

Policy on the Prevention of and Response to Sexual Harassment

1. Purpose and Scope

This Policy establishes the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's immediate commitment to ensuring that all activities conducted under the auspices of the OSCE PA are conducted in an environment free from sexual harassment and gender-based misconduct.

This Policy applies to all persons participating in OSCE PA activities in any capacity, including Members of National Delegations, Staff of National Delegations, OSCE PA Secretariat staff, contractors and consultants engaged by the OSCE PA Secretariat, observers, guests, and accredited journalists.

2. Normative Foundation

This Policy is grounded in the Assembly's established acquis, including successive Annual Declarations, as well as the Helsinki Final Act (1975) and UNSCR 1325 (2000). It is vested in the Bureau's authority under Rule 6.3 of the Rules of Procedure to ensure the efficient operation of the Assembly between sessions.

3. Definition of Sexual Harassment

For the purposes of this Policy, sexual harassment means any unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, whether verbal, non-verbal, or physical, that has the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, or that creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment. This includes, without limitation: unwelcome sexual advances; sexually suggestive comments, jokes, or gestures; unwanted physical contact; sharing or displaying sexually explicit materials in connection with OSCE PA activities; conduct that demeans or degrades a person on the basis of gender or sexual orientation; and retaliation for reporting harassment. This constitutes misconduct regardless of whether it is a single incident or a pattern of behaviour, and regardless of the gender or seniority of the persons involved.

4. Standards of Conduct

All persons participating in OSCE PA activities shall treat every other participant with dignity and respect, refrain from any conduct constituting sexual harassment, not exploit differences in status or seniority to coerce or intimidate any person, and not retaliate against any person who in good faith makes a complaint under this Policy.

These standards apply in all settings connected with OSCE PA activities, including statutory meetings, conferences, social functions, side events, election observation missions, and informal

interactions occurring in connection with an OSCE PA activity.

5. Relationship to National Law

This Policy operates alongside and does not derogate from the national law of the country in which an OSCE PA activity takes place. Sexual harassment may constitute a criminal offence or civil wrong under the law of the host country. The OSCE PA will not impede any person from exercising rights under applicable national law, and shall cooperate with national authorities where required. Where an OSCE PA activity takes place on the premises of the host parliament or another institution, the rules and procedures of that institution may also apply concurrently. Participants are encouraged to seek legal advice on their rights under the applicable national legal framework.

6. Reporting and Complaint Procedures

6.1 Harassment Contact Person

The OSCE PA Secretariat shall designate at least one Harassment Contact Person for each OSCE PA activity. This person shall be clearly identified to all participants, available throughout the activity, and shall maintain strict confidentiality regarding disclosures received. Contact details shall be communicated to all registered participants in advance of and at each activity.

6.2 Complaints

Any person who experiences or witnesses sexual harassment within the framework of an OSCE PA activity may speak confidentially with the designated Harassment Contact Person, or submit a formal written complaint to the Secretary General, or seek recourse under national law of the host country.

In cases involving OSCE PA Secretariat staff, invoke applicable procedures under the OSCE PA Staff Regulations

Complaints may be filed by the affected person or, with their explicit consent, by a witness or representative.

6.3 Principles

All complaints shall be handled with confidentiality, fairness, non-retaliation, timeliness, and appropriate support for the complainant.

7. Enforcement

All measures under this section shall be taken in a manner that respects the wishes and safety of the complainant. Notifications to Heads of Delegation and referrals to national authorities

shall be made only with the complainant's informed consent, except where there is a compelling protection or legal obligation to act without consent.

7.1 Members of Delegation

The OSCE PA has no disciplinary authority over Members for conduct outside the chamber.

Where a complaint relates to such conduct, the Secretary General shall, subject to the complainant's informed consent: formally notify the Head of the relevant National Delegation requesting action under applicable national parliamentary rules; inform the complainant of rights to seek recourse under the national law of the host-country; and bring the matter to the attention of the President, who may consult the Bureau on whether the Member's continued participation is compatible with the safety and dignity of other participants. The Bureau may, by two-thirds majority, invite the National Delegation to withdraw the Member for the remainder of the activity.

Where the complaint concerns or implicates the President, the role of political interlocutor shall be assumed by the Vice-President with the greatest length of service and, at parity of length of service, by the Vice-President who obtained the highest number of votes in the election, and at parity of votes, the eldest among them. The President shall not lead or participate in the handling of any case in which they are the subject of the complaint.

7.2 Staff of National Delegations

The OSCE PA has no employment or disciplinary jurisdiction over staff of National Delegations.

The Secretary General shall formally notify the Head of the relevant National Delegation requesting appropriate action.

7.3 Observers or Guests

In respect of institutional observers admitted under Rule 45 (PACE, NATO PA, IPU, European Parliament, CIS IPA, PABSEC, Partner parliaments), the OSCE PA has no unilateral authority to withdraw their accreditation, as their admission is based on notification by their parent parliamentary body.

Where a complaint involves such a person, the Secretary General shall formally notify the relevant parent parliamentary body.

In respect of other observers admitted under Rule 45 at the discretion of the President or the Standing Committee, the President may withdraw or suspend admission at any time.

Where a complaint involves a person admitted as a guest sponsored by a Member, the Secretary General shall formally notify both the sponsor and, where relevant, the parent organization of the guest, requesting that the sponsorship be withdrawn. Upon withdrawal of sponsorship the

basis for the guest's accreditation lapses and the President may restrict or remove their access to OSCE PA premises and activities accordingly.

7.4 Secretariat Staff

Violations by OSCE PA staff shall be subject to applicable disciplinary procedures under the OSCE PA Staff Regulations. The Secretary General has full authority to act under those regulations without prior Bureau approval.

7.5 Contractors and Consultants

The Secretary General may, without prior Bureau approval, terminate or suspend the contractual engagement of any contractor or consultant found to have engaged in sexual harassment, in accordance with the terms of the relevant contract and applicable law.

8. Prevention and Awareness

The Secretariat shall communicate this Policy to all participants in advance, include it in accreditation documentation, ensure Harassment Contact Persons are trained, and include information on the applicable national legal framework in host-country practical information.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, where this Policy is adopted within thirty days prior to an OSCE PA activity, the requirements to include information in advance accreditation documentation and to provide host-country legal framework information in general practical information shall apply from the subsequent activity. The Secretariat shall nonetheless ensure that the Policy is published and accessible to all registered participants at the earliest opportunity, and that a trained Harassment Contact Person is designated for the activity.

9. Review

The Bureau shall transmit this Policy to the Standing Committee for information at the first opportunity, with a view to the Standing Committee adopting Rules on the same subject matter under Rule 35 of the Rules of Procedure.

10. Entry into Force

This Policy enters into force upon adoption by the Bureau under Rule 6.4. It applies to all OSCE PA activities thereafter.

Entered into force on 1 July 2026