

**Seán Ó Fearghaíl TD,
Speaker of the Lower House (Dáil Éireann)**

OSCE PA Autumn Meeting's Parliamentary Conference

'Fifty Years After Helsinki: The Role of Parliaments in Reinforcing the
OSCE's Comprehensive Model of Peace and Security'

Dublin | 2 October 2024

Check against delivery.

A Chairde, Dear friends,

A Chomhaltaí den Tionól Parlaiminteach, Members of the Parliamentary
Assembly,

It is a great honour to address you today at the Convention Centre Dublin on what is the inaugural session of a timely Parliamentary Conference. Hosted by the Houses of the Oireachtas, this is the 22nd Autumn Meeting of the Organisational for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Parliamentary Assembly.

I want to first acknowledge and warmly welcome the presence of all our delegates from parliaments across the OSCE area – spanning North America, Europe and Central Asia. I also welcome our keynote speakers, the diplomatic corps and distinguished guests. You are all very welcome to Dublin, in what is the first Autumn Meeting of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly hosted in the Emerald Isle.

As you are all aware, the OSCE, recognised as a regional arrangement under the United Nations Charter, is a primary instrument for early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. The Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE, in turn, is a forum for inter-parliamentary dialogue and cooperation on matters of security, for supporting economic development and the sustainable use of natural resources, and for promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

This conference, held under the theme 'Fifty Years After Helsinki: The Role of Parliaments in Reinforcing the OSCE's Comprehensive Model of Peace and Security', marks therefore a significant opportunity to facilitate inter-parliamentary dialogue, and, in turn, advance the fundamental objectives pursued by the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE.

Next year we will celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, signed on 1 August 1975. The Act, as a politically binding agreement, contains several measures designed to enhance security and cooperation in the OSCE region. It further contains key commitments on political, military, economic, environmental and human rights issues, as well as ten fundamental principles governing the behaviour of States towards their citizens, and towards each other.

The spirit of unity that launched the OSCE in 1975 in Helsinki is as relevant today, in 2024, as it was back then, if not more. Indeed, when considering our current geopolitical realities, as parliamentarians with democratic legitimacy and visibility, we have an evident role to play in reinforcing the OSCE's comprehensive model of peace and security in today's world.

On this note, it is apparent to all of us that we are living in a world filled with uncertainty, one which is intertwined with a challenging political climate. Crises and conflict, not to mention the growing impact of regional

and global threats to democracy, continue to present substantial challenges to the realisation and maintenance of peace and security.

As parliamentarians, we can and must play a crucial part in raising and maintaining awareness of these issues, and of the role played by the OSCE in building bridges across our region. The OSCE's strength, today as in the past, is that States with differing values, cultures and historical experiences sit together and establish, through consensus-building and political compromise, common rules for living together. In today's climate therefore, it is important that we, as parliamentarians, recognise the added value of the organisation for our citizens.

We can also do more to actively engage with our respective states, and other parliaments, to stem corruption and its spread, to support security and peace operations, to guarantee election integrity, and to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms. While the OSCE's Parliamentary Assembly is a venue where concrete recommendations may be put forward on all of these matters, we must not forget, however, that parliamentarians play a crucial part in ensuring that these recommendations are met with genuine political will.

Elected members of national parliaments, many who are present today, further play a crucial role in influencing policy priorities, holding governments accountable, and providing a firmer democratic foundation to advancing peace and cooperation across the globe.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and its national delegations are crucial in fostering political dialogue to address challenges such as a lack of political attention, financial resourcing, or a presence on the ground. Sustaining this dialogue is vital.

Over the next two days, this conference will address topics such as the OSCE's conflict cycle, MP's roles in the climate crisis and migration governance. Reflecting on Ireland's experiences with discrimination and the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, remembering the

sacrifices and political leadership shown to achieve a successful outcome we are reminded that peace and security cannot ever be taken for granted.

In summary, parliaments have a key role to play in promoting the OSCE's core values, reducing conflicts and building trust amid the geopolitical challenges.

I cannot conclude my remarks without recognising the dire humanitarian crises ongoing in the Middle East and in Ukraine. These conflicts have had a disproportionate impact on civilians, especially women and children. Schools and hospitals have not escaped these wars, impacting on education and provision of healthcare services. Achieving lasting ceasefires and an avenue to peace has proved to be most challenging, but I implore you as fellow parliamentarians, to maintain focus on these crises. Our efforts must seek to end the indiscriminate killing and suffering of innocent civilians and secure the release of those held captive. We urgently need to achieve a peaceful resolution to these conflicts. I applaud the international organisations who are working day and night to provide aid and care to millions of people. The ongoing war in Ukraine has also led to a dire humanitarian crisis with millions of people displaced and in need of temporary shelter. I ask those behind the weapons of these wars, to look inside their hearts, search for their own humanity and bring it to bear on ending these dreadful conflicts.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my gratitude for the opportunity to join you today to highlight the role of parliaments in reinforcing the OSCE's comprehensive model of peace and security. I wish you all a productive conference and look forward to your deliberations.

Go raibh míle maith agaibh

Thank you.