

Highlights from the Call for Action – Helsinki+50 meeting on “The role of the OSCE in addressing the conflict in Ukraine and its consequences”¹

Wednesday, 23 March 2022, 14:30 – 17:00 CET, Zoom

Representatives of the OSCE institutions reported on their ongoing activities and programmatic responses:

- **CPC:** prioritized duty of care to international and national staff; issued policy guidance on anti-trafficking; started scoping enhanced assistance to the field operation in Moldova as well as other field operations to support host authorities in facing economic and social repercussions of the war. Mentioned possible ExB projects to help with the humanitarian crisis based on the needs of the UA government and civil society and possible limited presence of the SMM and PCU in the near future. Encouraged OSCE Parliamentarians to urge the respective Governments to actively support the extensions of the mandates of SMM (expiring at the end of March) and PCU (expiring in June). If SMM mandate is not extended due to the current circumstances, the Mission could continue for some time with mainly administrative activities.
- **HCNM:** warned about the danger of instrumentalizing and politicizing national minorities, as this would harm not only future reconciliation efforts in UA but also pose a risk to the neighboring countries and the wider OSCE region. Ongoing rhetoric and hate speech could become a catalyst for development of security-oriented policies in other participating States that would result in worsening situation for national minorities there.
- **ODIHR:** provided administrative support to the Moscow Mechanism, a fact finding and assessment mission, which plans to address human rights and humanitarian impact on the ground; set up monitoring and documentation mechanism, including interim assessment and final report to ensure accountability for the violations of the international human rights and humanitarian law; carried out trafficking assessment and provided advice on how to coordinate anti-trafficking response in the neighboring countries. Mentioned a possible human rights assessment mission at a later stage in cooperation with local authorities and civil society, as well as SMM and PCU and a possible training for UA human rights

¹ The Highlights from the OSCE PA Call for Action - Helsinki +50 Meetings are not intended to be official conclusions, nor an exhaustive list of all issues or suggestions raised during the debate, but rather a compilation of points recorded for possible future reference. As this compilation is not exhaustive, any comments or suggested additions are welcome.

defenders on human rights monitoring. Expressed readiness to provide emergency legislative assistance to the parliament and support parliamentary diplomacy efforts.

- **RFoM:** voiced concern about the drastic situation in UA for journalists, reminding participants that a number of them had lost their lives while trying to cover the war, and warned about the RF's rapid movement towards total censorship; underlined the need to distinguish between deliberate disinformation and war propaganda; mentioned close cooperation with partners in UNESCO, CoE and EU as well as civil society and journalists on the ground.

Main points raised by panelists and participants in the discussion:

- voiced their concern about the dire humanitarian situation in Ukraine and an increasing risk of human trafficking for refugees and displaced persons. Participants also warned about the far-reaching consequences of this war on the OSCE region.
- commended governments and civil societies in Poland, Slovakia, Moldova, Romania and Hungary for their help in receiving Ukrainian refugees.
- emphasized the importance of providing protection to the refugees, since they are at greater risk for human trafficking and smuggling. Stricter security in camps, registration of housing offers, and identity checks were proposed.
- expressed their readiness to assist with alleviation of the humanitarian crisis. Parliamentarians also pointed out that their concerns about the plight of civilians and the situation in Ukraine are shared by ordinary citizens across the OSCE region. In this regard, there is a role for MPs in taking the lead and showing their constituents the contribution to Ukraine by the OSCE.
- One participant argued that the OSCE should not kick out Russia from the organization or suspend its membership, as it did in the past with Yugoslavia or Belarus (as far as the PA was concerned). Containment and retaliation are not the ways out of the present war; as much as the economic sanctions will bring more sufferings to those implementing them rather than to those against whom they are implemented, without bringing the war to its end. To stop the sufferings of the Ukrainian people and Ukraine's destruction, there is a need to engage Russia in the process of rational and positive talks.
- In response to the question of the possible failure of the OSCE as a security organization in preventing the war, it was pointed out that existing tools were used in as much as the participating States allowed it, given the consensus nature of the organization. The early warnings have been issued, the situation has been duly monitored for years, and further action had to be taken by participating States. The participants underlined there is a role for the OSCE now, especially by promoting dialogue, and in the immediate aftermath of the war, as it has flexible instruments from its conflict cycle toolbox that can prevent future wars and conflicts.
- Other participants concluded that the war was a failure not just on part of the OSCE, but the whole international community. The OSCE should draw lessons on how to prevent such conflicts in future and reconsider if the existing tools are sufficient to do so.

Recommendations:

- Ukrainian delegation urged participating States to impose a no-fly zone, increase military and economic support to Ukraine, and strengthen sanctions against the RF.
- Parliaments should encourage their governments to support humanitarian efforts and protect refugees.
- Parliamentarians should urge their governments support the field operations in Ukraine, including the extension of their mandates.
- Parliamentarians should use their influence on governments to make full use of OSCE as a unique platform to detect, prevent and defuse crises and conflicts in its region.
- Parliamentarians should support their governments in development and implementation of policies for diverse societies and pay due attention to preserving the social cohesion of the host countries when designing an overall response to the refugee crisis.
- OSCE and PA leadership could conduct a visit to Kyiv to assess the situation on the ground.
- OSCE PA leadership could put forward an appeal for diplomatic dialogue and peace talks to be presented simultaneously by each OSCE PA delegation in national parliaments.
- OSCE should coordinate its efforts with the EU, UN specialized structures to help with the refugee influx and with their subsequent integration.
- OSCE could hold a conference on the history of the engagement of the organization on the ground to draw lessons from the past and discuss the most efficient tools at its disposal.
- OSCE and PA leadership in cooperation with the UN Secretary General could convene a conference involving the permanent members of UN Security Council, Ukraine and a number of other European countries (possibly including Ukraine's neighbors). The conference would aim to discuss guarantees for Ukraine if it were to choose neutrality.
- With the consent of Ukraine, UN General Assembly could deploy a peacekeeping force to protect humanitarian corridors.
- Interested countries could appeal to the UN to establish a no-fly zone over nuclear power plants and humanitarian corridors.
- One participant proposed consideration of an overall strategy of engagement for the OSCE, which should include the following steps: i. to reopen the channels of communications between the opposing sides which were closed or to keep open those which are still functional; ii. to take a stand against the inflammatory and offensive rhetoric, since, as long as nobody wants to start a third world war, the time is for dialogue and negotiations, and not for recrimination and mutual condemnations; iii. to prepare itself for providing support to the peace process through field missions of monitoring and peace keeping; iv. to provide humanitarian aid and to implement humanitarian protection measures for the civilians who are victims of the war; v. to draft a blueprint for a model of protecting the rights of those belonging to the ethnic minorities living in Ukraine and to assist to and monitor its implementation in the shortest delay; vi. to facilitate the agreement on a peace solution through negotiations, by providing mediation and/or good offices.