

**REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL
OF THE OSCE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY**

Roberto Montella

AUTUMN MEETING

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Tordenskjoldsgade 1, 1055 Copenhagen K., Denmark

Phone: +45 33 37 80 40 - Fax: +45 33 37 80 30 - osce@oscepa.dk - www.oscepa.org

Report to the Standing Committee
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OSCE PA Secretary General, Roberto Montella

As we convene in Bishkek this autumn, the Assembly and the International Secretariat are once again exceptionally busy. With work on several OSCE PA meetings underway, preparations for multiple election observation missions, and numerous other activities by Assembly Members, this meeting comes at an important time in our calendar.

I'm particularly pleased that the Assembly is meeting for the first time in Kyrgyzstan. This gives us another opportunity to emphasize how important **Central Asia** is in our OSCE work. Members of Parliament from **Kyrgyzstan** have long been active in our Assembly (a former member, Roza Aknazarova, was for a while in the OSCE PA Bureau). We are grateful for Kyrgyzstan's generosity in hosting this meeting as it provides us with yet another opportunity for dialogue on the many pressing issues on the OSCE's agenda as well as enabling many parliamentarians to see this beautiful country.

Activities of the International Secretariat in support of Members

Our Berlin Annual Session three months ago was a real success and an opportunity for serious debate on significant OSCE issues. On behalf of the International Secretariat, I extend our thanks to the **German Parliament**, whom we enjoyed working closely with throughout this project. The Bundestag's welcome and hospitality, overseen by our **Treasurer Doris Barnett**, helped to make the event as pleasant as it was substantive. Since the conclusion of the Session, the International Secretariat has worked to communicate the Assembly's recommendations to OSCE Governments, including through targeted briefings to OSCE participating States and to OSCE Executive Structures and Institutions by our **Vienna Liaison Office's Team** headed by Ambassador Andreas Nothelle.

Immediately following the closure of the Berlin Session, a number of Assembly Members continued discussions in the '**Leinsweiler**' format, focusing particularly on addressing potential ethnic conflicts through law and good practices. Supported by the German Delegation to the OSCE PA and the German Foreign Ministry, the seminar brought together more than 20 parliamentarians and experts in the field from the OSCE and other organizations' bodies.

The International Secretariat has helped to facilitate work by several OSCE PA Special Representatives who have remained very active in recent months. In mid-July, **Special Representative on Gender Issues Hedy Fry travelled to Kyiv** for meetings with government and parliamentary officials as well as the leadership of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine. Dr. Fry particularly underlined the need for greater equality between women and men to fully advance Ukraine's reform agenda and conflict-resolution efforts. Newly appointed Special Representative on South East Europe, **Mark Pritchard**, has also been very active on behalf of the OSCE PA, paying two visits to the region in three months, including high-level meetings in **Tirana, Podgorica, Belgrade** and planning visits to Skopje, Pristina and Sarajevo. His visits have underlined the Assembly's engagement in the region and close co-operation with OSCE field operations in the region. These visits will lend a crucially important contribution to shaping the OSCE PA's policy for South East Europe in the foreseeable future. **Vice-President Pascal Allizard, our Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs, travelled to Morocco** in mid-September for meetings at the highest level of government and parliament, once again welcoming the active engagement of Morocco's parliament in OSCE PA work.

This year also saw the most significant **contribution of the OSCE PA to the OSCE's annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting** in the meeting's history. The two-week meeting is Europe's largest annual human rights and democracy conference. I'm pleased that an unprecedented number of OSCE PA members participated this year, with **President George Tsereteli addressing the opening session**, with additional substantive contributions by **Vice-Presidents Isabel Santos Kari Henriksen** and **Third Committee Chair Margareta Kiener Nellen and Rapporteur Kyriakos Hadjiyanni** in the subsequent days. The PA's participation, supported from the International Secretariat by Farimah Daftary, Andreas Baker, Nat Parry and Marc Carillet at key moments of the meeting, was warmly welcomed by the organizers and participants. Increasing OSCE PA engagement at such events is an important opportunity for the Assembly to enhance our impact in all areas of OSCE work.

Since being elected in early July, **President Tsereteli** has also been very busy representing the OSCE PA. The President began his mandate by participating in the 'Leinsweiler' seminar in the days immediately following the Annual Session, and continuing on to Italy for a meeting marking the 10th anniversary of the OSCE High Commissioner's **Bolzano/Bozen** Recommendations on National Minorities in Inter-State Relations. He subsequently spoke at the 15th annual **South Caucasus Media Conference** organized by the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media in Tbilisi, Georgia, focused on Quality Journalism for Trustworthy and Credible Information. In the past month, the President has also paid a high-level **visit to Armenia** where he and I were warmly hosted by **Hermine Naghdalyan**, giving us the opportunity to reiterate the OSCE's commitment to active work in Armenia regardless of last year's closure of the OSCE Office in Yerevan. The President and I also travelled to **Rome** and met with officials at the highest levels of government and parliament, with a particular focus on maximising our co-operation with the Italian Chairmanship of the OSCE in the run-up to the Milan Ministerial Council. The President also visited Baku on the occasion of the 100th Anniversary of the first Parliament of **Azerbaijan**, meeting with government and parliament leaders.

Strengthening the OSCE PA's functioning

The approval in Berlin of the **Assembly's 2018-2019 budget** proposed by Treasurer Doris Barnett has provided the International Secretariat of the Assembly with adequate resources to serve the members for the coming year. The additional resources will enable us to keep pace with the Assembly's general increase in activities, as well as support the newly established ad hoc committees focused on migration and on terrorism. The International Secretariat wants to support and contribute to the intensified interest and ability for parliamentarians to engage in OSCE work, all to the benefit of increasing the impact of the Organization and the Assembly.

I'm also particularly pleased that the Assembly will soon also benefit from the support of **two junior professional officers**. We have publicly advertised the vacancies for these positions, as well as a **position of an Administration and Logistics Officer**. A professional and transparent selection process will soon begin to fill in these positions. I also want to reiterate the Assembly's appreciation to the Danish Parliament and Austrian Government for supporting our Headquarters and Vienna Liaison Office, as well as the Italian Government for generously seconding two staff members of our team.

As the Assembly's overall level of work increases, Assembly leadership has also been engaged in consideration of how to best ensure the Assembly's work remains effective in meeting Members' wishes. The International Secretariat is pleased to contribute to discussions led by President Tsereteli, Vice-President Peter Bowness and Vice-President Isabel Santos, advising particularly on implementation issues related to ideas and initiatives. We hope that these discussions prove fruitful and help the Assembly to fully meet Members' expectations.

In my concluding report to the Assembly's plenary in Berlin, I made a reference to the "*Council of Europe's Report of the Independent Investigation Body on the allegation of corruption within the Parliamentary Assembly and the PACE's Guidelines for the observation of elections*" and said that despite of the fact that our Assembly has thus far been immune from these types of allegations, we should be proactive, rather than reactive, in putting together even more stringent safeguards than those we have now in place and necessary mechanism to prevent conflict of interest in election observation mission work. Together with Ambassador Andreas Nothelle we are working on a draft of a more stringent Code of Conduct that will be presented to the Milan Bureau in December for discussion and deliberation and then submitted to the Standing Committee in Vienna in February 2019 for its final adoption.

In keeping with the times, we have also started the process of **redesigning our website**, www.oscepa.org. We hope that this will soon provide the Assembly with a modern look and easier access for all visitors to this, our primary communication method. The International Secretariat has been actively encouraging a reduction in the use of paper at our conferences in favour of electronic tools, and we see this upgrade of our website as contributing to this effort.

Co-operation within the OSCE and with partners

Recent months have demonstrated the benefits of our efforts to **strengthen co-operation with other OSCE offices**, providing the Assembly with numerous opportunities to increase our impact. What has become a regular and largely seamless communication between our Vienna Liaison Office and decision-making bodies and OSCE executive structures has been supplemented by a high level of activity particularly by President Tsereteli. His visit to Rome in mid-September proved an excellent opportunity to consolidate the close ties the Assembly enjoys with the OSCE Chairmanship, including through direct meetings with **Italian Foreign Minister Enzo Moavero Milanesi** and other senior officials. The Assembly's contribution to OSCE work is strongly appreciated, with Minister Moavero Milanesi commending the active contribution of parliamentary diplomacy in the region. The President's recent contributions to major events organized by the **OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Lamberto Zannier**, and by the **OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Harlem Désir**, as well as by the **OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights** have similarly helped to solidify the Assembly's strong co-operation throughout the Organization.

Members continue to also offer OSCE experience to other organizations, and **Vice-President Azay Guliyev's recent participation in a United Nations-organized seminar in Tashkent** focused on the role of parliaments in engaging Afghanistan into Central Asian cooperation frameworks through preventive diplomacy. Vice-President Guliyev particularly shared thoughts on the OSCE PA's experience in parliamentary diplomacy and on Central Asia's important role in our work.

Upcoming events

The coming months promise to remain a busy period for Assembly members. Simultaneous with the Bishkek Autumn Meetings, the OSCE PA is observing elections in **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, with **Makis Voridis** of Greece having been appointed to serve as Special Co-ordinator for the short term OSCE observer mission and **Pia Kauma** from Finland as Head of the OSCE PA observers. At the end of October, **Kristian Vigenin and Margareta Cederfelt** will provide leadership to the election observation mission to Georgia and President Tsereteli as **Special Coordinator** and **Isabel Santos as Head of Delegation** will lead the teams in the USA elections where we are working closely with the OSCE/ODIHR and other partners.

Additionally, several activities on key topics, including by our **migration and counter-terrorism** ad hoc committees will enhance Assembly work. The Secretariat will continue to support this work, as well as parliamentary contributions to many other conferences and events throughout the OSCE region.

Preparations are well underway for the organization of future meetings, including the meeting of the Bureau on **5 December 2018 in Milan**; the **Winter Meeting on 21 and 22 February 2019 in Vienna**; and our 28th Annual Session to be held from **5 to 9 July 2019 in Luxembourg**. We also look forward to holding our **2019 Autumn Meeting in Marrakech, Morocco**, marking the first time that an OSCE Partner for Co-operation will host an OSCE PA statutory meeting. I hope that invitations to host Assembly events in coming years will also soon be forthcoming, ensuring that we can continue the important dialogue on OSCE issues in coming years.