

**REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL
OF THE OSCE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY
TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE**

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Report to the Standing Committee
21 February 2019

OSCE PA Secretary General, Roberto Montella

This report covers the **activities** of the Assembly and its International Secretariat **since our last meeting in Bishkek**. As you will see we have maintained an exceptionally busy pace. My last report was delivered in October when we simultaneously held our Autumn Meeting in Kyrgyzstan and one of our teams was observing the elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We find ourselves in the same situation during this Winter Meeting, when we simultaneously have members of our team working on the election observation mission in Moldova. **Simultaneous activities** have become more **the norm** than the exception during these last years and I am grateful to receive your increasing positive feedback on the quality of the services we deliver to you, Members of Parliament. This is a **team effort** and the **OSCE PA Secretariat** is happy and privileged to service you.

These many activities represent an **overall increase in engagement by parliamentarians** in all aspects of OSCE work. **The Chairperson-in-Office, Slovak Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák**, outlining the Slovak Priorities for 2019 underlined the importance of **working for the people**. This priority is fully in line with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's strengthened emphasis on ensuring close co-operation and synergies between the two OSCE Dimensions (Governmental and Parliamentary), the OSCE Secretary General and the OSCE autonomous Institutions (ODIHR, HCNM, FoM), and the OSCE field operations in order to **put all these assets at the service of the 'end users of the OSCE products' – the people, the citizens, of the OSCE participating States** as well as their institutions.

Activities of the International Secretariat in support of Members

President George Tsereteli has maintained a heavy schedule in his function as the Assembly's highest representative. Indeed, the President's emphasis on deepening co-operation has already resulted in an unprecedented level of interaction. He has **addressed the Permanent Council on two occasions** in recent months; in October to provide the Assembly's input to the OSCE Ministerial Council, and in January to convey the Assembly's upcoming priorities. This comes in addition to his **opening address to OSCE Foreign Ministers in Milan last December**.

The President visited **Bratislava** in October, meeting with the incoming Slovak OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and his team, helping to align work for 2019. Since Bishkek, the President has visited and held high-level meetings in the **USA**, the OSCE's most populous country, meeting with **Vice-President Roger Wicker** and other senior congressional and government leaders, as well as in the **Vatican City**, the least populous country, helping to ensure broad-based input to Assembly work. Similarly, his visits to **Kazakhstan** and **Uzbekistan** served not only as an opportunity to support the work of his new Special Representative on Central Asia, **Roman Haider (Austria)**, but also for the President and the human rights committee Chair **Margareta Kiener Nellen (Switzerland)** to contribute to a high-level human rights forum in Samarkand. The President's visits to **San Marino**, hosted by **Oscar Mina and Margherita Amici**; to **Moldova**, hosted by **Serghei Sirbu**; and to **Italy**, hosted by **Paolo Grimoldi** also provided excellent opportunities for high-level exchanges on priority issues with government and parliamentary leaders in all countries. His tireless efforts have helped to ensure continued political discussion on OSCE issues and are a strong contribution to Assembly work.

Assembly work has engaged a wide range of parliamentarians in many pressing topical issues in recent months. Our continued efforts in the field of **counter-terrorism**, through the Ad Hoc Committee headed by **Makis Voridis (Greece)**, have included several activities with OSCE

counterparts as well as high-profile meetings in the **United States**, supported by **Congressman Richard Hudson** as Vice-Chair of the Committee, **the United Nations in New York**, and **France**, and a major International Parliamentary Conference on Victims of Terrorism, organized by **Ignacio Cosidó Gutiérrez (Spain) in Madrid**. Organized with the support of Marco Bonabello from our staff, all these activities proved instrumental in deepening the PA's understanding of the evolving challenges in this field and building solid partnerships. As the UN is eager to engage more with parliamentarians, it values particularly the leading role played by the PA in counter-terrorism. The committee's 'Parliamentary Initiative on Strengthening Border Security and Information Sharing' was broadly welcomed as an effective way to leverage parliamentary work to the benefit of our Organization, and I take this opportunity to warmly thank all those delegations who promptly sent their feedback, which we are currently reviewing in collaboration with the OSCE Secretariat. Our **Ad Hoc Committee on Migration**, supported by Farimah Daftary, continued its series of field visits to learn about and highlight migration issues, this time in **Denmark** and **Sweden**, exploring the multifaceted responses to migration challenges there. Committee Chair **Nahima Lanjri (Belgium)** and her colleagues were hosted by **Peter Juel Jensen (Denmark)** and **Margareta Cederfelt (Sweden)** and met with migration authorities, local officials, border police, school administrators, members of the international community, civil society, and migrants and refugees.

The leadership of our **General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions** have also been particularly active. In particular, Chair **Margareta Kiener Nellen (Switzerland)** and Rapporteur **Kyriakos Hadjiyanni (Cyprus)** undertook a major visit to **Ukraine in December. Visiting Kyiv, Dnipro and Mariupol** in the South East of the country, supported by Marc Carillet from our Vienna office, this visit served as another opportunity to highlight the difficult humanitarian situation caused by the conflict. The visit, organized with the strong support of the **Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine**, was another example of our close work with the executive structures of the OSCE. In early January, members of the committee leadership also visited **Warsaw to meet with ODIHR leadership** and experts, to continue close co-ordination in the field of human rights protection.

Parliamentarians have also continued to offer their leadership to **OSCE election observation work**, and since we last met the OSCE PA has deployed some **220 observers in four different countries**. While many in the Assembly were still in Bishkek for our Autumn Meeting, **Makis Voridis and Pia Kauma (Finland)** led our team of observers to the important general elections in **Bosnia and Herzegovina**. Shortly thereafter, Vice-President **Kristian Vigenin (Bulgaria)** served as OSCE Special Co-ordinator, and together with Head of the OSCE PA observers Vice-President **Margareta Cederfelt**, observed both rounds of the Presidential election held in **Georgia**. President **Tsereteli** personally led the short-term observers as Special Co-ordinator for the mid-term elections in the **United States**, together with Vice-President **Isabel Santos (Portugal)** who led the OSCE PA observer team. And finally, **Peter Osusky (Slovakia)** and **Nahima Lanjri** provided important leadership for the extraordinary parliamentary elections held in **Armenia** in December. I know that we all look forward to welcoming newly elected Members of Parliament from these countries into the OSCE PA family in the near future. I also took the opportunity to participate in a meeting of the signatories to the Declaration of Principles on International Election Observation, in London, ensuring that the Assembly continues to contribute to thinking and developments in the field of election observation.

Strengthening the OSCE PA's functioning

In the Secretariat we have been pleased to support two important processes intended to strengthen the work of our Assembly. Firstly, **discussions on reforming our working practices**, led by **President Tsereteli**, and Vice-Presidents **Peter Bowness and Isabel Santos**, have **progressed well, with**

practical ideas being put forward for consideration. The Secretariat has continued to provide advice on the implications of various ideas and already implemented some initiatives and looks forward to continuing to support discussions on improving our work. Changes to our meeting agendas are a tangible result of this work, with additional efforts made to integrate the important work being done by Assembly members (such as Special Representatives and Ad Hoc Committee members) between meetings fully into our work, and time-tabling of some agendas to enable better time allocation. Secondly, as promised during our Berlin Annual Session, **we have taken a pro-active approach to drafting clearer guidelines for our election observation work.** This document is intended to provide clarity on a range of key issues, including potential conflicts of interests for applicants to participate in our observation missions and lines of authority. **Ambassador Andreas Nothelle has developed a strong proposal, and following consultation with Bureau members in recent months, I hope that the Standing Committee will take positive note of it.**

Late last year we welcomed to the International Secretariat a new colleague, **Dimitrije Todoric**, as our **new Administration and Logistics Officer**, who will provide overall support to our administration section, and ensure the smooth running of logistical and security-related matters during our Assembly meetings. In the coming months, we also look forward to welcoming two new colleagues through the Junior Professional Officer programme; recruitment for these positions has been completed, and I'm confident that the rigorous and transparent process that we have undergone will ensure that the Assembly will soon benefit from strong support of these two young professionals. As I have reported previously, the Secretariat continues to attach great importance to maximizing the transparency and the effectiveness of our recruitment procedures. In recent recruitment processes we have not only carefully followed procedures strictly and based decisions on merit, but we have also given **serious consideration to gender related aspects.** These steps are part of a longer-term **strategy which aims at achieving gender balance both in Copenhagen and Vienna** and both within management and professional staff. The desired overall goal of achieving such a balance will take time but I am confident that we have embarked on the right path.

I would like to express my personal as well as the Assembly's note of **gratitude** to Denmark (in particular **Secretary General, Mr. Carsten U. Larsen**) **for the generous support provided by the Danish Parliament to the OSCE by hosting our Parliamentary Assembly headquarters** as well as to the **Austrian Government** who supports the costs of our Vienna Liaison Office.

In terms of Human Resources, *Grazie* to the **Italian Government** who generously supports the OSCE PA by seconding three members of our staff at no cost to the OSCE PA Budget as well as *Danke* to the **German Government** who recently started the secondment of a staff member in the Vienna Liaison Office.

Within the Secretariat we have also continued efforts to strengthen our **media outreach capacity.** Most important in this regard is our soon to be unveiled and **newly designed website, www.oscepa.org.** Our website is the 'face' of our work for tens of thousands of visitors each year, and so I'm very pleased that we will soon present a new, modern and streamlined product to all visitors to the site. This major redesign has been accomplished in-house, **under the supervision of Nat Parry**, who along with **Stephen Paul** and others have worked in recent months on this project. Together with increased emphasis on expanding our abilities and capacity in the field of audio-visual work, I believe that this new website will be a strong step forward in increasing our media reach.

I have been pleased to continue to expand the Secretariat's contacts with senior officials, friends of the Assembly and the diplomatic community throughout the OSCE. In recent months we were honoured to host a **visit in Copenhagen by former OSCE PA President Javier Ruperez.** In

addition, we've enjoyed visits by the Italian, Slovak, Portuguese and Ukrainian Ambassadors to Denmark.

Co-operation within the OSCE and with partners

Deepening and expanding our co-operation has been a hallmark of the Assembly's work in recent months. This has included extensive work by our President, who has used his bilateral meetings to convey messages on behalf of all parts of the Organization, as well as by our various committees that are working to identify key areas in which parliamentarians can leverage their particular strengths on behalf of the OSCE, and by the Secretariat in support of all of these efforts and more.

The Assembly continues to participate, both at parliamentary and Secretariat levels, in almost all major initiatives of the Governmental side of the OSCE. The President's remarks to the opening of the OSCE Ministerial Council in Milan were the most prominent evidence of this, and I'm particularly pleased that this has been supplemented by the President once again being given the opportunity at the beginning of the year to address the Permanent Council to lay out Assembly priorities. This is now an established practice that I think will serve the Assembly well. In addition, I'm particularly pleased that the Slovak Chairmanship has committed to once again inviting the **OSCE PA President to participate in meetings of the OSCE Ministerial Troika**, reviving a practice in the past that was discontinued more than a decade ago.

These advances in our co-operation are the result of political leadership, but also of the work of our **Vienna Liaison Office** in constantly demonstrating the added value of the Assembly in OSCE work. Beyond the regular co-operation, instances such as Chief Political Advisor Francesco Pagani's participation in the meeting of political directors from all OSCE participating States, and Ambassador Nothelle's participation in Ambassadorial retreats have been key opportunities to reinforce this message. Secretariat staff have continued to convey Assembly views in OSCE-organized conferences and events on issues ranging from election standards to the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security. The strong participation by PA Secretariat members in the annual opening of the Chairmanship that included regional working groups enabled extensive interaction with staff from OSCE field offices and Institutions that will strengthen our co-operation throughout the year.

OSCE PA Members have repeatedly contributed to OSCE-organized events, such as Vice-President **Pascal Allizard (France)**, the Assembly's Special Representative on the Mediterranean, who addressed the opening session of the 2018 **OSCE Mediterranean Conference in Malaga**. Another example of our increasing interaction can be seen in the recent contribution by the Chair and the Rapporteur of our General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment, **Nilza de Sena (Portugal) and Elona Gjebrea-Hoxha (Albania)**, to the 1st Preparatory Meeting of the 27th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum and held high-level meetings with the OSCE leadership to align priorities and workplans for 2019. Similarly, **Margareta Kiener Nellen's** contributed to a workshop on **Security Sector Governance and Reform in Minsk**, and **Makis Voridis'** participated in the 2nd **OSCE-wide Seminar on Passenger Data Exchange and the Implementation of UNSC Resolution 2396, in Vienna**. These opportunities demonstrate that the added value of parliamentary engagement is increasingly recognised and appreciated throughout the Organization.

Also outside of the OSCE family, the PA has had several opportunities to deepen our co-operation. Most notably, President Tsereteli and I travelled to Geneva to participate in a session of the **Inter-Parliamentary Union**, holding meetings with the President, Secretary General and numerous other officials. I hope for continued deepening interaction with the IPU in coming months and years. The

President also played a prominent role in the 3rd meeting of **Speakers of Eurasian Countries' Parliaments**, hosted by the Turkish parliament in **Antalya** in October.

Upcoming events

The coming months look set to be equally busy, as we prepare for our main **Annual Session in Luxembourg**, continue our election observation work and committee work, and proceed with further opportunities for strengthening the Assembly and our co-operation.

Excellent preparatory work by the parliament of Luxembourg, supported by Secretariat guidance from Deputy Secretary General Gustavo Pallares, Head of Conference Services Odile Lelarge and others, promises to result in a very successful Annual Session. I take this opportunity to extend sincere thanks to our coming hosts for the efforts they are making to host our most important annual meeting. I look forward to new invitations by national parliaments to hold our meetings, enabling our important inter-parliamentary dialogue to continue.

We are also looking forward to representatives of all OSCE and partner countries gathering for our **Autumn Meeting in Marrakech**, representing the first time one of our statutory meetings will be hosted by a Partner State. I see this as an important opportunity to reiterate our commitment to the Mediterranean dimension of our work.

In the field of elections, our busy season kicks off immediately following the Winter Meeting as we deploy a team of observers for the parliamentary elections in Moldova under the leadership of President Tsereteli who will himself serve as Special Co-ordinator together with **Vice-President Kari Henriksen** as head of the OSCE PA team. We are also in preparation for observation missions to the important Presidential election in Ukraine, 31 March, which will be led by **President Emeritus Ilkka Kanerva** as Special Co-ordinator and **Treasurer Doris Barnett** as Head of the OSCE PA observers, and to Skopje for the Presidential election on 21 April. I continue to be impressed by the amount of time that parliamentarians are willing to carve out of their busy schedules to participate in international election observation; this is a true demonstration of commitment to the principles of democracy.

A plethora of other activities, including the next Leinsweiler seminar, committee work, and co-operation with, for example, the Interparliamentary Assembly of the CIS on a counter-terrorism conference, are planned in coming months. The Secretariat will continue to work diligently to deliver on your expectations with the motivation, energy and professionalism we normally put in your service. Thank you for your leadership, Roberto.