

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's 21st Autumn Meeting



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Yerevan, Armenia

18-20 November 2023

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Summary

More than 300 participants, including nearly 200 parliamentarians from some 50 countries, gathered in Yerevan on 18-20 November for the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's 21st Autumn Meeting. The meeting featured a Parliamentary Conference, a meeting of the Standing Committee, meetings of the Ad Hoc Committees, and a Mediterranean Forum. The Parliamentary Conference was held under the theme "OSCE in Times of Crisis: Role of the PA in Responding to Internal and External Challenges," and included speeches dealing with the Russian Federation's ongoing war against Ukraine, as well as recent military hostilities in the South Caucasus.

Speaking at the inaugural session were Nikol Pashinyan, Prime Minister of Armenia; Alen Simonyan, President of the National Assembly of Armenia; and Pia Kauma, President of the OSCE PA. OSCE Secretary General Helga Schmid and Armen Grigoryan, Secretary of the Security Council of the Republic of Armenia, spoke at session one, held under the theme "Addressing security: the OSCE's role in an era of conflict."

Chaired by OSCE PA Vice-President and Special Representative on Fighting Corruption Irene Charalambides (Cyprus), session two was held under the theme "Corruption as a fundamental threat to peace and security" and featured presentations by experts from the World Bank, Armenian Government and OSCE/ODIHR. In the debate, lawmakers highlight-

ed their national efforts in the fight against corruption, noting that it requires legislative changes as well as an overhaul of the relationship between government and citizens.

Session three, chaired by OSCE PA Vice-President Daniela De Ridder (Germany), was held under the theme "Respect for all: protecting minorities and people affected by conflict," and heard contributions by experts from academia and the office of the Prime Minister of Armenia. Parliamentarians raised issues including the need to adopt legislation for the integration of child refugees, and for international organizations to provide support to those suffering the effects of war.

The Mediterranean Forum on 20 November was chaired by OSCE PA Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs Pascal Allizard (France) and featured remarks by Chair of the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group Vesa Häkkinen. The Forum included addresses by parliamentary delegations from OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation, and closing remarks by President Kauma who outlined a range of issues on which there is widespread agreement.

The Standing Committee met to hear reports by the President, Treasurer, and Secretary General. The Ad Hoc Committees on Countering Terrorism and Migration, as well as the Parliamentary Support Team for Ukraine, also met in Yerevan to discuss ongoing work.





Parliamentary Conference Opening Session

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's 21st Autumn Meeting featured a Parliamentary Conference held under the theme "OSCE in Times of Crisis: Role of the PA in Responding to Internal and External Challenges."

The opening session included speeches by Alen Simonyan, President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia; Nikol Pashinyan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia; and Pia Kauma, President of the OSCE PA.

Opening Session



Alen Simonyan, President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia

Welcoming participants to Yerevan, President Simonyan highlighted the challenges that his country faces following the September military operation in Azerbaijan, including more than 100,000 ethnic Armenians forced to leave Karabakh during one week. There is a historic opportunity for lasting peace, he said, stressing that for the sake of peaceful co-existence for future generations, peace talks must continue. Armenia is also eager to normalize relations with Türkiye, he said.

"Our region needs peace," Simonyan underlined, noting that one of the most important components of that resolution is democracy. He further recalled the 2023 Vancouver Declaration stressing that peace in the region has no alternative.

Nikol Pashinyan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia

Prime Minister Pashinyan discussed the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace process, noting that the

main principles of peace have been agreed but that significant obstacles and persistent mistrust between the two countries continue to hinder progress. Reaffirming Armenia's dedication to the peace agenda, he urged sustained efforts to normalize relations in the region. "Peace in our view is a state of affairs when all the countries of the region live with open borders," Pashinyan underlined, "are connected by active economic, political, and cultural ties, and have accumulated experience and tradition of solving all issues diplomatically and through dialogue."

He noted that the normalization of Armenia's relations with Türkiye is an important factor for the strategic vision of a peaceful, developing, and safe environment in the South Caucasus.

Pia Kauma, President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

President Pia Kauma (Finland) highlighted the focus of the meeting, noting the strong societal divides unveiled by the war in Ukraine, the refugee crisis in the South Caucasus, and the



conflict in Gaza. "As we seemingly navigate from crisis to crisis, failing to anticipate major events, we should remind ourselves that, almost half a century ago, our countries came together once more to break this destructive cycle," President Kauma said.

Kauma stressed that the price of justice cannot be the continued suffering of civilians, sustainable peace and true security require trust

and reconciliation, and political leaders have a responsibility to lead the way. She recalled the effectiveness of the OSCE field missions that used to exist throughout the South Caucasus

– in Yerevan, Baku, Tbilisi, and Grozny – and helped strengthen state institutions, promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and develop civil society.

She further regretted the existential crisis faced by the OSCE that is fuelled by the politicized withholding of financial resources and a systematic misuse of the consensus rule underlining the cruciality of the Assembly stepping up to advocate for a functional OSCE and to speak up in defence of

As we seemingly navigate from crisis to crisis, failing to anticipate major events, we should remind ourselves that, almost half a century ago, our countries came together once more to break this destructive cycle.

- OSCE PA President Pia Kauma

OSCE values. The relevance of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security in enabling effective responses to new security realities must be used to its full potential.

Session One

Addressing security: the OSCE's role in an era of conflict

Chaired by OSCE PA President Pia Kauma, session one was opened with remarks by OSCE Secretary General Helga Schmid and Secretary of the Security Council of the Republic of Armenia Armen Grigoryan. Interventions from the floor highlighted the relevance of the OSCE and its comprehensive approach to security and featured calls to strengthen the Organization in the face of challenges for the entire OSCE region.

Helga Schmid, OSCE Secretary General

Speaking about the OSCE's role in a deeply challenging political climate, OSCE Secretary General Helga Schmid said that although the OSCE faces challenges, the OSCE Secretariat, institutions, and field operations continue to play a meaningful role in enhancing security for all. In the South Caucasus, she said, the OSCE is supporting conflict prevention and stability through the Geneva International Discussions and the related Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism. She expressed appreciation to Prime Minister Pashinyan for his dedication to the pursuit of lasting peace.

SG Schmid recalled the Permanent Council discussions related to the situation in Karabakh and stressed that the OSCE stands ready to play a role in the future international engagement by bringing its expertise in areas like border management, reconciliation, confidence-building, and engagement of minority populations. She further recalled the OSCE's vital work in Ukraine

to address the war's impacts and support the country's democratic institutions through the Support Programme for Ukraine. In Central Asia, the OSCE is working to strengthen regional links between the countries and promote connectivity, address the impacts of climate change, support border security and help respond to the 2021 developments in Afghanistan through the 'Response to the Implications of Afghanistan for the OSCE Region' framework, she said. In Southeastern Europe, the OSCE strengthens social cohesion and integration of diverse societies, addresses corruption, and works on trial monitoring, she said. Combating trafficking in human beings is also an essential aspect of OSCE work.

In conclusion, Secretary General Schmid expressed hope for a productive Ministerial Council and thanked the participating States for their willingness to find solutions to the Organization's challenges.





Armen Grigoryan, Secretary of the Security Council of the Republic of Armenia

Armen Grigoryan spoke about Armenia's experiences with democratization, noting that the country has undergone dramatic positive changes in recent years. Democratization has made Armenia more resilient to external challenges, he said, expressing his belief that democracy will endure in Armenia and that it can substantially contribute to peace and security. He stressed that Armenia wants stability in the region and is firmly committed to the peace agenda.

Recalling the Brussels negotiation processes, he underlined that delimitation of borders between Armenia and Azerbaijan plays a significant role in creating regional stability, to which the Alma-Ata Declaration is the fundamental document. According to this framework, Armenia and Azerbaijan must recognize each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

He further stressed the importance of promoting the imperative for regional and cross-border connectivity in the South Caucasus, not least through projects like 'Crossroads of Peace' and diversification of foreign

and security policies. Grigoryan extended his appreciation to the 'National Platform for Democratic Oversight of the Security Sector' established with the special support of the OSCE under the Defence and Security Committee of the National Assembly of Armenia stressing that it is having a substantial meaningful impact on strengthening good conduct in the defence and security sectors. In conclusion, Grigoryan emphasized the vital role of the OSCE PA and the importance of the cross-dimensional approach to security in the OSCE region.

Discussion

The discussion featured calls for reinforcing multilateralism, including by ensuring that the OSCE is strengthened ahead of its 50th anniversary in 2025 and the current organizational crisis is overcome in order to build sustainable peace and all-encompassing security in the OSCE region. The parliamentarians highlighted ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and in the Middle East, as well as recent military hostilities in the South Caucasus, as evidence of the need for a bolder approach to international diplomacy and co-operative security. They further called to respect the principles set out in the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris.







Session Two

Corruption as a fundamental threat to peace and security

Chaired by OSCE PA Vice-President and Special Representative on Fighting Corruption Irene Charalambides (Cyprus), session three was devoted to a discussion on corruption as a fundamental threat to peace and security. Members listened to presentations by Alexandra Habershon from the World Bank, Mariam Galstyanan, anti-corruption specialist at the Armenian Corruption Prevention Commission, and Konstantine Vardzelashvili, Head of the Democratization Department at the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).





Irene Charalambides, OSCE PA Vice-President

Opening the second session of the Parliamentary Conference, OSCE PA Vice-President and Special Representative on Fighting Corruption Irene Charalambides (Cyprus) underlined that corruption is a fundamental threat to all three OSCE dimensions. "Corruption erodes the trust of the people to us, the politicians. It erodes trust to Institutions because they are seen as a vehicle for private gain of those who pull the strings, not as a vehicle for service," Charalambides said. She also stressed that corruption exacerbates inequalities among different groups in society, which in turn provides fertile ground for foreign interference and recruitment by terrorist groups.

Not shying away from mentioning her own country's shortcomings, Charalambides provided an example of alleged assistance to Russian oligarchs in sanctions evasion by very few private legal and accounting offices in Cyprus to illustrate how corruption undercuts

state aims and even foreign policy. She called for enhanced international co-operation and assistance to combat corruption, stressing that this is "an investment to growth, to democracy and ultimately to security."

Alexandra Habershon, Programme Manager, Global Lead, Anti-Corruption Governance Global Practice, World Bank

Habershon described corruption as a driver of conflict and discussed the World Bank's efforts in promoting good governance, highlighting the financial cost of corruption as a significant obstacle to economic development. Corruption, she said, is in fact a key reason why economic and social reforms often fail. "It undermines our ability to achieve development objectives, it undermines results in education, in health, all human capital outcomes," Habershon said.



Habershon highlighted the need for a whole-of-government approach that — in the context of a growing impact of artificial intelligence — include digital anti-corruption strategies to effectively combat corruption, financial crime, and tax crime. This approach must ensure legislative remedies are tailored to the specific needs of individual countries, Habershon said.

Mariam Galstyanan, Lawyer, Member of the Corruption Prevention Commission (CPC) of the Republic of Armenia

Galstyanan discussed the Armenian national strategy against corruption to illustrate the importance of a comprehensive approach to tackling corruption. In line with previous speakers, she noted that “the effects of corruption directly affect the peaceful population.” As such, fostering good governance is essential, Galstyanan said. She pointed out that Armenia emphasizes the prevention of

corruption, in which information technology can be a great aid. She highlighted that, no matter the strength of the institutional framework, consistency is key. “We will never succeed without changing the mindset of people to zero tolerance for corruption,” Galstyanan said.

Konstantine Vardzelashvili Head of the Democratization Department at the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)

Vardzelashvili emphasized the human dimension of corruption, including the importance of the rule of law, public integrity, effective democratic institutions, and independent judiciaries. “Corruption in institutions is characterized by an absence of public integrity standards (or weak standards), but also by a lack of transparency and oversight, and a deficient justice system,” Vardzelashvili said. And while corruption results from weak governance, corruption may also lead to a further weakening

Session Two



of governance, he noted. In this regard, ODIHR gives practical and comprehensive advice to OSCE participating States in tackling corruption, and provides legal opinions on anti-corruption legislation. Vardzelashvili stressed the importance of ODIHR's partnerships with other OSCE institutions as well as external partners in combating corruption, also commending the good co-operation with the OSCE PA.

Discussion

In the debate, lawmakers highlighted their national efforts against corruption, including fighting money laundering, bribery, financial crime, fraud, and cybercrime. Members also referred to practices of tax evasion as an unfair burden on those who do pay their taxes.

Members further commented on how corruption is intertwined with conflict and other forms of crime. Corruption can enable wars and can be a breeding ground for organized crime, including money laundering and terrorism, lawmakers said. Further, corrupt regimes can misuse military aid.

In line with the panelists, it was noted that corruption has a major impact on our societies. Parliamentarians stressed the need for a comprehensive strategy to tackle corruption, including legislative changes that allow for the prosecution of corruption-related crimes. Members also underlined the importance of the civil society, in particular journalists, as the eyes and ears for reporting corruption.







Session Three

Respect for all: Protecting minorities and people affected by conflict

Session Three, chaired by OSCE PA Vice-President Daniela De Ridder, was held under the theme “Respect for all: Protecting minorities and people affected by conflict,” and was addressed by Fernand De Varennes, former UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues (2017-2023), and Yeghisheh Kirakosyan, Representative of Armenia on International Legal Issues.



Session Three

Daniela De Ridder, OSCE PA Vice-President

Vice-President De Ridder opened the session by pointing to the stark reality facing millions of individuals within and beyond the OSCE region, particularly in conflict zones. She provided alarming statistics, focusing on the dire situation in Ukraine following the February 2022 invasion by the Russian Federation and the atrocities committed against civilians, including unlawful killings, sexual violence, and the deportation of children.

The humanitarian consequences of the conflict in the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan were also highlighted, with more than 100,000 individuals fleeing to Armenia in a week. De Ridder emphasized the need for additional support for Armenia in integrating this large community and ensuring the right to return.

De Ridder then turned to the protection of minorities, referencing the Vancouver Declaration's commitment to prioritizing their protection. She recognized the ongoing persecution of minorities as a cause of rising tensions and called for collective action to uphold their rights, considering them a key component for human security. She pointed to the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities' comprehensive set of guidelines and recommendations as a valuable resource.

In conclusion, Dr. De Ridder acknowledged the immense challenges ahead but expressed confidence in the OSCE PA determination and political will to make a difference.

Fernand De Varennes, former UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues from 2017 to 2023

Fernand De Varennes, who served as UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues from 2017 to 2023, highlighted the unprecedented nature and scale of current global crises. He emphasized that the world is witnessing an increase in violent conflicts not seen since 1945, noting that more than 110 million people worldwide are currently displaced. Stressing that no national borders are immune from the pressure by population movements caused by conflict and despair, Dr. De Varennes drew attention to the disproportionate impact of conflicts and displacement on minorities and the global permeability of borders to pressure from conflict-related movements.

To better protect minorities, Dr. De Varennes asserted that preventing conflict should be a primary focus. Stressing the shortcomings of the international community in this regard, he pointed to the rise in hate speech and hate crimes, particularly in online media. He also expressed concern about the resurgence of exclusionary nationalistic politics and the instrumentalization of minorities, contributing to a worsening situation.

In De Varennes' view, preventive action against conflicts should prioritize excluded groups, as conflicts typically involve grievances, injustice, and discrimination against minorities. He, therefore, stressed that protecting minority rights and addressing human despair remain crucial for conflict prevention.



Yeghisheh Kirakosyan, Representative of Armenia on International Legal Issues

Kirakosyan said that the military escalation in Karabakh over the last three years has spurred Armenia to actively utilize international legal mechanisms for protecting minorities and individuals affected by the conflict. He pointed out the human suffering endured by ethnic Armenians due to the conflict, including inhumane treatment, forced disappearances, civilian casualties, and, more recently, the mass displacement of ethnic Armenians.

He conveyed that the country has initiated a series of cases against Azerbaijan, particularly before the European Court of Human Rights and the International Court of Justice. These cases typically resulted in the adoption of

interim and provisional measures. Kirakosyan emphasized the importance of the international community focusing on conflict prevention and highlighted the surge in hate speech on social networks as one of the root causes of conflicts. Armenia's legal proceedings against Azerbaijan encompassed issues of discrimination, protection of cultural heritage, and the humanitarian consequences of the blockade of the Lachin corridor.

Kirakosyan underscored the right of ethnic Armenians to return and remain free from violence and intimidation in Karabakh. In conclusion, Kirakosyan stressed that these legal proceedings serve the objective of providing an impartial report on the current situation and seeking a peaceful settlement of disputes with Azerbaijan.

Discussion

In the debate, OSCE PA delegates emphasized the importance of protecting the norms of international humanitarian law, rethinking conflict prevention strategies, eliminating manifestations of hatred towards minorities, and the necessity of joint efforts on this issue. The delegates particularly reflected on the egregious acts committed by the Russian Federation against civilians in Ukraine, the disproportionate effects of the Israeli-Hamas conflict on the civilian population, and the humanitarian consequences of military actions in Karabakh.

Parliamentarians stressed that durable peace

cannot exist without social justice and the equal protection of all civilians in conflict. In this regard, many delegates rejected a policy of double standards regarding events in Gaza. Reiterating their unwavering support for Ukraine, parliamentarians called for the protection of vulnerable groups, especially children and displaced people. The respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as the implementation of commitments regarding the reintegration of Armenians in Azerbaijan, was emphasized for sustainable peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Overall, parliamentarians' interventions highlighted the urgency to strengthen the response to the wars and injustices taking place and to step up support for those suffering their effects.





Closing Session

Sargis Khandanyan, Head of the Armenian Delegation to the OSCE PA

The Head of the Armenian Delegation began his remarks by highlighting the productive discussions that had been held in Yerevan on the internal and external challenges to the OSCE area. Focus has been paid by OSCE parliamentarians to the people who suffer the most and to whom we are accountable, Khandanyan said. Khandanyan noted that every time that OSCE parliamentarians gather, there is a chance to improve the situation of the world, but it is clear that too often this is not the case. Expressing reactions to the negative developments is not enough, he said. What is needed is to take stronger actions. Those who are defending OSCE values must be supported and those who are challenging those values must be defeated, he said. Finally, Khandanyan expressed gratitude to those who made it possible for this meeting, calling out who is the aggressor and who is the victim.

Roberto Montella, Secretary General of the OSCE PA

Secretary General Montella expressed optimism for the prospects for peace between

Armenia and Azerbaijan and underlined his hope that this could have positive impacts on the whole OSCE region.

Although no resolutions are adopted at the Autumn Meeting, Montella said that he expects the debates that took place in Yerevan would inform and influence the upcoming OSCE Ministerial Council in Skopje. The Secretary General expressed gratitude to all of the staff and volunteers who made the Autumn Meeting possible and to Members of

the Assembly for contributing to fruitful and engaging debates.

Pia Kauma, President of the OSCE PA

In her concluding remarks, President

Kauma expressed appreciation to all participants for coming to Armenia to support and defend the OSCE. "Our discussions over the past two days have made it very clear that the OSCE has strong advocates throughout our region," she said. "But, today, we are all worried. We are tired of the Organization's Rules being abused. We are concerned that no budget has been adopted for over two years. We regret that the OSCE's field presence keeps on shrinking. The present situation is not acceptable. All this is clear."

She assured the Autumn Meeting participants

Our discussions over the past two days have made it very clear that the OSCE has strong advocates throughout our region.

- OSCE PA President Pia Kauma

Closing Session

that their concerns would be relayed directly to the Foreign Ministers who would soon be gathering in Skopje. As opposed to the OSCE's governmental side, Kauma stressed that the Parliamentary Assembly is not paralyzed. It is important, she said, to remain positive so that the PA can remain influential. Rather than remaining spectators, she said, OSCE parliamentarians must actively contribute to confidence-building. "I am confident that – despite all the problems in Vienna – our Assembly can play this role," President Kauma said. "Your strong engagement proves it."



Mediterranean Forum

Situation in the Middle East

The Mediterranean Forum met on 20 November under the theme of "Situation in the Middle East" chaired by Pascal Allizard, Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs, and the Mediterranean Forum included remarks by OSCE PA President Pia Kauma, Chair of the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group Vesa Häkkinen and addresses by the Heads of the Parliamentary Delegations from the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation.

Mediterranean Forum

Pascal Allizard, Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs

In his opening remarks, Special Representative Allizard expressed gratitude for the gathering in Yerevan, marking the first in-person meeting of the Mediterranean Forum since 2019. He particularly emphasized the forum's importance in engaging Mediterranean Partners and incorporating their perspectives.

Allizard underlined the urgency of addressing the consequences of global warming and natural disasters in the Mediterranean region, leading to significant displacements and humanitarian challenges. The potential increase in forced migration due to climate change was mentioned, with a focus on the alarming number of natural disasters causing displacement. Allizard discussed the flaws in the international system in relation to human rights violations along migration routes, especially in the Mediterranean. Conflicts in border regions with Mediterranean countries are affecting political and economic stability, he noted. He highlighted the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, expressing concerns about the substantial loss of life. The Special Representative stressed the need for broad dialogue, involving regional and international partners, to prevent regional escalation.

Pia Kauma, OSCE PA President

In her remarks, President Kauma thanked Allizard for his work over six years as Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs and welcomed the participation of the Moroccan Delegation in the Autumn Meeting, acknowledging their consistent commitment to the

OSCE PA and their valuable contributions to debates. She encouraged Partners to engage with the OSCE PA at the highest level and urged all members to connect with parliamentarians from Partner countries.

Given the events in the Middle East, Kauma emphasized the importance of increased participation by parliaments from the southern shore of the Mediterranean. She stressed the need to hear diverse voices and perspectives in debates to find appropriate solutions to shared challenges. She anticipated that the addresses and debates in the meeting would mark the first step in this direction.

Vesa Häkkinen, Chair of the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group and Permanent Representative of Finland to the OSCE

Ambassador Häkkinen pointed out that the central role of the Mediterranean Partnership is enhancing security. The Partnership for Co-operation is an excellent platform for developing joint responses to counter security threats, he said, highlighting the unique perspective that OSCE partnerships offer on the security situation in the OSCE region and its neighbourhood. He underlined the alarming situation in the region, particularly following the terrorist attack by Hamas against Israel on 7 October, and stressed the importance of empowering youth, especially young women, in the field of security. In this regard, he said, the OSCE can provide valuable tools such as field missions, projects, and platforms for dialogue. He concluded by noting the demonstrated commitment of OSCE Partners through practical co-operation and active participation.



Addresses by the Heads of the Parliamentary Delegations from the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation

The Speaker of the Israeli Knesset, Amir Ohana, addressed the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly via video link. Speaker Ohana described the atrocities of 7 October, noting that victims suffered torture and extreme violence. After these horrors, he said, Israel determined that it must act to defend itself. "Israel has the obligation to ensure the safety and security of its citizens," he said.

Fatima El Hassani, a member of Morocco's Delegation, stressed that armed conflicts must provide full protection of civilians, a point that was reiterated in the general debate. El Hassani condemned attacks on civilians and called for international efforts aimed at peace, stability and prosperity for all peoples of the region.

Discussion

Parliamentarians raised issues related to security, the environment, economic development and migration in Middle East, stressing that armed conflicts must provide full protection of civilians and noting that conflict is an obstacle to development and reaching other international goals, such as addressing climate change. There were also calls for the immediate release of all hostages being held by Hamas.

In closing remarks, President Kauma expressed deep concern for the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza, particularly its impact on women and children, and called for humanitarian pauses to facilitate assistance to those in need. She also highlighted the polarizing nature of the Israel-Palestine conflict, emphasizing its divisive impact on society, and urged vigilance against bigotry and violence in OSCE countries.



Standing Committee Meeting

The Standing Committee consists of the OSCE PA's 57 Heads of National Delegations and Members of the Bureau. Meeting three times a year – at the Winter Meeting, Autumn Meeting and Annual Session – the Standing Committee guides the work of the Assembly, approves its budget and appoints the Secretary General.

Report of the President

Pia Kauma reported on her recent activities, notably the meetings she held the previous week with leaders of Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia. She called on parliamentarians to add their voices to the peace efforts in the South Caucasus. The President highlighted her collaboration with other institutions of the OSCE and noted that it is a testament to the OSCE PA that parliamentarians continue to engage so enthusiastically in the Assembly. It is important in these challenging times, she said, to ensure parliamentary and political support for the OSCE.

Report of the Treasurer

Treasurer Büser presented a summary of the Assembly's finances, noting that it is imperative that the OSCE PA's financial standing remains firm. The PA has demonstrated remarkable efficiency, he said, noting that its budget remains lower than similar parliamentary assemblies. He highlighted the challenges associated with the non-payment of the Russian Federation's dues, but stressed that the financial footing remains robust and resilient. He also informed the Standing Committee of the ongoing performance audit of the Assembly being performed by Deloitte, which he underlined demonstrates the Assembly's commitment to the highest financial standards.

Report of the Secretary General

Secretary General Roberto Montella thanked the Armenian Delegation and the OSCE PA's conference team for organizing the Autumn Meeting on a limited time schedule, and informed the Standing Committee of the International Secretariat's activities. In particular, he highlighted the three-country tour of the South Caucasus that had just been completed, the upcoming OSCE Ministerial Council, and election observation activities. He also discussed the ongoing audit of the OSCE PA, noting that it is a good opportunity to ensure the highest level of transparency and ensure fiscal responsibility. Pointing out that the Secretariat's work follows the political leadership of the Assembly, he commended the parliamentarians for providing clear objectives for the OSCE PA.

Other Business

The Standing Committee members discussed a proposed amendment to the Rules of Procedure regarding voting rights of OSCE PA delegations but with no agreement reached, the proposal was referred to the Subcommittee on the Rules of Procedure. The Standing Committee also heard reports on election observation missions, the activities of ad hoc committees, and upcoming Assembly events and statutory meetings.

Meetings of the Ad Hoc Committees

The Ad Hoc Committee on Migration was established in 2016 to serve as a focal point for the PA's work in the field of migration. To strengthen the contribution of OSCE parliamentarians in addressing violent extremism, in July 2017 the PA established the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism. The Parliamentary Support Team for Ukraine was established in July 2023 to promote support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Meeting of the Parliamentary Support Team for Ukraine

Held on 18 November, the meeting of the Parliamentary Support Team for Ukraine (PSTU) was chaired by President Pia Kauma, who delivered opening remarks focused on the human costs of the war. The PSTU meeting featured a presentation by Ambassador Marcel Pesko, Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, who discussed the importance of using all the tools of the Organization to strengthen Ukraine's resilience in the face of the war and hold Russia accountable.

The meeting featured discussions on the security, economic and environmental, and human dimensions of the war led by the PSTU's three rapporteurs.

Meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism

At the meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism (CCT), chaired by OSCE PA Vice-President Reinhold Lopatka (Austria), members discussed the Fourth Counter-Terrorism Co-ordination Meeting of Parliamentary Assemblies and the Second Parliamentary Policy Dialogue that were held 4-5 October in Vienna. Lopatka informed CCT members that the PA was re-elected on 4 October to lead the Co-ordination Mechanism of Parlia-

mentary Assemblies on Counter-Terrorism for another year. In this capacity, the OSCE PA will continue to co-ordinate the counter-terrorism work of 16 assemblies around the world with the support of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism. Lopatka also briefed the CCT members on his recent visit to Israel where he met with people directly affected by Hamas's terrorist attack on 7 October.

Meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration

Chaired by OSCE PA Vice-President Daniela De Ridder (Germany), the meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration included a review of implemented activities, with a follow-up discussion on a recent online panel regarding the sponsorship of refugees and the integration of newcomers to Canada, organized by Hedy Fry (Canada). The meeting also included a discussion on the Armenia refugee emergency, with President Kauma and Special Representative on South Caucasus Kari Henriksen (Norway) sharing observations from their visit to Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia from 13-17 November. President Kauma noted that Armenia has welcomed more than 100,000 persons from the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, and has done a commendable job facilitating their access to employment and schools. There was also a discussion of irregular migration along the Central and Eastern Mediterranean routes.







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