

Parliamentary Web Dialogues focus on refugees, migrants and environmental aspects of COVID-19



An OSCE PA webinar on Tuesday examined migration-related aspects of COVID-19, including the impact on refugee camps and migrant detention centres. The online event featured remarks from OSCE PA President George Tsereteli (Georgia); Vice-President Margareta Cederfelt (Sweden), Acting Chair of the OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Migration; Dunja Mijatovic, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights; Gianluca Rocco, Chief of Mission and Regional Response Coordinator of the International Organization for Migration Office in Greece; Lord Alf Dubs (United Kingdom), Member of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration; and OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella. In addition, 12 parliamentarians took the floor during the discussion.

Participants explored best practices for specific measures that can be implemented with respect to vulnerable categories of migrants. Members expressed concern over a spike in racism and xenophobia directed at certain groups, particularly those of Asian descent. Participants urged a high level of co-ordination between countries, exchange of best practices, and support from relevant international organizations in order to meet the challenges of migration.

Closing the event, Lord Dubs said that governments need to exercise collective responsibility and solidarity, as no one country can deal with it alone. The webinar was moderated by

OSCE PA Senior Programme Officer Farimah Daftary.

On 22 May, an OSCE PA webinar examined the environmental aspects of COVID-19 with OSCE parliamentarians and experts from academia and the international community, who offered perspectives on how to ensure that recovery efforts prioritize the need to address climate change and promote biodiversity. In developing COVID-19 recovery plans, policy-makers have an opportunity to advance an agenda to protect the environment while creating new employment opportunities, participants said. Speakers stressed the need to invest in green technologies and transition from fossil fuels to clean energy.

Second Committee Chair Doris Barnett (Germany) opened the event by noting that the pandemic requires policymakers to rethink old habits and adjust them appropriately. Dr. Francesca Dominici, Professor of Biostatistics at Harvard University, presented a detailed description of COVID-19's health effects and noted that certain vulnerable populations are at greater risk than others. Susan Gardner, Director Ecosystems Division in the UN Environment Programme, noted that investing in the health of people requires investing in the health of the planet.

The webinar was moderated by OSCE PA Senior Advisor Marco Bonabello and included remarks by President Tsereteli and Secretary General Montella.

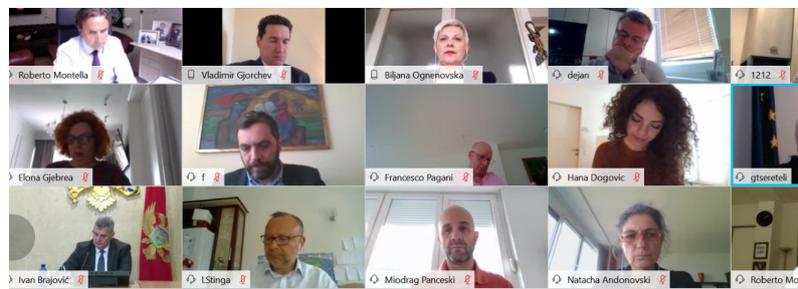
SG Montella speaks about OSCE PA work with Italian magazine

OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella recently gave an interview to Real Inside Magazine, an Italian publication. Find it online here (in Italian): <https://bit.ly/3d7wble>

Online forum promotes dialogue in SE Europe with PA members, heads of OSCE field operations

OSCE parliamentarians from southeastern European delegations met online Monday with Assembly President George Tsereteli (Georgia), OSCE PA Special Representative on South East Europe Mark Pritchard (UK), and Secretary General Roberto Montella for a discussion on how countries of the region are coping with COVID-19 and to share ideas for focused engagement from the PA. The MPs were joined by representatives of OSCE field operations, the OSCE CPC, ODIHR, the HCNM, the OSCE Secretariat, and the OSCE PA International Secretariat.

Topics of discussion included the public health situation, how authorities are responding to COVID-19, upcoming elections, and possibilities for deploying future election observation missions. Members stressed the usefulness of OSCE PA forums and noted that despite being a public health emergency, the pandemic has also served to ease tensions in the Balkans, producing a spirit of solidarity in the region.



President Tsereteli noted that during the pandemic, focus must continue to be placed on conflict mediation, the economic situation, and on human rights. Addressing the topic of possible election observation missions, SG Montella said that, in addition to the usual considerations, the PA would only organize missions if ODIHR has the necessary conditions to deploy long-term observers.