

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Remote Autumn Meeting



2021
3-4 November

Contents



- 
- 3 Summary
 - 5 Mediterranean Forum
 - 13 Parliamentary Conference
 - 17 Standing Committee Meeting

Summary

Featuring a Standing Committee meeting, a Mediterranean Forum and a Parliamentary Conference on the theme “Current Security Challenges: Focus on Afghanistan,” the OSCE PA’s 19th Autumn Meeting took place in an online format on 3-4 November. It was the first Autumn Meeting held since 2019 due to the pandemic.

More than 30 parliamentarians from across the OSCE area took part in the Afghanistan debate on 4 November. Introducing the debate, OSCE PA President Margareta Cederfelt (Sweden) noted that what happens in Afghanistan has major implications for neighbouring countries, as well as for international security more broadly. She noted that given the Taliban’s history, there are serious concerns that the hard-won rights of women and girls will be revoked. Amb. Tuula Yrjölä, Director of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre, said that the OSCE should support participating States in mitigating the impacts of the evolving situation.

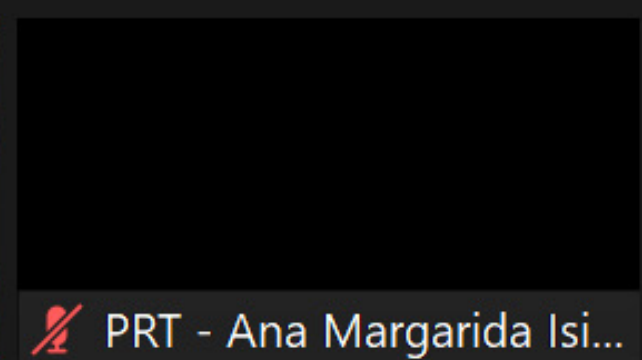
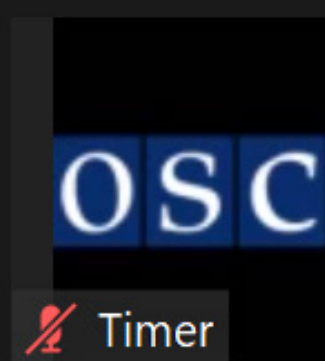
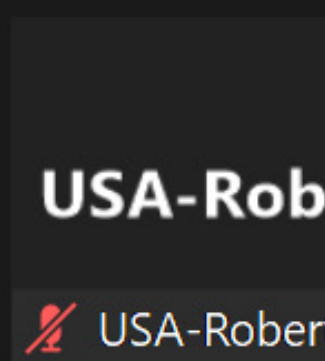
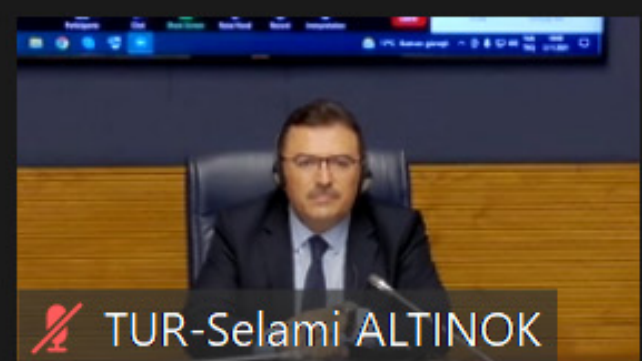
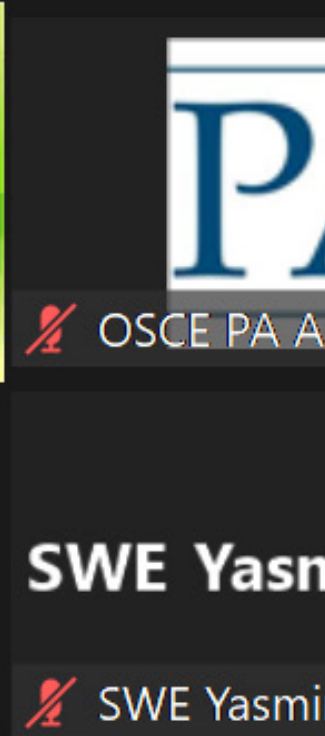
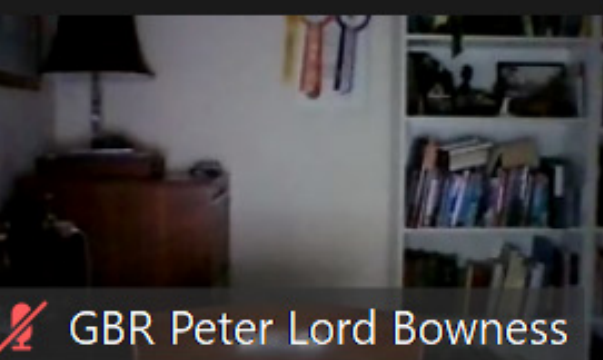
The chairs of the OSCE PA’s three general committees spoke about the ripple effects on the security of the OSCE region, which will likely be felt for years to come. In the debate, parliamentarians expressed concerns about the return of an international terrorist threat, the humanitarian situation and economic crisis. There is a palpable

need for working on issues such as human rights and ensuring humanitarian access in co-operation with neighboring countries of Afghanistan, it was stressed.

Earlier in the day, the PA’s Mediterranean Forum met and heard from delegates representing a number of OSCE Mediterranean Partners as well as Adam Halacinski, the Chairperson of the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group. Amb. Halacinski briefed the Assembly on OSCE initiatives with Mediterranean Partners and discussed ways to improve the OSCE as platform for debate on how to overcome current challenges in the region.

The OSCE PA’s Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs and Vice-President Pascal Allizard (France) noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated tensions and crises in the region.

Climate change was stressed as also a global priority, as it is exacerbating drought and flooding, and leading to increased migration flows. Parliamentarians raised concerns about the development gap between north and south, with migration highlighted as a challenge for Europe as a whole.



Mediterranean Forum

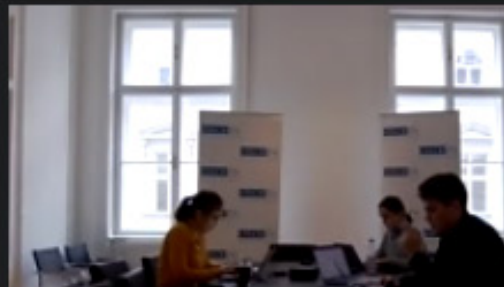
The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Mediterranean Forum met on 4 November 2021 and heard from delegates representing OSCE Mediterranean Partners as well as President Margareta Cederfelt and Adam Halacinski, the Chairperson of the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group.



Di Domenico

CAN -Ya'ara Saks

CAN -Ya'ara Saks



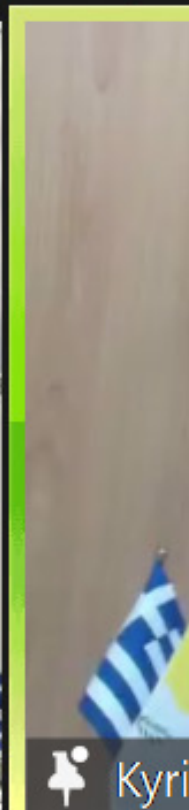
OSCE PA Vienna Office



FRANCE - M. Allizard



OSCE Parliamentary Assembly



Kyriacos

Mediterranean Forum

Pascal Allizard, OSCE PA Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs and Vice-President

Pascal Allizard (France) noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated tensions and crises in the region. The pandemic, Allizard said, has highlighted the need for collective responses, both at the governmental and parliamentary level.

Allizard stressed in particular the need for co-operation in the health sector in order to cope with the emergency and the vaccination imperative, as well as co-operation in the humanitarian dimension to deal with migration, and in the security dimension to respond to the increased risks linked to the trafficking involved in these movements. "All these aspects of co-operation have been and must be activated in order to combat the multifaceted crisis we are currently experiencing," Allizard said.

Margareta Cederfelt, President of the OSCE PA

Margareta Cederfelt (Sweden) opened the Mediterranean Forum by noting that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 Mediterranean Forum had not been possible. With a full two years since last Mediterranean Forum, she stressed how much the PA values the participation of Mediterranean partners and how badly needed parliamentary diplomacy is. As long as there is continued dialogue, she said, there is hope for a safe and secure future.

She noted in particular the importance of working to improve security in all three dimensions – the politico-military, the economic-environmental and the human dimensions.

Adam Halacinski, Chair of the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group

Amb. Halacinski briefed the Assembly on past and upcoming OSCE initiatives with Mediterranean Partners and discussed ways to improve the OSCE as a platform for debate on how to overcome current challenges in the region. He highlighted a number of priorities including the improvement of regional co-operation in the fight against transnational organized crime with a focus on asset recovery. He also informed the parliamentarians of the Young Policy Advisers Course, designed for young people in the Mediterranean region.



Debate

Algerian MP Rafika Kesri mentioned terrorism and crime as pressing challenges facing the region, stressing the need for all countries to combat these threats together. Climate change is also a global priority, Kesri said, underlining that it is a multiplying factor to threats to peace and security. Global heating, she noted, is exacerbating drought and flooding, and leading to increased migration flows. Global solutions are required for global threats, she said, emphasizing the need for solidarity-based efforts.

Mohamed El Bakkouri (Morocco) spoke about recent elections in his country, which he noted were characterized by high turnout and strong women's participation, indicating much progress since the constitutional reform of 2011 and a healthy state of participatory democracy in Morocco. Morocco has been a leader on the pandemic, El Bakkouri said, noting that 24 million people have already been vaccinated in the country.

During the Mediterranean Forum's open discussion, parliamentarians raised concerns over issues including climate change and tax evasion. The pandemic has broadened the development gap between north and south, it was pointed out, and the global finance and trade system is exacerbating climate change and driving inequality. Migration was also highlighted as a challenge for Europe as a whole and not only for the Mediterranean countries.

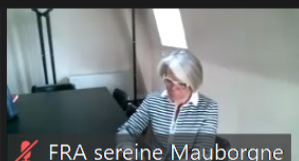
Mediterranean Forum



Carmelo Abela
LIVE on Custom Live Streaming Service



Anna Di Domenico



FRA sereine Mauborgne



El Bakkouri Mohamed



OSCE PA Vienna Office



BLR - Ivan Mamaiko



OSCE Parliamentary Assembly



FRANCE - M. Allizard

02:36

Timer



Azay Guliyev







Parliamentary Conference

The Autumn Meeting featured a Parliamentary Conference on 4 November on the theme “Current Security Challenges: Focus on Afghanistan.” More than 30 parliamentarians from across the OSCE area took part in the debate offered their perspectives on the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan and its implications for the OSCE region following the Taliban’s takeover in August.



Parliamentary Conference

Introducing the topic, OSCE PA President Margareta Cederfelt (Sweden) noted that what happens in Afghanistan has major implications for neighbouring countries, as well as for international security in general.

“The security threats emanating from this instability are multiple,” she said. “With the cold winter months, we can expect the humanitarian crisis to worsen, leading to hunger, pushing many more Afghans to flee their country.”

She also noted that given the Taliban’s history, there are serious concerns that Afghanistan will once again become a safe haven for terrorist groups and the hard-won rights of women and girls will be revoked.

“It is essential that human security be protected by safeguarding the fundamental rights of all

Afghans,” she said, noting that these are all issues for which the OSCE has a solid acquis.

Tuula Yrjölä, Director of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre

Ambassador Yrjölä addressed the PA Members, stating that the OSCE should support participating States in mitigating the impacts of the evolving situation. “For the OSCE to be smart and responsive to the complex challenges emanating from Afghanistan, we are going to need to think outside of our traditional geographic or technical mandates,” said the CPC Director.

“We will need to model internally the type of co-operation, learning and problem solving that all stakeholders will need to adopt in order to remain fit for purpose in this fast-changing environment.”

Richard Hudson, Chair of the OSCE PA’s Committee on Political Affairs and Security

Richard Hudson (United States) pointed out that the current circumstances are certain to have ripple effects on the security of OSCE participating States for years to come. Perhaps most alarming, he said, is the return of an international terrorist threat from Afghanistan.

“Even if we can somehow convince ourselves that the Taliban might not itself pose a direct threat to our countries, there is a real question of their capacity or will to counter groups active in Afghanistan who have a track record of seeking to attack our citizens,” Hudson said.



Pere Joan Pons, Chair of the OSCE PA's Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment

Pons (Spain) noted that the most immediate effect of the Taliban's takeover is the humanitarian crisis, with hundreds of thousands of civilians evacuated, and many families separated. The economic situation is also dramatic, Pons said. Following years of severe draughts that plagued local agricultural production, the recent sharp reductions in international aid caused the collapse of basic health and education services. He also noted that human-induced climate change has magnified the crisis, imploring governments meeting in Glasgow for the COP26 to advance climate commitments in line with the 2015 Paris Agreement.

Sereine Mauborgne, Chair of the General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions

Mauborgne (France) called the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan a wake-up call. The Parliamentary Assembly has already stressed the need for co-operation with neighboring countries of Afghanistan, but there is still an urgent need to work on issues such as human rights and ensuring humanitarian access, she said.

Debate

In the debate, parliamentarians raised concerns about the human rights situation, in particular the threat posed to female parliamentarians, and more generally to women, girls and LGBT+ communities, and noted the dangers posed by radicalization.

The speed with which the Afghan government collapsed was astonishing, it was pointed out, and one of the main factors identified in the rapid collapse was corruption, which should therefore be understood as a security issue. This underscores the need for redoubling efforts at developing the rule of law throughout the OSCE area, it was stressed.



Sereine Mauborgne

Standing Committee Meeting

The Standing Committee of the OSCE PA, consisting of the heads of national delegations and members of the Bureau, met on 3 November 2021 online to hear reports and discuss ongoing Assembly work. It was chaired by President Margareta Cederfelt (Sweden) from the PA's office in Copenhagen.

Standing Committee meeting included reports by the President, Treasurer, Secretary General, and discussion of PA activities and current political issues.

In her report, President Cederfelt outlined her main priorities and areas of activities since being elected in July. She highlighted her recent presidential visit to Central Asia and the election observation mission in Uzbekistan, expressing appreciation for a good working relationship with the government of Uzbekistan and noting that the Assembly is ready to support the implementation of OSCE recommendations.

The President discussed the security challenges in Central Asia due to the situation in Afghanistan, the involvement of the Tajik government, and the key role of Uzbekistan to deliver humanitarian goods. She noted that the Taliban's capture of Kabul in August brought Afghanistan to the top of the international political agenda, and as such she has prioritized engagement with OSCE participating States in the region. She also highlighted exchanges she has had with speakers of the parliaments of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, and Ukraine, to underline the added value of parliamentary engagement in conflict resolution in those countries.

OSCE PA Treasurer Peter Juel-Jensen (Denmark) reported on the state of the Assembly's finances and gave a positive assessment of the organization's financial management. He also noted that a budget for the year was adopted in July and announced that he will propose a balanced

budget for the next year in April.

Secretary General Roberto Montella offered his report to the Standing Committee, noting the increasingly high level of activities of the Assembly over the past several years. He stressed the need to prioritize PA work, maintain focus, and ensure quality over quantity. He also discussed political challenges facing the Assembly and underlined the need for building trust and mutual respect.

OSCE PA Special Representatives reported to the Standing Committee on their activities and plans, particularly in relation to developing OSCE PA involvement on Arctic issues, civil society engagement, and combating corruption.

Special Representative on Human Trafficking Issues Christ Smith (United States) called for attention on the trafficking of Afghan women and the need to monitor their suffering in light of the recent crisis in the country. Special Representative on Fighting Corruption Irene Charalambides (Cyprus) highlighted co-operation with OSCE executive structures, such as discussing the priorities of the Swedish OSCE Chairmanship in the fight against corruption, and taking part in the ODIHR's 30th anniversary event in October. Special Representative on Civil Society Engagement Kyriakos Hadjiyanni (Cyprus) reported on his meetings with ODIHR and NGOs, noting that close and ongoing interaction is necessary to promote human rights.

It was also stressed that OSCE participating States must adopt guidelines for the protection of human rights defenders based on OSCE commitments and universal human rights standards.



The chairs of the OSCE PA's ad hoc committees also briefed the Assembly's leadership. Chair of the OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism Reinhold Lopakta (Austria) reported on recent activities and underlined that he is committed to continuing to work together with other parliamentary assemblies and the UNOCT/ UNODC.

In a report on the OSCE PA's Call for Action - Helsinki +50 Initiative, Ambassador Lamberto Zannier described the efforts to increase the visibility and effectiveness of the OSCE. He provided an overview of the most recent meetings, which dealt with women, peace and security, integration of a youth perspective, and the revitalization of the human dimension. Amb. Zannier noted that there are typically around 100 participants

and encouraged members to attend and contribute to the events so that different perspectives can be integrated.

The President Emeritus of the OSCE PA and Chair of the Sub-Committee on Rules of Procedure and Working Practices, Lord Peter Bowness (United Kingdom), described the ongoing work to improve the Rules of Procedure in order to maximize the time of OSCE PA meetings.

In a review of OSCE PA activities and current international political issues, members raised concerns related to ongoing conflicts in the OSCE area, the climate crisis and migration, encouraging sustained parliamentary engagement on all of these fronts.



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

www.oscepa.org

osce@oscepa.dk

OSCE PA International Secretariat

Tordenskjoldsgade 1
1055 Copenhagen K
Denmark

Tel: +45 33 37 80 40

Fax: +45 33 37 80 30