

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Autumn Meeting, Istanbul, 17 November 2025

Secretary General Feridun H. Sinirlioğlu's Speech

President Sampietro,

President Emeritus,

Secretary General Montella,

Honourable Members of Parliament,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a special privilege for me to join you here today. Istanbul is a second home for me. Whether this is your first time or you are a returning visitor, I hope you get the chance to experience some of the sights, tastes and sounds of this magnificent city.

It is also always an honour to address this Assembly. As elected representatives from across the OSCE region, you are the lifeblood of this organisation. You represent our founding values in your national parliaments. And you help to ensure that this Organization is sensitised to public opinion, and viceversa.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The theme for our Parliamentary Conference this week is *'The OSCE at 50: Revitalizing Multilateralism through Dialogue and Co-operation.'*

Allow me to share three broad reflections on this theme. These are based not just on my first year as Secretary General, but on a long career in Turkish diplomacy.

My first theme is **critique**: why I believe the OSCE is not being used to its full potential.

My second is **renewal**: where I think the Organization needs to focus its efforts today in order to remain a key pillar in the Euro Atlantic Security Architecture.

And my final theme is **the future**: I will offer some ideas about how the OSCE could play a decisive role in helping to rebuild the European security architecture.

So, first - the critique. How and why are we currently falling short?

The CSCE, and later the OSCE, were created to navigate bad weather in international security.

A key problem here is that neither body was ever fully empowered to 'steer the ship'.

The CSCE never completed its transition to a fully-fledged Organization.

Today if the OSCE is to fulfil its historic mandate, then it must finish that transition. This means providing it with a legal personality via the adoption of a Charter. We need a stronger more resilient Organization.

The Euro Atlantic security architecture assembled over the past 50 years is now in ruins. I believe the OSCE will need to play a central role in the rebuild once this terrible war in Ukraine ends.

We cannot and must not forget the immense loss and suffering this war has inflicted on millions of people. Three of them, our OSCE officials Vadym Golda, Maxim Petrov and Dmytro Shabanov - have been detained for over three years. Their families have endured enough heartache. I am sparing no effort to ensure they are reunited with their loved ones as soon as possible. I thank the Parliamentary Assembly leadership for their support to my work to this end.

Let me now turn to my second theme – **renewal**. Where do we stand today?

I see at least **five areas** that should feature front and centre in any effort to reform and relaunch the Organization:

1. **First, dialogue** - as a practical tool to manage and mend tensions, particularly on hard security issues. This means continued investment in our power to convene and talk. And dialogue means talking with each other and active listening. Not monologues and rehearsed talking points.
2. **Second, conventional arms control** – we need to bring it back onto the agenda. No other forum has the inclusive membership and the expertise and mechanisms to support meaningful discussion. The OSCE is a standing forum for risk reduction, through unique channels of communication and tools, including work on combatting the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons. The Forum for Security Cooperation has a clear mandate in this space. The Vienna Document remains one of the last standing pillars of arms control which is still working despite the challenges. Let's use this space and build on it;
3. **Third, conflict management** – we should build on the Organization's expertise in field operations. The OSCE is still a 'conflict management' Organization, think about Bosnia and Herzegovina, where our mandate is enshrined in Dayton; or Kosovo, where it's framed within UNSC resolution 1244. Let's use that strength where it is needed today, or will be needed tomorrow.
4. **Fourth, electoral observation and assistance** - ODIHR remains the international gold standard on this, including in excellent partnership with this Parliamentary Assembly. We should not dilute it, but cherish and defend it.
5. and finally, **cooperative security** - nurturing the 'islands of cooperation' that still exist, where participating States work together in pursuit of common solutions. On cyber-security, combating trafficking in human beings, fostering connectivity, strengthening

border management. These are areas of our work with real and tangible confidence-building impact between countries. The role of the Parliamentary Assembly here is very important of course, and I thank you for your interest and engagement on these issues.

Migration is another potential example here. Our historic focus on conflict, border management, economic security, and human rights and the rule of law means we can focus on key drivers of migration. It is an issue which clearly concerns governments right across the OSCE region.

These are all areas which underline the OSCE's unique convening power, underpinned by practical contributions we make every day on the ground, spearheaded by our field operations.

Drawing on decades of experience, the OSCE has done and continues to do things no other Organization did or could.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Now let me turn to my third and final theme: vision for the future.

I believe it is time to start thinking big again.

In the 1960s and early 70s we faced a global existential threat. That recognition led the nuclear superpowers and their allies to the Helsinki Final Act. The framework we still work within today.

Once the war in Ukraine ends, and it will end, we will be at the threshold of another such moment.

We will need an inclusive open-ended process involving all the key players about the future of European security.

It will be in everyone's interest that, whatever agreement between the sides emerges to end the war, it should be implemented so that a ceasefire holds. And for that, it will need to be credible. And for it to be credible, it will need to be monitored, on both sides of the line of separation.

When the time comes, the OSCE will be ready, if the sides want us to become involved. Ready to serve as the impartial player on the ground. Anything the sides would need to sustain the cessation of hostilities, we will be ready to play our part.

When the war ends, we will also need to address what it has laid bare. The overall security architecture in Europe no longer holds, that is clear.

It will be in everyone's interest to build a system that endures. That can help us from falling into the abyss of an arms race, endless militarization and further confrontation.

We will need **a new dialogue** - honest, inclusive and forward looking. And we must be willing to address the hard questions, some of which have been apparent for decades.

I will give you one key example here.

Twenty-six years ago this month, OSCE participating States' Heads of State and Government gathered here in Istanbul. They agreed a 'Charter for European Security.' This reflected the optimism and the vision of those times. But it also captured a central question which remains unresolved to this day.

Paragraph 8 of that document recognised that each participating State had 'an equal right to security.' It 'reaffirmed the inherent right of each participating State to be free to choose or change its security arrangements, including treaties of alliance.' It also placed implicit limits on these arrangements, namely that they should not 'strengthen their security at the expense of the security of other States.'

The war in Ukraine has laid bare the fact that the tension contained in paragraph 8 remains unresolved. So any serious attempt to rebuild Europe's security architecture will need to include a review of what we did wrong; and what we underestimated.

We will need to go through that together, and listen to each other. Just like we did in the early 70's. That discussion, when it comes, will no doubt see numerous ideas on what could underpin a new "security architecture". For my part, I see three:

- **first, a set of principles** that would inform and regulate relations among States (what 50 years ago was the Helsinki decalogue, largely reflecting the UN Charter of course, which I think we must reaffirm);
- **second, a 'grand bargain'** to ensure all players have a direct stake in the system and wish it to hold (in Helsinki, many speculated the 'grand bargain' was between the recognition of the WWII borders in Europe and human rights);
- and third, an underlying **arms control and risk reduction regime** that can ensure transparency and stability, from the level of conventional to strategic weapons systems.

For all these tasks, I believe the OSCE is one of the key fora we have at our disposal.

It has the inclusivity, the legitimacy, the experience and the historical memory - to show that dialogue and co-operation are still possible and are surely needed, even and especially in the darkest times.

That, I believe, is the only way to ensure comprehensive security for all.

Thank you.