



REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT
OF THE OSCE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY
TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE



2023
18 November

Dear colleagues,

Our Delegations are set to meet again while our region faces a **rapid succession of major crises. Ukraine**, which has been at the heart of our political agenda since 2014 and even more so since February 2022, continues to battle Russian aggression. Our host country, **Armenia**, is responding to the mass exodus of ethnic Armenians who fled the territory of **Azerbaijan** last September. The unprecedented and orchestrated terrorist attack committed on 7 October and **Israel's** military response in the **Gaza** strip have raised the specter of a wider regional conflagration in the Middle East.

As parliamentarians involved in international affairs, it is legitimate that we seek decisive action through all means available. It is a testament to the mission of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly that we continue to experience **high levels of engagements by all our Delegations**. Your enthusiasm has further reinforced my conviction that this acceleration of events does not condemn the rules-based international order - of which the OSCE is a pillar - but rather justifies **our contribution towards a functioning multilateral system**. The events of recent months have also confirmed the underlying premises on which the OSCE was founded: that security is indivisible, that the various aspects of security are interconnected and interdependent, and that we can therefore only achieve peace and true security through a broad and comprehensive approach. In other words, **today's world needs a strong and effective OSCE**.

In this troubled context, I share the serious concerns expressed by our Assembly in Vancouver regarding the **immediate future of the OSCE**. With just a few weeks left, we face the unprecedented scenario of an Organization with no Chairpersonship, no Secretary General, and no Heads of Institutions. After 2017 and 2020, it is deeply disturbing that **regular leadership crises** seem to have become a new normal. I passed our message when I addressed the OSCE Permanent Council, whose Permanent Representatives overwhelmingly expressed sincere appreciation for the elaboration and adoption of our Vancouver Declaration. I have also had the opportunity to exchange directly with the Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE, the Foreign Minister of North Macedonia, Bujar Osmani, to assure him of our full support to try and overcome this extremely complex challenge. Since our Annual Session, I have also held numerous consultations with Permanent Representatives to the OSCE and with Ambassadors stationed in Helsinki to seek to resolve this issue. For our Assembly to be more impactful, it is crucial that we continue to **strengthen mutually beneficial co-operation between the governmental and the parliamentary branches of the OSCE**. I am confident that my close collaboration with the Finnish Foreign Ministry ahead of Finland's Chairpersonship of the OSCE in 2025 will add to these efforts. But our Assembly must also prepare for tomorrow: I would therefore suggest that the Standing Committee

soon consider establishing a new committee to discuss **the future of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly**.

Your active involvement in OSCE events and activities already contributes to all these efforts. Following my participation in the High-Level Conference on Climate Change in Vienna in July and the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Conference in Tetovo in September, I was pleased to see sustained engagement by our Assembly's leadership throughout the two weeks of the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference. This was further demonstrated by the high number of Members deployed to observe the parliamentary elections in Poland, in co-operation with the OSCE/ODIHR, which I had the honour to lead. Building on your enthusiasm, I plan on soon launching a series of visits by small groups of OSCE PA Members to interact with and learn about **OSCE Field Operations** and the countries in which they work.

With a view of better complementing the work of the executive structures of the OSCE, and providing greater parliamentary input on key issues, I have taken steps to streamline the work of Special Representatives. I have reduced their overall number, with portfolios focusing on priority topics, both thematic and regional. I will also continue to support the efforts of the International Secretariat in ensuring **coordination between our various activities to maximize the impact of our work**. In this vein, I was glad to address the Fourth Counter-Terrorism Co-ordination Meeting of Parliamentary Assemblies in Vienna to underline how our Assembly has been able to promote policy convergence amongst all OSCE participating States through the work of our Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism. I congratulate our Members on their achievements, which were recognized by the OSCE PA's re-election to lead this interparliamentary co-ordination mechanism.

As your President, I have sought to maintain balance in our activities while focusing on some key issues. In the current global context, it is important that we do not let a crisis chase another: **sustained political attention is necessary to find sustainable solutions**. It is with this in mind that I have decided to chair the newly-formed **Parliamentary Support Team for Ukraine** (PSTU), which I presented to parliaments and multilateral organizations participating in the European Conference of Presidents of Parliament in Dublin and the Second Parliamentary Summit of the Crimea Platform in Prague.

Ahead of our Autumn Meeting in Yerevan, I shared your deep concern regarding the ramifications of the recent events in Azerbaijan, which restored the country's sovereignty within its internationally-recognized borders, yet led to the mass displacement of ethnic Armenians from the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan to Armenia. I am grateful that despite this extraordinary situation for the country, the Armenian parliament has remained strongly committed

to hosting our meeting. Having spent many hours exchanging on the situation with relevant stakeholders, it has been clear that **the OSCE and our Assembly must remain invested in the South Caucasus** to facilitate humanitarian aid and assistance, support stability measures in the regions, and encourage the efforts aimed at concluding a comprehensive peace agreement. I am thankful that the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration is continuing to pay close attention to developments in Armenia. I will follow up on all these discussions through a presidential visit to all three countries – Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia – the week prior to our Autumn Meeting.

All of you have worried about the potential consequence of developments in the **Middle East** on the rest of the OSCE region. The horrific terrorist attacks perpetrated by militant and terrorist groups led by Hamas in south Israel on 7 October have shocked us all. These actions cannot be justified and must be unequivocally condemned. As I discussed with the Speaker of the Knesset, Amir Ohana, Israel has the right to defend itself and take the steps necessary to guarantee the safety of its population. Yet, Israel's military response to dismantle Gaza-based terrorist organizations and free hostages must uphold international humanitarian law and make every effort to protect Palestinian civilians. Our Mediterranean Forum will be a timely opportunity to debate these matters and reinforce our engagement in deconfliction and mediation.

Finally, given this multiplicity of challenges, I am grateful for the advice and support provided to me by the **International Secretariat**, as well as the open line of communication with Secretary General Roberto Montella. I take this opportunity to remind Delegations that the strain on the OSCE PA finances, which has been compounded by a sustained period of high inflation and the decision of certain Delegations to suspend the full payment of their annual contribution, hampers the International Secretariat's ability to support the wide range of activities organized by the OSCE PA for its Members. Although the ongoing integrated financial-business/performance audit may be a useful exercise to further improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the OSCE PA administration, I will also consider in the coming months new ways to finance our activities with the International Secretariat.

President
of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly
Ms. Pia Kauma
Yerevan, 18 November 2023

