



OSCE Code of Conduct Conference

Berlin, 2 June 2016

Mr. Alain Neri (MP, France)
Vice-President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Dear Parliamentarians,

Distinguished guests,

As the democratic backbone of the OSCE, the Parliamentary Assembly welcomes this discussion of the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security today. We particularly appreciate the effort to improve this landmark document's role in building confidence and security, in line with the German Chairmanship's priorities of rebuilding trust in the OSCE area.

At its core, the Code of Conduct recognizes the importance of democratic civilian control of the armed and security forces. As the Parliamentary Assembly has stated in a number of resolutions, this means that elected parliaments must have ultimate authority over the activities of the security sector – including the armed, internal, paramilitary, intelligence and police forces. It is up to parliamentarians, in other words, to ensure that fundamental human rights are respected by all security and intelligence services, both public and private.

The Code has concrete practical implications when facing crises. This has been illustrated most recently by the crisis in and around Ukraine. The principles of non-use of force, territorial integrity and political resolutions of conflicts provide participating States with practical and principled guidance on how to resolve these crisis situations. But for the Code to fulfill its role, we need both experts and parliamentarians to commit to fostering the implementation of it in all aspects. Parliamentarians must remain involved in the discussions and activities of OSCE executive structures related to the Code.

Parliamentarians must also assume their responsibility fully by exercising their rights and obligations by adopting necessary legislation and in particular by providing needed oversight.

In my view, parliamentarians hold the key to bestowing the Code of Conduct with greater legitimacy and relevance by increasing the attention paid to it and by providing it with active political support. In this regard, the Parliamentary Assembly can serve as a nexus between the OSCE and national governments. The PA can help institutionalize the discussions of the Code at the level of the OSCE by regularly setting an agenda item related to the Code on the agenda of its General Committee on Political Affairs and Security, as we have done repeatedly over the years.

The PA's comprehensive resolutions on the Code have urged all participating States to acknowledge and agree to its instruments, in particular regarding parliamentary oversight of the security sector.

Today, perhaps more so than at any time of the past two decades, the norms and principles outlined by the Code of Conduct are being breached with a discouraging frequency. Equally troubling, there is hardly any participating State across the OSCE region with a comprehensive and fully effective oversight over the private and public security sectors. New developments in anti-terrorism warfare and hybrid wars, to mention just two, have led to additional challenges.

We must therefore strengthen our efforts to improve implementation of the Code in order to strengthen security and build confidence among participating States. In order to maintain its applicability and relevance, we must continuously reaffirm the undiminished validity of its guiding principles and common values as well as discuss new ways of improving and building upon it.

We should all work together to keep the Code of Conduct a living document today and in the future.

Thank you!