

Assembly President Kauma addresses Speakers of Parliament in Strasbourg



Pia Kauma addresses the European Conference of Presidents of Parliament, Strasbourg, 20 March 2025

OSCE PA President Pia Kauma (Finland) and Secretary General Roberto Montella participated last week in the European Conference of Presidents of Parliament in Strasbourg, which brought together more than 60 Speakers and Deputy Speakers and hundreds of other delegates for discussions on democracy, freedom of expression, and violence against politicians.

Speaking on 20 March, President Kauma highlighted several threats to democracy in the OSCE area and urged greater vigilance in supporting people's democratic aspirations while reinforcing shared principles. In this regard, she highlighted the role of parliaments as essential, in particular their oversight mechanisms to ensure that strong executives remain accountable to the people's representatives.

"Across our region, we see a growing concentration of power

in the hands of the executive, often at the expense of parliamentary oversight," President Kauma said. "Left unchecked, this trend can lead to policies driven by short-term political calculations rather than long-term democratic stability."

The PA President also warned of external threats to democracy, notably the Russian Federation's war against Ukraine which has made clear the need for resilient democracies to uphold the rule of law and fundamental rights.

On the sidelines of the conference, President Kauma and Secretary General Montella held bilateral meetings with Theodoros Rousopoulos, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and Alain Berset, Secretary General of the Council of Europe. Discussions touched on areas of common interest between the OSCE and Council of Europe, with a focus on the prospects for peace in Ukraine, developments in the South Caucasus, and institutional co-operation particularly in the field of election observation.

Other informal discussions took place with Speakers of Parliament and other delegates. On 21 March, SG Montella took part in a meeting of Secretaries General, where the use artificial intelligence in parliamentary processes was in focus. OSCE PA Chief of Staff Andreas Baker also participated in the visit to Strasbourg.

Ad Hoc Committee on Migration members visit Madrid and Canary Islands

A 12-member delegation of the OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Migration, led by its Chair, OSCE PA Vice-President Daniela De Ridder (Germany), was in Madrid and Las Palmas de Gran Canaria on 20-21 March, to learn more about how Spain is coping with a major spike of irregular migrant arrivals since 2020. The visit aimed to identify areas of best practice with respect to migration management and assess areas where further support is needed, in particular with regards to vulnerable groups such as unaccompanied minors.

Hosted by OSCE PA Vice-President Pere Joan Pons (Spain) and the Congress of Deputies, the delegation met with key authorities, including Minister for Territorial Policy and Democratic Memory Ángel Víctor Torres Pérez, Secretary of State for Migration Pilar Cancela Rodríguez, officials from the International Protection department of the Ministry of Interior, as well as parliamentary spokespersons on migration. They also visited an emergency reception centre for male adults transferred from the Canary Islands as well as Ceuta and Melilla.

On the island of Gran Canaria, the delegation met with Anselmo Pestana Padrón, Government Delegate in the Autonomous Region of the Canary Islands, Fernando Clavijo Batlle, President of the Regional Government of the Canary Islands, and representatives of international organizations and NGOs. They also visited two more facilities – one hosting men and the other single women and families.

OSCE PA delegates learned about how the Canary Islands



Migration Committee's visit to Spain, Gran Canaria, 21 March 2025

are handling the record level of nearly 47,000 irregular arrivals in 2024, many of whom are unaccompanied minors and a growing number of women. Members discussed prospects for improving development in countries of origin to stem the flow of irregular migration, border protection, combating migrant smuggling and trafficking, and the need for more legal pathways, as well as the expectations from implementation of the EU Migration and Asylum Pact. Some interlocutors called for facilitating access to asylum procedures, as well as more accessible information and legal assistance for migrants.

The delegation included Vice-Chairs Kemal Çelik (Turkey); Kyriakos Hadjiyianni (Cyprus); Farah Karimi (The Netherlands); Gudrun Kugler (Austria); and Members Alessandro Alfieri (Italy); Canan Bayram (Germany); Valérie Boyer (France); Hedy Fry (Canada); Artemi Vicent Rallo (Spain); Liliana Reis (Portugal); and Baroness Rosie Winterton (United Kingdom).

Treasurer visits International Secretariat to discuss OSCE PA's FY 2025-26 budget

OSCE PA Treasurer Johan Büser (Sweden), joined by advisor Jonathan Demner, visited the International Secretariat in Copenhagen on 25 March to finalize work on a proposed budget for the coming year. Meeting with Secretary General Roberto Montella, Deputy Secretary General Gustavo Pallares, Chief of Staff Andreas Baker, Head of ICT Service & Support Section, Finance Officer Stephen Paul, Senior Advisor Iryna Sabashuk, and Intern Isabella Ana Bjerggran-Keseric, Büser discussed preparations for the upcoming Bureau meeting and Assembly priorities for the year



Meeting at Secretariat with Johan Büser, Copenhagen, 25 March

ahead. Discussions focused on ensuring that the Secretariat can continue delivering a high level of activities cost-effectively and efficiently. The Treasurer will present the draft budget to the OSCE PA Bureau on 7 April in Copenhagen.