

War in Ukraine: OSCE Parliamentary Assembly responds



Delegation speaks with Polish Border Guard, 14 March 2022

A number of OSCE PA initiatives have been undertaken over the past week to address the ongoing war in Ukraine. The PA held an extraordinary meeting of its Standing Committee on 11 March, hearing reports about the Russian Federation's invasion from Ukrainian Ambassador to the OSCE Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk and former Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko. The meeting, consisting of OSCE PA heads of delegations from the 57 OSCE participating States and members of the Bureau, was convened in order to further discussions on how the Parliamentary Assembly can most effectively respond to the crisis, including efforts to promote a ceasefire and support Ukrainian refugees.

Delivering a message on behalf of Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, Amb. Tsymbaliuk stressed the importance of remembering the lessons of the past, calling for an anti-war coalition to stop Russian aggression, and appealed for ambitious steps to be taken to save Ukrainian lives. In his remarks, Poroshenko said that at its core, the current situation is about peace, dignity and the future of European security.

On 13-14 March several PA leaders and the OSCE's Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings visited Polish reception centres for Ukrainian refugees near the Polish-Ukrainian border. The mission was intended to inform policymakers of how best to effectively support those displaced by the war and prevent risks of trafficking. On a private initiative, delegation members brought a cargo truck full of 22 tons of food, medicines, and other supplies for Ukrainians in need.

Hosted by Head of the Polish Delegation to the OSCE PA Barbara Bartuś, the mission included President Margareta Cederfelt (Sweden), Vice-President and Chair of the OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Migration Kristian Vigenin (Bulgaria), Third Committee Chair Sereine Mauborgne (France), Third Committee Rapporteur Johan Buser (Sweden), Second Committee Rapporteur Gudrun Kugler (Austria), Secretary General Roberto Montella, Advisor to the Secretary General Freyja Koçi, and Valiant Richey, the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings.

The delegation visited the reception point at the Railway Station in Przemyśl and met with representatives of the local government and social organizations. The OSCE officials then visited the Polish-Ukrainian border crossings in Korczowa and Medyka and met with representatives of the Border Guard. The delegation also visited the reception centre for young people in Stalowa Wola, and the Caritas reception center in Bojanów. President Cederfelt noted that the whole of Polish society is involved in the response to refugees and in a joint statement the PA stressed that the humanitarian crisis is a reminder of the urgent need to implement a ceasefire.

PA Vice-President Azay Guliyev (Azerbaijan) and Secretary General Montella represented the Assembly at the 2022 Antalya Diplomacy Forum in Antalya, Turkey, on 11-13 March to highlight the role of parliamentarians in conflict resolution. Speaking at a panel on parliamentary diplomacy, Guliyev stressed that the Assembly offers a platform for Ukrainian and Russian parliamentarians to engage in dialogue. Montella applauded the efforts of bringing together the Ministers of the Russian Federation and Ukraine on the sidelines of the Forum and stressed that dialogue is the only way forward.

SG Montella met today in Vienna with Amb. Alexander Lukashевич, the Russian Permanent Representative to the OSCE, and presented the PA positions on the ongoing war and the initiatives to create chances for dialogue. The SG also met to discuss the situation with Albanian Ambassador to the OSCE Eglantina Gjermeni, UK Ambassador Neil Bush, and OSCE Secretary General Helga Schmid.

Vienna meeting of OSCE PA young parliamentarians aims to amplify youth voices

On the initiative of OSCE PA Special Representative on Youth Engagement Farah Karimi (The Netherlands), members of the PA's informal network of young parliamentarians met last week in Vienna to discuss the youth agenda in the PA and to meet OSCE stakeholders. Six parliamentarians from Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Georgia and Norway had a chance to meet with representatives of OSCE executive structures to learn about the integration of youth perspectives in the work of the OSCE and discuss the role of parliamentarians in promotion of Youth, Peace and Security agenda in the organization.

In a meeting with ODIHR's Democratic Governance Unit parliamentarians were informed about the organization's initiatives and activities focused on youth in human dimension context and discussed structural challenges for young people's engagement in decision-making. Parliamentarians also shared ideas about co-operation with ODIHR in future capacity-building initiatives for young politicians and activists

and the areas of support of youth political participation, especially in the context of the political parties.

Young parliamentarians were also briefed by the U.S. and Spanish Co-Chairs of the Group of Friends of Youth and Security about their work and activities and brainstormed on future areas of co-operation. Participants emphasized that young people should be seen as contributors and beneficiaries of security across all OSCE dimensions and, therefore, a cross-dimensional and comprehensive strategy is needed in the organization to promote Youth, Peace and Security agenda and address challenges faced by youth.

The parliamentarians also discussed the possibility of a joint resolution dedicated to youth issues to be presented at the OSCE PA 29th Annual Session in Birmingham, proposed mechanisms of engagement of young people in the OSCE PA policy discussions and agreed on the establishment of network's executive committee and follow-up activities and meetings of the network.