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Original: English

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE OSCE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

Mr. George Tsereteli

**Twenty-eighth Annual Session
of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly**

LUXEMBOURG, 4-8 July 2019

Dear colleagues and friends,

Following my election as President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Berlin, I have continued to highlight several of our priorities, which include redoubling our conflict resolution efforts, ensuring that the OSCE is fully equipped to address new challenges, and promoting our common values.

I have appreciated the level of support I have received from Members of the Assembly and the Secretariat in both Copenhagen and Vienna. This has been crucial to support an intensive agenda to meet our most pressing challenges such as addressing conflicts, radicalization and terrorism, and migration, implementing our human right commitments, striving to achieve gender equality, fostering economic co-operation, expanding our international partnerships, and reforming the OSCE PA to make our work more impactful.

Detailed information on my work as President is listed in this report. In addition to these primary activities, I have met on several occasions with Heads of OSCE institutions to improve co-ordination at headquarters and in the field and ensure that our activities complement each other. I have also met with numerous PA delegations on the margins of my travels to ensure that all voices are heard and reflected in the work of our Parliamentary Assembly. Finally, together with a small group of Members, the Bureau and the International Secretariat, we have held regular discussions to consider changes in the Assembly's work, in order to make it more effective and more visible.

I want to thank those parliaments that have hosted my visits, but also particularly applaud and thank OSCE staff. Since our last Annual Session, I have had the opportunity to visit four OSCE field missions¹ and I have met with dedicated professionals from many other OSCE offices. I can personally attest to the excellent work they do, at times under difficult circumstances.

July 2018

Immediately after our Berlin Annual Session, I participated in the Leinsweiler seminar hosted by our Treasurer Doris Barnett (Germany), which this year focused on how to prevent ethnic conflicts through law and the exchange of best practice. In my remarks, I warned that nationalist rhetoric as well as unilateral actions have threatened to undermine trust in the OSCE's



¹ The OSCE Programme Office in Nur-Sultan, the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan, the OSCE Mission to Moldova, and the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine.

ability to find common ground. I also noted that minorities should be seen as an asset for OSCE countries, where they can serve as a bridge in inter-state relations, in particular in border areas.²

I reiterated that message in Udine the following week, on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations on National Minorities in Inter-State Relations organized by the High Commissioner on National Minorities, Ambassador Lamberto Zannier.

I capped that busy first half of July by opening the 15th annual South Caucasus Media Conference organized by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media in Tbilisi. Echoing our Berlin debates, I warned that the instrumentalization of “fake news” as a political tool poses a danger to democracy and noted that everyone benefits from ensuring high professional media standards. My main point was that journalists and politicians should work together in the interests of good journalism and democracy.³

August 2018

Over the summer, we coordinated a plan of activities together with the International Secretariat. We also continued to work diligently to modernize our working practices with a view of making the OSCE PA more visible and more effective. I visited the International Secretariat in early September to finalize our plans.

September 2018

My first official activity after the summer was my participation in the opening of the OSCE’s Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) in Warsaw. The preparations for this year’s meeting were undermined by lack of consensus in Vienna regarding the agenda, and I have since repeated my regret that the basic functioning of our organization is threatened by such disputes. The OSCE PA has formulated and implemented several changes to the consensus rule, which I have encouraged participating States to consider. In my address to the HDIM, I stressed that open dialogue on controversial issues must continue and opposing views must



² OSCE parliamentarians address ethnic conflict prevention in Berlin seminar, 13 July 2018, <http://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/osce-parliamentarians-address-ethnic-conflict-prevention-in-berlin-seminar>.

³ Journalists and politicians should work together in the interests of good journalism and democracy, says OSCE PA President at Tbilisi media conference, 19 July 2018, <http://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/journalists-and-politicians-should-work-together-in-the-interests-of-good-journalism-and-democracy-says-osce-pa-president-at-tbilisi-media-conference>.

be heard by all in order to successfully work together towards implementing OSCE commitments.

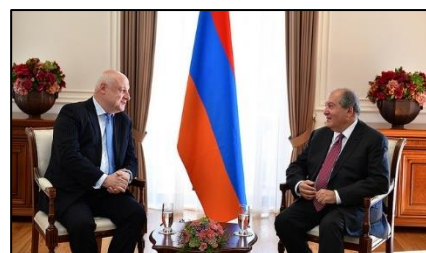
I am glad to report that the PA significantly stepped up its engagement with the HDIM this year, as four other Members of our Bureau were in attendance. This sent a positive signal to the rest of our partners regarding our readiness to work together to promote accountability and advance human security for all across the OSCE area.⁴

Following this, I was in Yerevan on 11-12 September to meet with President Armen Sarkissian, Speaker Ara Babloyan, Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, as well as parliamentary leaders, civil society representatives, and students. We discussed a range of issues including economic development, electoral reform, anti-corruption efforts, regional relations, and Armenia's work within the OSCE. Following a dramatic change of government earlier in 2018, I was pleased to see a willingness for political forces to work together constructively, which carried on to the early parliamentary elections of December 2018.⁵

On 20 September, I was also in Baku on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the establishment of Azerbaijan's first parliament. This was a welcome opportunity to follow-up on my visit of March 2018 with President Ilham Aliyev, Speaker Ogtay Asadov and our colleagues from the Delegation of Azerbaijan.⁶

Both of these trips were useful to highlight our Assembly's continued engagement in the South Caucasus region and discuss how parliamentary diplomacy can contribute to advancing peace in the region.

On 13-14 September, I also visited Rome to ensure close continued co-ordination with the Italian Chairmanship in the run-up to the Milan Ministerial Council meeting. In meetings with the Chairperson-in-Office Foreign Minister Enzo Milanese, Deputy Foreign Minister Guglielmo Picchi, the President of the Senate, Maria Elisabetta Alberti Casellati, the President of the Chamber of Deputies, Roberto Fico and other



⁴ High-level OSCE PA participation at Europe's largest human rights conference, 21 September 2018, <http://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/high-level-osce-pa-participation-at-europe-s-largest-human-rights-conference>.

⁵ Electoral reforms, regional security and co-operation in focus of OSCE PA President's visit to Armenia, 13 September 2018, <http://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/electoral-reforms-regional-security-and-co-operation-in-focus-of-osce-pa-president-s-visit-to-armenia>.

⁶ In Baku OSCE PA President invites greater role for parliament, 24 September 2018, <http://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/in-baku-osce-pa-president-invites-greater-role-for-parliament>.

high-level interlocutors, I welcomed Italy's leadership on addressing our most pressing challenges.

I also emphasized the importance of overcoming differences, building on shared needs and experiences, and restoring a strong commitment to multilateralism. I noted the important role played by Italy in promoting greater synergy between the parliamentary and governmental structures of the Organization, which has been one of the concrete deliverables of this year's Chairmanship.⁷

October 2018

I was pleased to return to Kyrgyzstan for our Autumn Meeting on 3-6 October to engage in important conversations on challenges such as migration, trade, terrorism, border security and the environment. The exceptional effort put into the organization of this event by the Delegation of Kyrgyzstan and the staff of the Jogorku Kenesh was clear to all our participants,

As I pointed in my opening remarks, parliamentarians, along with civil society, have a key role to generate political will in support of the implementation of OSCE commitments and shared solutions. Our meeting in Bishkek was again a good opportunity to exchange on new ways to draw on our Members' expertise and modernize our work in order to maximize our impact.^{8,9}

Immediately after the Autumn Meeting, I travelled to Turkey to participate in the third Meeting of Speakers of Eurasian Countries' Parliaments, held this year under the theme of "Economic Cooperation, Environment and Sustainable Development in Eurasia". In my remarks, I insisted on the fact that unfulfilled agreements have made it more difficult to work together in the pursuit of economic success across the OSCE area.

Our growing challenges necessitate closer collaboration between Eurasian countries and regional and international



⁷ In Rome visit, President Tsereteli welcomes Italian leadership of the OSCE, urges enhanced co-operation for stability and security, 15 September 2018, <http://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/in-rome-visit-parliamentary-assembly-president-tsereteli-welcomes-italian-leadership-of-the-osce-urges-enhanced-co-operation-for-stability-and-security>.

⁸ Role of parliaments in promoting regional and international security highlighted at OSCE PA Autumn Meeting in Bishkek, 3 October 2018, <http://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/role-of-parliaments-in-promoting-regional-and-international-security-highlighted-at-osce-pa-autumn-meeting-in-bishkek>.

⁹ Central Asia security, Mediterranean co-operation, migration, trade and environmental challenges in focus at Bishkek Autumn Meeting, 5 October 2018, <http://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/central-asia-security-mediterranean-co-operation-migration-trade-and-environmental-challenges-in-focus-at-bishkek-autumn-meeting-of-the-osce-parliamentary-assembly>.

organizations, and the meeting was a good opportunity to discuss some of our most pressing challenges with the parliamentary leadership of a number of OSCE countries and partners. On the margins of the conference, I held several bilateral meetings, including with Speakers from Turkey, Slovakia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. I also exchanged with the Speakers from Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, South Korea and with Heads of Delegation from Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Mongolia.¹⁰

I was then in Vienna on 11 October for the traditional address to the OSCE Permanent Council, where I presented the Berlin Declaration and encouraged our governments to consider our work and recommendations as they prepared for the Milan meeting. I regretted the lack of improvement of the state of health of the OSCE since my first address in January 2018. We continue to see signs of growing dysfunctionality, which not only endangers the very existence of the OSCE, but also exacerbates tensions between our countries. During the question and answer session, exchanges with OSCE ambassadors echoed concerns over the general state of the Organization, and the inability to achieve progress in solving conflicts in the OSCE area.¹¹

While in Vienna, I also took the opportunity to participate in a roundtable on the role of the OSCE in the context of East-West relations as part of the EU's interparliamentary conference, and participated in the celebration of the 15th anniversary of the opening of the OSCE PA's Vienna Liaison Office.

Following this, I was in Bratislava to confer with our colleagues ahead of Slovakia's 2019 Chairmanship of the OSCE. I met once again with Speaker Andrej Danko; but also with the incoming OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajcak; and the Slovak Delegation led by Petr Osusky. This visit was useful to carry on with 2018's excellent co-operation with Italy, and make sure the PA's expertise is called upon to support Slovakia's priorities.¹²

At the tail-end of that trip, I was in Geneva on 15-16 October to address the Inter-Parliamentary Union and meet IPU



¹⁰ *Respect for commitments crucial to achieve sustainable economic development in Eurasia, says PA President*, 9 October 2018, <http://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/respect-for-commitments-crucial-to-achieve-sustainable-economic-development-in-eurasia-says-pa-president>.

¹¹ *OSCE tools must be used in the collective interest of all, President Tsereteli says in speech to OSCE ambassadors in Vienna*, 11 October 2018, <http://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/osce-tools-must-be-used-in-the-collective-interest-of-all-president-tsereteli-says-in-speech-to-osce-ambassadors-in-vienna>.

¹² *President Tsereteli highlights complementary work of PA in visit to incoming Slovak Chairmanship*, 15 October 2018, <http://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/president-tsereteli-highlights-complementary-work-of-pa-in-visit-to-incoming-slovak-chairmanship>.

President Gabriela Cuevas Barron to explore ways our Assembly can strengthen co-operation with regional parliaments and parliamentary assemblies to build greater coherence and effectiveness in our global parliamentary work.¹³

November 2018

In early November, I led our observation mission to the United States for the midterm elections together with Vice-President Isabel Santos. This was a very politically important mission, as the mid-term elections were the first nation-wide opportunity to vote following the change of administration in the United States two years ago. We put together an important statement that will hopefully be of use in coming years.¹⁴

Our mission was another strong demonstration that we treat all countries equally and hold them to the same standards. It was also important that our delegation included several Members of the Russian parliament. It is a credit to our work and mission that we took this inclusive approach and that our Russian colleagues could contribute to our work, despite the difficulties stemming from the 2016 election.

The following week, I returned to Italy to participate in an OSCE seminar on anti-corruption, where I highlighted that parliamentarians are essential partners in the fight against corruption. On the margins of the conference, I met with the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Corruption, Paola Severino, to discuss synergies between the OSCE executive structures and the Parliamentary Assembly in enhancing transparency and accountability across the OSCE area. I welcomed the Italian Chairmanship's active work in the field of anti-corruption and expressed hope that future OSCE Chairmanships would maintain this strong engagement.¹⁵

I carried on to the Vatican on 12 November and to San Marino on 13-14 November for the first-ever visit there by a President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. These visits were useful to reaffirm the equal importance we attach to all OSCE participating States and to demonstrate the valuable



¹³ OSCE PA President highlights inter-parliamentary co-operation at IPU meeting, 23 October 2018, <http://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/osce-pa-president-highlights-inter-parliamentary-co-operation-at-ipu-meeting>.

¹⁴ US elections highly competitive, but voting rights not guaranteed for all groups, observers say, 7 November 2018, <http://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/us-elections-highly-competitive-but-voting-rights-not-guaranteed-for-all-groups-observers-say>

¹⁵ In Rome, OSCE PA President highlights role of parliamentarians in fight against corruption, 12 November 2018, <http://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/in-rome-osce-pa-president-highlights-role-of-parliamentarians-in-fight-against-corruption>.

contributions of small and large countries alike. The OSCE's inclusiveness is one of its strongest assets.^{16,17}

Later that month, I was in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan for my third visit to Central Asia of 2018, this time accompanied by the new Special Representative on Central Asia, Mr. Roman Haider from Austria.

In Nur-Sultan on 19-20 November, I commended Kazakhstan for their strong support of the OSCE and their commitment to the success of the Organization. We discussed a wide range of issues, including then-President Nazarbayev's proposal to host an OSCE Summit in 2020 to renew the Helsinki Final Act. I have welcomed this idea, which would provide an additional opportunity for the OSCE to maintain its relevance through more high-level political dialogue.¹⁸

Mr. Haider and I were joined in Tashkent by the Chair of the OSCE PA General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions Margret Kiener Nellen on 21 November. We voiced our appreciation for the continued engagement of Uzbekistan with the OSCE and our Parliamentary Assembly, and discussed how parliamentary diplomacy can contribute to stability and development in Central Asia.¹⁹

Ms. Kiener Nellen and I finished the week in Samarkand to address the Asian Forum on Human Rights and stress the central role that parliaments play in upholding human rights commitments domestically and internationally.²⁰

December 2018

Together with Members of our Bureau, I participated in the OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting in Milan on 6-8 December. In my opening session address, I pointed out that a strong



¹⁶ Meeting with authorities at the Vatican, OSCE PA President and Secretary General welcome contributions of Holy See, 13 November 2018, <http://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/meeting-with-authorities-at-the-vatican-osce-pa-president-and-secretary-general-welcome-contributions-of-holy-see>.

¹⁷ OSCE PA President Tsereteli and Secretary General Montella meet with leaders of San Marino, 14 November 2018, <http://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/osce-pa-president-tsereteli-and-secretary-general-montella-meet-with-leaders-of-san-marino>.

¹⁸ OSCE-Kazakhstan relations commended by PA President, Special Representative on Central Asia applauds diplomatic achievements, 19 November 2018, <http://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/osce-kazakhstan-relations-commended-by-osce-pa-president-special-representative-on-central-asia-applauds-diplomatic-achievements-in-region>.

¹⁹ Reform agenda and role of parliament and parliamentary diplomacy highlighted in OSCE PA visit to Uzbekistan, 21 November 2018, <http://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/reform-agenda-and-role-of-parliament-and-parliamentary-diplomacy-highlighted-in-osce-pa-visit-to-uzbekistan>.

²⁰ In Samarkand forum, PA President and human rights Chair stress parliamentary role in human rights promotion, 23 November 2018, <http://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/in-samarkand-forum-pa-president-and-human-rights-chair-stress-parliamentary-role-in-human-rights-promotion>.

OSCE is needed to serve as a forum for real confidence-building in these periods of tensions between East and West. I also underlined to the OSCE Foreign Ministers that it is really up to governments to strengthen the OSCE, to pursue meaningful dialogue, and to demonstrate good faith in implementing commitments.²¹

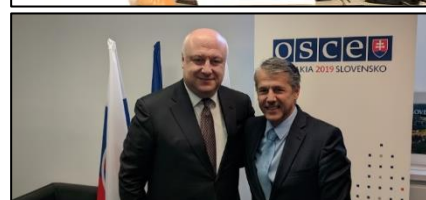
I reiterated those points in a number of high-level bilateral meetings with the foreign ministers of Turkey, the Russian Federation, Albania, and Moldova and the Head of Delegation from Morocco, as well as in a number of informal conversations on the sidelines of the Ministerial Council with ministers and ambassadors, including representatives from Italy, the United States, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Azerbaijan, Montenegro, Sweden and France.²²

January 2019

As is now established practice, I was in Vienna in mid-January to address the OSCE Permanent Council and outline the priorities and work of our Parliamentary Assembly in the run-up to our 2019 Annual Session.

I noted that our current environment and the behavior of several participating States clearly demonstrates the need for more sustainability in the OSCE's work and to provide the OSCE with the resources it needs to do its job. In that regard, I highlighted the PA's position regarding the need for a reform of the consensus rule and establish modalities that allow for this organization to function. I also stressed that the new Slovak OSCE Chairmanship's emphasis of co-operation to benefit those we ultimately serve mirrors the Assembly's focus on delivering effective results.²³

As part of my visit to Vienna, I met with the President of the Austrian National Council and Head of the Delegation of Austria to the OSCE PA Wolfgang Sobotka for talks focused on the crisis in and around Ukraine. I also exchanged with our colleagues in the Austrian delegation on future PA activities,



²¹ *Strong OSCE needed to navigate uncertain waters, OSCE PA President Tsereteli says at opening of Ministerial Council in Milan*, 6 December 2018, <http://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/strong-osce-needed-to-navigate-uncertain-waters-osce-pa-president-tsereteli-says-at-opening-of-ministerial-council-in-milan>.

²² *In high-level meetings in Milan, PA President urges steps to build confidence, insists on implementation of international agreements*, 7 December 2018, <http://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/in-high-level-bilateral-meetings-in-milan-osce-pa-president-urges-steps-to-build-confidence-insists-on-implementation-of-international-agreements>.

²³ *In address to the Permanent Council and meetings in Vienna, PA President Tsereteli urges a strong OSCE for real confidence-building*, 18 January 2019, <http://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/in-address-to-the-permanent-council-and-meetings-in-vienna-pa-president-tsereteli-urges-a-strong-osce-for-real-confidence-building>.

including election observation and participation in OSCE events.²⁴ In meetings with OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger, OSCE Representative on Media Freedom Harlem Désir and Permanent Representative of Slovakia Radomir Bohac, we discussed ways to further strengthen institutional co-operation and make use of the parliamentary toolbox in support of OSCE commitments and priorities.



On 21-22 January I was in Moldova to stress the importance of the upcoming parliamentary elections. My second visit is less than a year, coming just days after a visit by the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Slovak Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajcak, also reiterated the importance being paid to developments in Moldova by the OSCE. With public trust in the rule of law and democratic institutions at stake, I called on all my interlocutors to contribute to ensure that these elections meet the high standards expected by Moldovan citizens.²⁵



February 2019

On 5-8 February I participated in forums in Washington, DC and held a series of meetings to underline the importance of U.S. engagement for European security. I was pleased that these discussions emphasized the continued commitment of colleagues in the United States Congress to contribute to peace and stability across Europe.



While in Washington, I had the opportunity to attend the U.S. President's State of the Union Address on Tuesday night, and exchange with Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on the margins of the National Prayer Breakfast. As part of my visit I addressed a seminar held on the challenges facing South East Europe and the Russian Federation's role in the region, chaired by Senator James Inhofe and promoted by Fatmir Mediu (Albania). The event was also attended by several OSCE PA Members from the United States and South East European countries.



In discussions with the leadership from the State Department's Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, I also underlined the importance of increasing synergy between



²⁴ Austrian leadership important for OSCE says PA President in Vienna, 17 January 2019, <http://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/austrian-leadership-important-for-osce-says-pa-president-in-vienna>.

²⁵ In Moldova, OSCE PA President stresses importance of upcoming elections for public trust in institutions, 23 January 2019, <http://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/in-moldova-osce-pa-president-stresses-importance-of-upcoming-elections-for-public-trust-in-institutions>.

international organizations working on conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation.²⁶

In my home country of Georgia, I met on 11 February with the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Miroslav Lajcak to exchange notes on developments in the OSCE area, including the situation of the occupied territories of Georgia.

We met again in Vienna on the margins of our Winter Meeting, which was the occasion for me to hold a series of bilateral meetings, including with the U.S. and Russian delegations, as well as the delegations of Albania and Armenia, and the Chairman of the Kazakh Mazhilis Nurlan Nigmatulin. I also met with OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger and representatives from regional parliamentary organizations.²⁷

Immediately after, I led our observer mission for the parliamentary elections in Moldova as Special Co-ordinator. Together with our institutional partners, we produced a robust statement which will be useful as Moldova continues its democratization effort, and which will help guide some of the political conversations we will hold with our Moldovan parliamentary colleagues in the years to come.²⁸

Ahead of the Ukrainian presidential election, I also traveled to Kyiv to meet presidential candidates and key stakeholders. We met with a whole range of interlocutors including from the media, civil society, and the diplomatic corps, giving us a good overall picture of the situation. Together with Treasurer Doris Barnett, we took note of concerns regarding the campaign including allegations of misuse of state resources and vote-buying. We also underlined that every allegation needs to be fact-based, substantiated and addressed to the appropriate state bodies. Five years since the momentous Euromaidan events of February 2014, we recognized that holding a competitive, peaceful and well-administered presidential election was vital to advance the democratic development of Ukraine and promote stability and security in the OSCE region.²⁹



²⁶ In Washington, OSCE PA President underlines U.S. role in preserving European stability, 8 February 2019, <http://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/in-washington-osce-pa-president-underlines-u-s-role-in-preserving-european-stability>.

²⁷ Migration, counter-terrorism, corruption and more debated at OSCE PA's Winter Meeting in Vienna, 22 February 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/migration-counter-terrorism-corruption-and-more-debated-at-osce-pa-s-winter-meeting-in-vienna>

²⁸ Fundamental rights generally respected in competitive Moldovan elections, though campaign tainted by violations, observers say, 25 February 2019 <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/fundamental-rights-generally-respected-in-competitive-moldovan-elections-though-campaign-tainted-by-violations-international-observers-say>

²⁹ Tsereteli and Barnett in Kyiv in advance of election observation, 28 February 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/tsereteli-and-barnett-in-kyiv-in-advance-of-election-observation>

March 2019

On 25-26 March I visited the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg to finalize with the Chamber of Deputies the agreement to hold our 28th Annual Session in Luxembourg City. Together with Secretary General Roberto Montella, we met with Grand Duke Henri, Prime Minister Xavier Bettel, Speaker Fernand Etgen, Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn, as well as members of the Standing Committee of the Chamber of Deputies and the Delegation of Luxembourg to the OSCE PA led by Eugene Berger.³⁰

There, we voiced appreciation for Luxembourg's steadfast support to the OSCE and appreciate the full commitment of the authorities for the successful organization of our event. Topics of discussion included major international issues, particularly the crisis in and around Ukraine, protracted conflicts, the situation in Georgia, human rights, OSCE PA activities, and the future co-operation between Luxembourg and the PA.

I then traveled to The Hague for meetings aimed at reinforcing bilateral co-operation with the Dutch parliament and joint work between the Parliamentary Assembly and the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM).³¹

I met with Khadija Arib, President of the House of Representatives, Ankie Broekers-Knol, President of the Senate, and members of the delegation of the Netherlands to the OSCE PA. Our discussions touched on major international issues, including the situation in Ukraine, humanitarian consequences of active and protracted armed conflicts in the OSCE region, and relations with Russia. I welcomed Dutch initiatives aimed at resolving practical issues between opposing OSCE countries.

In a visit to the HCNM, I was briefed by Ambassador Lamberto Zannier and staff on current regional and thematic issues, as well as future projects and events. The visit was also an occasion to discuss ways to concretely increase co-operation between OSCE parliamentarians and the HCNM, through participation in joint visits and events. I voiced strong support for the work of the HCNM and committed the PA to engage with OSCE parliaments in order to ensure that HCNM



³⁰ In Luxembourg, OSCE PA President and Secretary General sign agreement for 2019 Annual Session, hold high-level meetings, 26 March 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/in-luxembourg-osce-pa-president-and-secretary-general-sign-agreement-for-2019-annual-session-hold-high-level-meetings>

³¹ President Tsereteli reinforces co-operation between the PA, Dutch Parliament and High Commissioner on National Minorities in visit to The Hague, 28 March 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/president-tsereteli-reinforces-co-operation-between-the-pa-dutch-parliament-and-high-commissioner-on-national-minorities-in-visit-to-the-hague>

recommendations and guidelines are taken into account when developing national legislation, with a view of easing inter-ethnic tensions across the OSCE area.

April 2019

On the occasion of our Bureau Meeting in Copenhagen on 8 April, we welcomed Albanian President Ilir Meta, who discussed preparations underway in Albania for its assumption of the 2020 OSCE Chairmanship, and OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger, who emphasized it is necessary to rebuild trust and ensure the Organization is equipped with needed resources for it to be effective. In our exchanges, I noted in particular the importance of overcoming the political differences that have stood in the way of principled discussions and removing obstacles that continue to delay the OSCE budget from being adopted in a timely fashion and prevents OSCE institutions from carrying out their mandates.³²

In a lengthy conversation with President Meta, we also discussed Albanian domestic challenges and political developments. Both Secretary General Montella and I welcomed Albania's commitment to chair the OSCE in 2020, which is an act of courage, responsibility, and generosity. With the Chairmanship in sight, we stressed the need for Albanian politicians to promote a positive image through political convergence and compromise that must materialize in the appropriate fora, through responsible dialogue and co-operation. Throughout this spring we have closely followed developments in Albania and have stood ready to engage our expertise and instruments in co-ordination with the OSCE's governmental side and institutions³³

Two weeks later, I served as Special Co-ordinator and leader of the short-term OSCE observer mission for the second round of the presidential election in Ukraine. Working closely with the ODIHR, the European Parliament, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and our own delegation led by Doris Barnett, our presence was crucial to support a democratic and orderly transfer of power and continue to assist Ukraine in the country's renewed efforts to provide good governance.³⁴



³²Assembly leadership meets in Copenhagen, hears from Albanian President and OSCE Secretary General, 8 April 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/assembly-leadership-meets-in-copenhagen-hears-from-albanian-president-and-osce-secretary-general>

³³ Albanian President Meta meets with OSCE PA President and Secretary General in Copenhagen, 9 April 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/albanian-president-meta-meets-with-osce-pa-president-and-secretary-general-in-copenhagen>

³⁴ Fundamental freedoms respected in competitive Ukraine election, though campaign lacked genuine discussion of issues, observers say, 22 April 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/fundamental-freedoms-respected-in-competitive-ukraine-election-though-campaign-lacked-genuine-discussion-of-issues-observers-say>

On 29 April, I met in Minsk with Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko to emphasize the importance of close co-operation between Belarus and the PA, discuss efforts to put an end to the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine through the Minsk negotiating process, and address the status of democratic reforms. I also followed up on the need to safeguard fundamental rights and ensure an even playing field ahead of parliamentary elections with Speaker Vladimir Andreichenko, the Head of the Delegation of Belarus to the OSCE PA, Boleslav Pirshchuk, and representatives from opposition parties and civil society.³⁵

My visit to Belarus served to participate in the parliamentary conference of the Silk Road Support Group, hosted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus under the theme “Belt and Road: Deepening Cooperation for Sustainable Development and Prosperity.” I noted concerns voiced regarding the growing influence of China in the OSCE area, including during our Copenhagen Bureau meeting, and welcomed this opportunity to encourage greater parliamentary oversight over Belt and Road projects.

May 2019

In early May, I participated in the fifth Leinsweiler seminar, which this year explored lessons learned from European history on the power of economics as an instrument of conflict prevention and rehabilitation – or as a source of conflict. Together with Doris Barnett, we underlined that the aim of these seminars is to promote dialogue between OSCE participating States at a time where entrenched positions and nationalist rhetoric, as well as unilateral actions which run contrary to the founding principles of the OSCE, have threatened to undermine trust and the ability to find common ground.³⁶

Later that month, I took part in a study visit to explore the local and global impact of climate change together with Second Committee Chair Nilza de Sena (Portugal), Rapporteur Elona Gjebrea Hoxha (Albania), and the Delegation of Norway led by Siv Mossleth and Vice-President Kari Henriksen. In Svalbard, one of the world’s northernmost inhabited areas, we



[2019/fundamental-freedoms-respected-in-competitive-ukraine-election-though-campaign-lacked-genuine-discussion-of-issues-international-observers-say](https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/fundamental-freedoms-respected-in-competitive-ukraine-election-though-campaign-lacked-genuine-discussion-of-issues-international-observers-say)

³⁵ *In visit to Belarus, PA President underlines need for democratic reform, parliamentary oversight*, 29 April 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/in-visit-to-belarus-pa-president-underlines-need-for-democratic-reform-parliamentary-oversight>

³⁶ *Parliamentarians discuss economic drivers of conflict and co-operation at OSCE PA seminar in Leinsweiler, Germany*, 6 May 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/parliamentarians-discuss-economic-drivers-of-conflict-and-co-operation-at-osce-pa-seminar-in-leinsweiler-germany>

witnessed new local realities in the High North and considered how climate change poses security risks for the entire OSCE region. This visit was important for us to better understand the concerns emerging from Norway and other Arctic countries.³⁷

In meetings with Storting President Tone Trøen, Minister for Climate and Environment Ola Elvestuen, and Foreign Affairs State Secretary Marianne Hagen in Oslo, we further highlighted the need for Arctic countries to maintain concerted efforts to safeguard the High North as an area of peaceful co-operation, while all OSCE countries must commit to the protection of the nature and biodiversity of the Arctic.

In order to support international co-operation and security dialogue in the High North, and alert OSCE parliamentarians to the threat of climate change, I have appointed Torill Eidsheim (Norway) as Special Representative on Arctic Issues. I look forward to her work to involve parliamentarians in efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change.³⁸

June 2019

On 2-3 June, I was in Bratislava to address the Spring Session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. I underlined that challenges to the European security architecture call for greater transatlantic and pan-European co-operation. This requires both our Organizations and our Assemblies to reinforce our partnership to achieve a safe and secure Europe without divisions.

I had fruitful talks with NATO PA President Madeleine Moon (MP, United Kingdom) and NATO PA Secretary General David Hobbs to explore opportunities for the NATO PA and the OSCE PA to deepen their relationship. In light of the OSCE PA's upcoming Autumn Meeting in Marrakesh this October, we discussed ways for the two parliamentary assemblies to work together to tackle security challenges in the Mediterranean region.³⁹



³⁷ In visit to Arctic region, OSCE PA leadership explores local and global impact of climate change, 23 May 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/in-visit-to-arctic-region-osce-pa-leadership-explores-local-and-global-impact-of-climate-change>

³⁸ In Oslo, OSCE PA delegation urges continued focus on High North, Tsereteli names new Special Representative on Arctic Issues, 24 May 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/in-oslo-osce-pa-delegation-urges-continued-focus-on-the-high-north-president-tsereteli-names-new-special-representative-on-arctic-issues>

³⁹ In address to NATO PA, OSCE PA President Tsereteli calls for stronger partnership to defend common values and tackle security challenges, 3 June 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/in-address-to-nato-parliamentarians-osce-pa-president-tsereteli-calls-for-stronger-partnership-to-defend-common-values-and-tackle-security-challenges>

Later that week I was glad to take part with several other Members in a conference on parliamentary oversight organized by the Parliament of Georgia and ODIHR. In my keynote address, I called for continued attention to uphold and strengthen OSCE parliaments' roles in holding governments accountable, as a way to ensure that state actions are efficient and that they respond to the needs of the public.⁴⁰

In Kazakhstan, I served as Special Co-ordinator and leader of some 300 short-term observers for the early presidential election. This election represented an important moment for Kazakhstan's society as this was the first time that the long-serving first president was not competing. While there were seven candidates, including for the first time a woman, the election showed that there is a need for genuine democratic consolidation and significant political, social and legal reforms. I encouraged the new President, former OSCE PA Vice-President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, and authorities to seize this opportunity, strengthen trust in the institutions and meet the expectations of the people of Kazakhstan.⁴¹

Immediately after this important work in Nur-Sultan, I participated in the "Baku Conference on Regional Cooperation and Security" with parliamentary leaders from Azerbaijan, Germany, and Turkey. This was another opportunity for high-level dialogue with the Azerbaijani authorities to further advance parliamentary contributions to peace in the South Caucasus.

For my last activity prior to this Annual Session, I visited Cyprus to encourage continued engagement in parliamentary diplomacy to tackle enduring and emerging challenges. In meetings with President of Cyprus Nicos Anastasiades, the President of the House of Representatives Demetris Syllouris, Foreign Minister Nicos Christodoulides, and Minister of Finance Harris Georgiades, I welcomed Cyprus's active engagement in our complex agenda. I underlined that the work of the delegation led by Irene Charalambides and of our Third Committee Rapporteur Kyriakos Hadjiyianni provides leadership in several key areas including the defence of human rights, the fight against corruption, and outreach to partners in the southern Mediterranean and the Middle East.



⁴⁰ Robust oversight key to rule of law, stress OSCE parliamentarians in Tbilisi, 6 June 2019,

<https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/robust-oversight-key-to-rule-of-law-stress-osce-parliamentarians-in-tbilisi>

⁴¹ Potential for reform left untapped in Kazakhstan's election through lack of respect for fundamental freedoms and voting irregularities: observers, 10 June 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/potential-for-political-reform-left-untapped-in-kazakhstan-s-early-presidential-election-through-lack-of-respect-for-fundamental-freedoms-and-widespread-voting-irregularities-international-observers-say>

My visit also included a visit to the UN Buffer Zone and the offices of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), where I heard more about ongoing efforts to create the conditions for a comprehensive and durable settlement of the Cyprus dispute, and I encouraged closer co-operation with the UN as a means to further reinforce the effectiveness of our multilateral efforts to prevent and overcome conflicts. I also visited the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus, where I was impressed to hear from both Turkish and Greek Cypriots impacted by the partition of the island about the willingness of both sides to foster reconciliation.⁴²

* * *

In this period, I have also made statements when the PA voice needed to be heard. In response to the holding of “elections” in the so-called “people’s republics” of Donetsk and Luhansk in eastern Ukraine in mid-November, I emphasized the PA’s full support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders and reiterated a long-standing call for the full implementation of the Minsk agreements by all sides, which remains the best path to a long-term solution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine. Holding any kind of elections without Ukraine’s consent is a clear violation of the country’s sovereignty. I underlined that the ‘elections’ held on 11 November were unlawful and provocative and only served to hinder the implementation of the Minsk agreements.⁴³

Regarding the seizure of Ukrainian naval vessels and the blocking of traffic into the Kerch Strait by Russia: I stated that this represented an unacceptable escalation of tensions, and urged Moscow and Kyiv to avoid further steps that might have led to a military escalation.⁴⁴ These are points I made directly to Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov when we met at the Milan Ministerial Council Meeting.

In January I welcomed reports from Azerbaijan that the General Prosecutor’s Office had terminated a criminal case against anti-corruption blogger and chair of the media NGO Institute for Reporters’ Freedom and Safety Mehman Huseynov. I have followed his case closely and I have



⁴² OSCE PA presidential visit to Cyprus focuses on parliamentary diplomacy, humanitarian concerns, 20 June 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/osce-pa-presidential-visit-to-cyprus-focuses-on-parliamentary-diplomacy-humanitarian-concerns>

⁴³ OSCE PA President Tsereteli regrets local ‘elections’ in Donbas, urges renewed commitment to international negotiations, 12 November 2018, <http://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/osce-pa-president-tsereteli-regrets-local-elections-in-donbas-urges-renewed-commitment-to-international-negotiations>.

⁴⁴ PA President urges Russia to restore freedom of passage to the Sea of Azov, urges restraint from Moscow and Kyiv, 26 November 2018, <http://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/osce-pa-president-urges-russia-to-restore-freedom-of-passage-to-the-sea-of-azov-urges-restraint-from-moscow-and-kyiv>.

regularly raised it in my discussions with parliamentary colleagues and Azerbaijani authorities.⁴⁵

During our Winter Meeting in Vienna, I decided to ask Vice-President Margareta Cederfelt to carry out a report on the investigation of the assassination of Boris Nemtsov, upon the request of several Members and Russian civil society and based on a call by our Assembly last year in Berlin. I am thankful to the U.S. Congress for having adopted a strong resolution on this topic, where the work of our Parliamentary Assembly is clearly underlined, and which calls on Russia to co-operate with the PA. I look forward to continued close co-operation with the Helsinki Commission on this issue.

As part of our continued efforts to monitor developments in Albania and assist in solving the current political deadlock, we issued together with OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Slovakia's Foreign and European Affairs Minister Miroslav Lajčák, OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger, and OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella a communique strongly condemning the use of violence by protesters in Tirana, as well as the threats and attempted intimidation directed at the Head of the OSCE's Presence in Albania and at the Organization in general. We also called on law enforcement officials to show restraint.⁴⁶

I have also closely followed the events unfolding in Moldova in early June and I welcomed the important political agreements that were reached, culminating in a peaceful transition of power in line with the results of the parliamentary elections. I have encouraged the new Moldovan government to focus on stability, reforms, and delivering for the people in the months and years to come.

* * *

Throughout this period, I have carried on consultations with Members and the International Secretariat on ways to improve and modernize our work in order to maximize the impact of the PA's activities.

Under the guidance of Vice-President Peter Bowness, many ideas have been put forward, and some of them are already being implemented. We have given more importance to non-



⁴⁵ OSCE PA President welcomes the dropping of new criminal proceedings against jailed Azerbaijani blogger Mehman Huseynov, 22 January 2019, <http://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/osce-pa-president-welcomes-the-dropping-of-new-criminal-proceedings-against-jailed-azerbaijani-blogger-mehman-huseynov>.

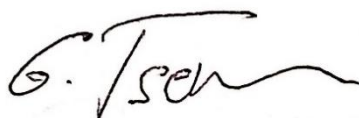
⁴⁶ OSCE leaders express concern regarding violent protests in Albania, call for utmost restraint and dialogue, 13 May 2019, <https://www.osce.org/chairmanship/419423>

statutory activities by engaging in major debates on terrorism and on migration at our Winter Meeting and by integrating discussions with Central Asian field office Heads during our Autumn Meeting in Bishkek. We have also implemented the timetabling of agendas to give greater clarity on expectations of our own meetings.

Since our last Annual Session, our Secretariat has worked on developing guidelines that complement the current Code of Conduct for Election Observation Missions regarding potential conflicts of interests, and our election observation practices have been reviewed to preserve the overall credibility of this exercise.

I have also followed up on discussions among the Assembly leadership to ensure that our work reaches a larger public. Our Secretariat has developed a media strategy, which along with the redesign of our website and the launch of a mobile application, will fully insert the OSCE PA into the digital age.

Let me once again thank Secretary General Roberto Montella and the International Secretariat for their support and express my gratitude for the strong engagement of our Members over the recent months. This has greatly contributed to strengthening our Organization and making it more visible and effective. I look forward to continuing this important work with you.



George Tsereteli

