerely thank you.**

OSCE standards and commitments. Indeed, that is – and always will be – the foundation of our work. I am sad to repeat what I have said at all of our recent meetings: **This Organization's values are under acute threat today.**

We have held many debates about the crisis in and around Ukraine. I think we all understand that dialogue cannot undo the fact that all 10 core principles of the Helsinki Final Act have been violated during the crisis. It also cannot undo the violations that have occurred in the context of frozen conflicts in the OSCE area.

But, as parliamentarians, and as members of this Assembly, we also believe in what dialogue *can* do. We have facilitated some of the only direct contact between Ukrainian and Russian parliamentarians since the crisis began, and we aim to do more of that. On that note, I'm pleased to see that the Russian Delegation has rejoined our Assembly.

**I hope all of us are willing to be open and honest about the facts on the ground in eastern Ukraine and in occupied Crimea.**

Our dialogue must also be in support of the Minsk Agreements, which are the only viable solution. I welcome the fact that the ceasefire in eastern Ukraine has largely held in the past several weeks. I look forward to the day when local elections can

be held throughout all of Ukraine. And I look forward to the restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity.

There is another crisis now raging in the OSCE area, and it is also one that urgently requires constructive dialogue: That is the migrant and refugee crisis.

**If we cannot bear to see images of drowned children washing up on the beaches of southern Europe or huddled masses in dirty camps, then let us take action.**

Countries like Italy, Greece, Turkey, Malta and Hungary cannot handle the influx on their own. The countries of the Balkans also need support. Let me especially applaud Germany's leadership on this issue.

Europe can and **simply must do more** to respond, and do so with **solidarity** and **compassion**. Building walls is not the answer, but fair burden-sharing is. Let us help inspire the political will needed to respond to this situation responsibly.

Many other topics are on our agenda here in Mongolia:

The threat of terrorism affects each and every one of our countries. Turkey, as well as the countries of Central Asia, are facing the direct threat of ISIS and Al-Qaeda. Many Western OSCE countries also bear the ugly scars of terrorism and Islamic extremism. We must strengthen our resolve to counter these threats, work more closely and effectively with each other, and do all we can to support a resolution to the horrific war in Syria.

Environmental issues are also on our agenda. Desertification, water scarcity, and lack of food security are only expected to worsen with global warming. As parliamentarians, **it is absolutely our obligation** to push our governments and populations to make ambitious progress in fighting global warming and living sustainably. We must demonstrate strong parliamentary support for the UN climate change talks in Paris.

Tomorrow we will focus on democratic development and the human dimension. There have been improvements in some of our countries, but backsliding is also common. This trend is deeply alarming to me, and it strikes at the core of OSCE values. We simply cannot tolerate when journalists are jailed on politically motivated charges, or when civil society is silenced by the authorities, or when the rule of law really amounts to the rule of those in power.

In the presentations that we will hear over the next days, many of these topics will be considered by parliamentarians and experts from the eastern part of the OSCE area.

In fact, Ulaanbaatar is the easternmost location for an OSCE PA Meeting in the history of this Assembly – and so what better occasion to focus on developments in the eastern OSCE area?

I am delighted that today we are hosting a panel with the heads of OSCE offices in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. This is a rare opportunity to have all of them together, and before you. These offices help to fulfill OSCE commitments, and they should be expanded, not shut down, as has happened in some countries.

I also welcome and thank our esteemed guests from the United Nations and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, who will be making presentations.

And to our hosts, the Mongolian Delegation to the OSCE PA and the State Great Hural, I again want to say thank you – *Bai-YER-La*.

I wish us all success over the next several days.