



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe  
**PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY**

**COMPREHENSIVE REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES  
OF THE PRESIDENT  
OF THE OSCE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY**

**H.E. Mr. George Tsereteli  
(November 2017 – December 2020)**

**February 2021**

Upon assuming the office of President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in November 2017, I have strived to highlight several priorities, which include redoubling our conflict resolution efforts, ensuring that the OSCE is fully equipped to address new challenges, and promoting our common values and principles.

Throughout my presidency, I have greatly 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 pursue an ambitious 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 between November 2017 and December 2020 is listed in this report. In addition to these primary activities, I have also made numerous statements when the PA voice needed to be heard. In addition, 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 – and online – to ensure that all voices are heard and reflected in the work of our Parliamentary Assembly.

I want to thank parliaments that have hosted my visits, but also particularly applaud and thank OSCE staff. Over the course of my presidency, I have had the opportunity to visit eight OSCE field missions<sup>1</sup> and all OSCE Institutions, where I have met talented and dedicated professionals. I can personally attest to the excellent work they do, at times under difficult circumstances.



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<sup>1</sup> The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine, the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek, the OSCE Programme Office in Nur-Sultan, the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan, the OSCE Presence in Albania, the OSCE Mission to Serbia, and the OSCE Mission to Moldova.

## **November 2017**

Upon assuming the office of President of the OSCE PA on 9 November, I travelled to Copenhagen for meetings at the International Secretariat. There, together with Secretary General Roberto Montella and his staff, we made plans for presidential activities in the run-up to the Berlin Annual Session.<sup>2</sup> This visit also afforded me the opportunity to discuss OSCE priorities with the Speaker of the Danish Parliament, Pia Kjaersgaard, and thank her for Denmark's generous contributions to the work of our Parliamentary Assembly.<sup>3</sup>

I returned to Copenhagen in late November to address the Standing Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and exchange both with then-PACE President Stella Kyriakides and Michele Nicoletti, who was elected President in January 2018. In my remarks, I highlighted the role that the OSCE and the Council of Europe have historically played in the transformation of Europe. I also urged continued dialogue and a creative approach to strengthen international co-operation, in particular to address migration and to counter terrorism. I also underlined a number of new and enduring challenges, which require greater attention: growing political and social tensions both within and between countries, democratic erosion and threats to human rights throughout the OSCE area, as well as ongoing conflicts, radicalization, terrorism, populism, cybersecurity, migration, and organized crime.<sup>4</sup>

## **December 2017**

I reiterated these messages in my address to OSCE Ministers and in the various bilateral meetings I held on the margins of the Vienna Ministerial Council, including with then-incoming Chairperson-in-Office and Italian Foreign Minister Angelino



<sup>2</sup> OSCE PA President Christine Muttonen steps down, Vice-President George Tsereteli to serve as President, 9 November 2017, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2017/osce-pa-president-christine-muttonen-steps-down-vice-president-george-tsereteli-to-serve-as-president>.

<sup>3</sup> New Assembly President Tsereteli and Danish Parliament Speaker Kjaersgaard discuss OSCE priorities, 10 November 2017, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2017/new-assembly-president-tsereteli-and-danish-parliament-speaker-kjaersgaard-discuss-osce-priorities>.

<sup>4</sup> In address to Council of Europe parliamentarians, OSCE PA President Tsereteli urges enhanced co-operation to meet new and enduring challenges, 24 November 2017, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2017/in-address-to-council-of-europe-parliamentarians-osce-pa-president-tsereteli-urges-enhanced-co-operation-to-meet-new-and-enduring-challenges>.



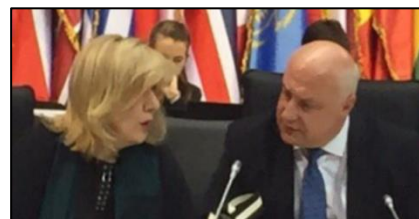
Alfano. I emphasized that governments should make the best use of the OSCE, which is a unique platform that deserves to be nurtured, supported and provided with necessary financial, human and material resources.<sup>5</sup> I also underlined that although comprehensive security may at times require compromise, the OSCE's core values and founding principles are areas that are not up for negotiation, and that comprehensive security requires equal attention to all its dimensions – including the economic and environmental.<sup>6</sup>

A priority of mine has been to redouble our organization's conflict resolution efforts. Each and every day, we all see the tragic human consequences of the conflicts in Ukraine, and Georgia, as well as from the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. As parliamentarians, I believe it is our duty to speak up against the violation of human rights in these conflict zones. I addressed these issues at a meeting of the GUAM Parliamentary Assembly in Tbilisi, as Georgia held the chairmanship of the regional format for co-operation between Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova.<sup>7</sup>

### **January 2018**

For my first official visit of 2018, I travelled to Kyiv to reiterate the steadfast support of the Parliamentary Assembly for Ukraine's territorial integrity, within its internationally-recognized borders, and renew our calls to reach a sustained ceasefire. I met with a range of high-level interlocutors, including the Verkhovna Rada Chairman Andriy Parubiy, to also follow up on Kyiv's commitment to its reform agenda.

I also visited the premises of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to voice my strong support for their work. The SMM is a critical stabilizing force and it should be granted all necessary funds and security guarantees, as well as full access to Ukrainian territory, including everywhere along the border



<sup>5</sup> President Tsereteli builds dialogue and co-operation at OSCE Ministerial Council in Vienna, 8 December 2017, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2017/president-tsereteli-builds-dialogue-and-co-operation-on-margins-of-osce-ministerial-council-in-vienna>.

<sup>6</sup> Assembly President Tsereteli asks foreign ministers to equip OSCE with tools to meet current challenges, 7 December 2017, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2017/assembly-president-tsereteli-asks-foreign-ministers-to-equip-osce-with-tools-to-meet-current-challenges>.

<sup>7</sup> In address to GUAM Parliamentary Assembly, President Tsereteli underlines importance of resolving protracted conflicts, 21 December 2017, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2017/in-address-to-guam-parliamentary-assembly-president-tsereteli-underlines-importance-of-resolving-protracted-conflicts>.

with the Russian Federation, to successfully accomplish its mission.<sup>8</sup>

I reported on this visit and reiterated the key messages of my Ministerial Council remarks when I addressed the OSCE Permanent Council at the end of January. There, I also urged participating States to rapidly adopt the OSCE's budget, so the organization can live up to our expectations.<sup>9</sup> On the margins of this address, I met with the President of the National Council of Austria, Wolfgang Sobotka, to voice our collective appreciation for his country's strong support to the OSCE.<sup>10</sup>

## **February 2018**

I began February by traveling to New York City and Washington, DC. In my talks with senior UN officials, including UN General Assembly President and incoming OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Miroslav Lajcak, I underlined the importance of continued close co-operation among international actors. The OSCE and the United Nations are natural partners in many areas, and these meetings served to explore opportunities for further co-operation in priority fields of work, in particular the crisis in and around Ukraine, unresolved conflicts in the South Caucasus, developments in Central Asia and South East Europe, as well as humanitarian concerns, migration and terrorism. We also exchanged on our efforts to encourage a greater participation of women the conflict cycle to increase the likelihood and sustainability of peace and security, including through closer co-operation between our Organization and UN Women.<sup>11</sup>

In Washington, I noted the essential role of the OSCE as a forum for dialogue and stressed the importance of continued U.S. engagement in the Organization. My meetings with



<sup>8</sup> OSCE PA President stresses support for Ukraine, urges ceasefire as critical step to save lives, 19 January 2018, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/in-kyiv-osce-pa-president-stresses-support-for-ukraine-urges-ceasefire-as-critical-step-to-save-lives>

<sup>9</sup> PA President stresses value of OSCE, calls for greater support for organization, 25 January 2018, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/pa-president-stresses-value-of-osce-calls-for-greater-support-for-organization>.

<sup>10</sup> PA President Tsereteli and Austrian Parliament President Sobotka discuss OSCE priorities, 26 January 2018, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/pa-president-tsereteli-and-austrian-parliament-president-sobotka-discuss-osce-priorities>.

<sup>11</sup> In visit to UN, Tsereteli stresses need for international co-operation on peace efforts, 2 February 2018, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/in-visit-to-un-tsereteli-stresses-need-for-international-co-operation-on-peace-efforts>.



Members of Congress, State Department officials, and staff from the Helsinki Commission helped reinforce the robust working relationship that the Parliamentary Assembly has enjoyed with our American colleagues and emphasize that continued American commitment is essential to keep our organization strong.<sup>12</sup>



During our Winter Meeting, I exchanged with several delegations, including from Canada, France, Montenegro, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Romania, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, Uzbekistan, Israel and Morocco. These meetings served to prepare upcoming PA activities, presidential visits, and statutory meetings, as well as to discuss political developments in the OSCE region.<sup>13</sup>



### **March 2018**

My first activity following our Winter Meeting consisted in a trip to Baku to discuss democratic and economic reforms in the country with Azerbaijani counterparts, including President Ilham Aliyev. There, I highlighted Azerbaijan's potential as a bridge for dialogue and co-operation in the OSCE area. I also underlined that democratic reforms, particularly on freedom of the media and on creating conditions to maximize the contribution of civil society, should be addressed adequately. I explained that democratic and economic reforms in Azerbaijan mean increased security in the OSCE.<sup>14</sup>



On the margins of my visit, I was able to visit jailed journalists Mr. Mehman Huseynov and Mr. Aziz Orudjev and I asked the authorities to reconsider their cases. I am glad to report that Mr. Orudjev was later released from prison and I hope we can continue to dialogue on these issues going forward.



In Baku, I also participated in the international conference on “The role of Parliamentarians in boosting economic

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<sup>12</sup> *In Washington, OSCE PA's Tsereteli and Montella welcome U.S. role in the OSCE*, 9 February 2018, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/in-washington-osce-pa-s-tsereteli-and-montella-welcome-u-s-role-in-the-osce>.

<sup>13</sup> *Migration, violent extremism, climate change, arms control and 'fake news' top OSCE PA's Winter Meeting agenda*, 23 February 2018, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/migration-violent-extremism-climate-change-arms-control-and-fake-news-top-osce-pa-s-winter-meeting-agenda>.

<sup>14</sup> *High-level OSCE PA delegation in Baku emphasizes Azerbaijan's potential as bridge for dialogue and co-operation*, 12 March 2018, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/high-level-osce-pa-delegation-in-baku-emphasizes-azerbaijan-s-potential-as-bridge-for-dialogue-and-co-operation>.

cooperation and cultural ties along the Silk Road,” organized by the Parliament of Azerbaijan and the Silk Road Support Group led by our colleague Azay Guliyev. In my remarks, I pointed out that the OSCE’s economic and environmental activities are among its greatest successes. In times when all OSCE countries are becoming increasingly aware of the link between economic success and individual security, I focused on the key role that parliamentarians must play to favour economic opportunities and increase trade to support security across the OSCE area.<sup>15</sup>

Later in March I was in Berlin to sign the official agreement to hold our Annual Session here in Berlin with Bundestag President Wolfgang Schauble. I commended Germany for its steadfast support to OSCE commitments and our Organization and also discussed a range of issues including the situation in and around Ukraine and the fight against terrorism. I appreciated this opportunity to also meet with Treasurer Doris Barnett and other Members of the German delegation.<sup>16</sup>

Immediately after, I was in Warsaw for meetings with the Polish parliament and the ODIHR. With our Polish colleagues I discussed a number of issues, including domestic developments on judiciary reform and the rule of law. I also noted Poland’s strong attachment to the OSCE and expressed appreciation for the active participation of Polish parliamentarians in our activities, including election observation.

In my meetings with ODIHR, I highlighted that parliamentarians bring added value to election observation: the political experience of parliamentarians complements ODIHR’s expertise and long-term observation, producing a stronger, more credible assessment of the elections. I think it is important that we continue to emphasize that election observation needs political leadership underpinned by credible long-term analysis. It is this combination that makes



<sup>15</sup> OSCE PA President Tsereteli stresses parliamentarians’ role in economic co-operation at Baku international conference, 13 March 2018, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/osce-pa-president-tsereteli-stresses-parliamentarians-role-in-economic-co-operation-at-baku-international-conference>.

<sup>16</sup> President of the Bundestag and OSCE PA President finalize agreement to bring OSCE parliamentarians to Berlin for Annual Session, 21 March 2018, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/president-of-the-bundestag-and-osce-pa-president-finalize-agreement-to-bring-osce-parliamentarians-to-berlin-for-annual-session>.



the OSCE an indisputable leader of election observation recognized throughout the world.<sup>17</sup>

## **April 2018**

The Copenhagen Bureau meeting was the occasion for me to exchange with the Assembly's leadership on current political issues and prepare PA activities in the run-up to the Berlin Annual Session.

Following this, I was in Bishkek to take part in the Central Asian Regional Heads of Mission Meeting and for bilateral consultations. I commended Kyrgyzstan's strong engagement with the OSCE and called for sustained efforts to advance security and stability in the region. In my bilateral talks, I recognized Kyrgyzstan's considerable achievements in consolidating democratic values, while also encouraging continued vigilance and sustained progress to strengthen democratic institutions. I reiterated the Assembly's strong support for OSCE Field Missions equipped with robust mandates. I also underlined the importance of good co-ordination both within the OSCE and with our international partners to successfully tackle the region's challenges. The visit was also a good opportunity to exchange with students from the OSCE Academy, as well as assess preparations for the 2018 Autumn Meeting.<sup>18</sup>

## **May 2018**

In May, I took part in the Lisbon conference on cybersecurity organized by the Portuguese parliament under the leadership of our colleague Vice-President Isabel Santos. On the margins of that conference I also met with government interlocutors to express our gratitude for Portugal's support for the OSCE and our work. In my remarks, I pointed out that in an increasingly digital world, armed conflicts are not the only breeding ground for threats against governments and citizens. In cyberspace, we see new challenges emerging and old challenges evolving.



<sup>17</sup> Election observation, rule of law and international co-operation focus of OSCE PA visit to Poland, 23 March 2018, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/election-observation-rule-of-law-and-international-co-operation-focus-of-osce-pa-visit-to-poland>.

<sup>18</sup> In visit to Kyrgyzstan, OSCE PA President Tsereteli welcomes OSCE engagement, calls for continued attention to democratic reforms, 20 April 2018, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/in-visit-to-kyrgyzstan-osce-pa-president-tsereteli-welcomes-osce-engagement-calls-for-continued-attention-to-democratic-reforms>.



Whether the issue is child sexual exploitation, terrorist recruitment, or crimes such as identity theft and fraud, the internet offers new opportunities for criminals and extremists. This conference was timely to ensure that we respond effectively in a proportionate way to these threats.<sup>19</sup>

I then travelled to Eastern Ukraine as part of a delegation also consisting of President Emeritus and Special Representative on Mediation, Mr. Ilkka Kanerva, Third Committee Chair and Special Representative on OSCE Border Issues Mr. Ignacio Sanchez Amor, and Special Representative on Eastern Europe, Mr. Kent Harstedt. Our delegation travelled to areas close to the frontline in eastern Ukraine where we met with internally displaced persons and people living in the conflict zone. We exchanged with local NGOs and international humanitarian organizations, as well as with representatives from the Donetsk and Luhansk regional administrations, to better understand the tragic humanitarian situation.

We took a close look at buildings damaged by hostilities and observed government efforts to restore infrastructure. Along check-points on the line of contact we witnessed the considerable extent to which mine fields and areas containing unexploded ordinances pose a threat to civilians. We saw that everybody in the region has in reality become a casualty of war with the targeting of civilian housing and hospitals, destruction of schools, and extensive damage to agricultural production.

Our visit contributed to gain extensive insight into the work of the Special Monitoring Mission. We saw a demonstration of the operation of short range, medium range and long range Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) equipped with cameras that monitor the region and follow up on cease-fire violations. Many of them have been made inoperable by electronic jamming or even shot down, in flagrant violation of the Minsk accords. We underlined the SMM's enormous contribution, serving as a reliable point of contact for all people in the



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<sup>19</sup> *Protections against cyber threats must build trust and uphold fundamental freedoms, say OSCE parliamentarians at Lisbon conference*, 8 May 2018, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/protections-against-cyber-threats-must-build-trust-and-uphold-fundamental-freedoms-say-osce-parliamentarians-at-lisbon-conference>.

conflict region, and providing credible and detailed information to the international community.<sup>20</sup>

We then travelled to Kyiv to meet governmental and parliamentary leaders, including President Petro Poroshenko, Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin, and Deputy Chairperson of the Verkhovna Rada Iryna Herashchenko. I reiterated the OSCE PA's solidarity with the people of Ukraine who face tragedies on a daily basis and renewed our call for the full implementation of the Minsk Agreements to end this armed conflict. In our discussions, we supported efforts to launch a UN peace-keeping mission to be deployed in the whole conflict area including the border with Russia, which would finally make a fully effective monitoring by the SMM possible. We also stressed the importance of pursuing the domestic reforms necessary to implement the Minsk Agreements and urged OSCE participating States to prioritize assisting the country in its efforts to ease the plight of the up to two million internally displaced persons.<sup>21</sup>

Later in May I was in Tirana for bilateral meetings with the Albanian government and parliament, including President Ilir Meta, Speaker Gramoz Ruci, and Foreign Minister Bushati. Among other topics, we discussed deepening the co-operation between the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and Albania, as well as the challenges the country faces in the implementation of decisive reforms. I appreciated the valuable work of the OSCE Presence in Albania headed by Ambassador Borchardt, which testifies to the important contribution that the OSCE can offer in assisting Albania accomplish its ambitious goals. The visit was useful to highlight the region's special significance for the OSCE and to reaffirm our commitment and determination to continue actively engaging with Albania and the whole South East European region following the retirement of our Special Representative, Mr. Roberto Battelli



<sup>20</sup> OSCE parliamentarians, visiting Donbas, call for urgent steps to ease humanitarian situation, 13 May 2018, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/osce-parliamentarians-visiting-donbas-call-for-urgent-steps-to-ease-humanitarian-situation>.

<sup>21</sup> In meetings with President Poroshenko and other senior Ukrainian representatives in Kyiv, OSCE PA delegation discusses ways to end fighting and reduce suffering, 15 May 2018, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/in-meetings-with-ukrainian-president-poroshenko-and-other-senior-ukrainian-representatives-in-kyiv-osce-pa-delegation-discusses-ways-to-end-fighting-and-reduce-suffering>.



after his more than 25 years of service on behalf of our Assembly.<sup>22</sup>

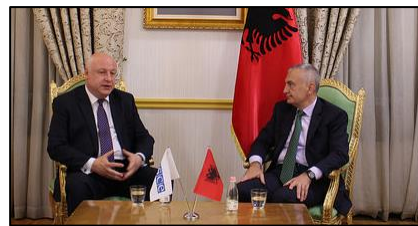
## **June 2018**

In June, I met in Tbilisi with a delegation of 25 Permanent Representatives to the OSCE, and discussed with them the OSCE PA's agenda, including our priority issues such as terrorism, migration, protracted conflicts, election observation, and the crisis in and around Ukraine. We also had a fruitful conversation on our efforts to build co-operation within the OSCE family.

At the end of the month, I undertook the first OSCE PA presidential visit to Moldova in almost a decade, where I lauded recent achievements in the Transdniestrian settlement process and encouraged both Chisinau and Tiraspol to sustain the momentum of progress in the coming months to create the necessary conditions for a comprehensive and peaceful resolution of the conflict. I noted that at a time when European security and stability are threatened, Chisinau and Tiraspol are setting a positive example for the rest of the OSCE area, where conflict resolution has been characterized by lack of progress.

As part of my visit, I travelled through the he Gura Bicului – Bychok bridge, which reopened last November after being closed to traffic since the 1992 conflict. In Tiraspol, I also visited a joint vehicle registration office, which will allow for the participation of vehicles from Transdniestria in international traffic starting on 1 September 2018. I saw that, as a result of recent agreements, people on both sides of the Dniester/Nistru River can already notice tangible improvements to their daily lives and encouraged Chisinau and Tiraspol to continue to display resolve to overcome their remaining differences to pave the way for a long-term and comprehensive settlement.

As part of my visit, I also met with the extra-parliamentary opposition, civil society representatives and members of the international community to discuss recent political



<sup>22</sup> In Tirana, OSCE PA President Tsereteli reaffirms OSCE commitment to South East Europe and Albania, 25 May 2018, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/in-tirana-osce-pa-president-tsereteli-reaffirms-osce-commitment-to-south-east-europe-and-albania>.



developments and stress the need to reinforce the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary in Moldova.<sup>23</sup>

Immediately after, I traveled to London to participate in a regional forum on the Western Balkans hosted by the House of Lords. There, I underlined the importance of continuing reform efforts to strengthen democratic institutions and reiterated our collective commitment to South East Europe.<sup>24</sup>

### **July 2018**

During our Berlin Annual Session, I was honored to be elected to my first full term as President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. Together, we adopted a strong Berlin Declaration which underlined the essential “commitment to the fundamental principles of international law, human rights and the rule of law enshrined in the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act” and called for greater commitment from governments to the OSCE’s principles of dialogue and détente, including through the strengthening of arms control regimes, security sector reform, the development of confidence- and security-building measures, and the good-faith implementation of agreements.<sup>25</sup>

Immediately after our annual meeting, 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 ability to find common ground. I also noted that minorities should be seen as an asset for OSCE countries, where they can



<sup>23</sup> *Progress in Transnistrian settlement leads way for conflict resolution in OSCE area, says PA President in Moldova*, 26 June 2018, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/progress-in-transnistrian-settlement-leads-way-for-conflict-resolution-in-osce-area-says-pa-president-in-moldova>.

<sup>24</sup> *South East Europe must focus on common goals and continue reform, say OSCE PA leaders at London seminar*, 28 June 2018, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/south-east-europe-must-focus-on-common-goals-and-continue-reform-say-osce-pa-leaders-at-london-seminar>.

<sup>25</sup> *Berlin Declaration calls for parliaments to strengthen oversight of OSCE commitments, governments to renew commitment to dialogue and détente*, 11 July 2018, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2018/berlin-declaration-calls-for-parliaments-to-strengthen-oversight-of-osce-commitments-governments-to-renew-commitment-to-dialogue-and-detente>.

serve as a bridge in inter-state relations, in particular in border areas.<sup>26</sup>

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 15<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>27</sup>

### **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



<sup>26</sup> 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>.

<sup>27</sup> 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>.



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 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.<sup>28</sup>

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.<sup>29</sup>

On 20 September, I was also in Baku on the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>30</sup>

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.



<sup>28</sup> 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>.

<sup>29</sup> 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>.

<sup>30</sup> 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>.



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 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.<sup>31</sup>

### **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.<sup>32,33</sup>



<sup>31</sup> 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>.

<sup>32</sup> 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>.

<sup>33</sup> 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>.

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 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.<sup>34</sup>

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.<sup>35</sup>

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



<sup>34</sup> *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>.

<sup>35</sup> *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>.



conference, and participated in the celebration of the 15<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>36</sup>

At the tail-end of that trip, I was in Geneva on 15-16 October to address the Inter-Parliamentary Union and meet IPU 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.<sup>37</sup>

## **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.<sup>38</sup>

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



<sup>36</sup> *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>.

<sup>37</sup> *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>.

<sup>38</sup> *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>



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.<sup>39</sup>

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 contributions of small and large countries alike. The OSCE's inclusiveness is one of its strongest assets.<sup>40,41</sup>

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



<sup>39</sup> 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>.

<sup>40</sup> 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>.

<sup>41</sup> 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>.

additional opportunity for the OSCE to maintain its relevance through more high-level political dialogue.<sup>42</sup>

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, we and discussed how parliamentary diplomacy can contribute to stability and development in Central Asia.<sup>43</sup>

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.<sup>44</sup>

## **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 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.<sup>45</sup>

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



<sup>42</sup> *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>.

<sup>43</sup> *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>.

<sup>44</sup> *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>.

<sup>45</sup> *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>.



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.<sup>46</sup>

## **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.<sup>47</sup>

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, including election observation and participation in OSCE events.<sup>48</sup> 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.



<sup>46</sup> *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>.

<sup>47</sup> *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>.

<sup>48</sup> *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>.



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.<sup>49</sup>

## **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 international organizations working on conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation.<sup>50</sup>

In my home country of Georgia, I met on 11 February with the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Miroslav Lajcak to exchange



<sup>49</sup> 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>.

<sup>50</sup> 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>.

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.<sup>51</sup>

During our Winter Meeting in Vienna, I asked 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 the previous year in Berlin.

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.<sup>52</sup>

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



<sup>51</sup> *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>

<sup>52</sup> *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>



presidential election was vital to advance the democratic development of Ukraine and promote stability and security in the OSCE region.<sup>53</sup>

### **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.<sup>54</sup>

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).<sup>55</sup>

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



<sup>53</sup> 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>

<sup>54</sup> 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>

<sup>55</sup> 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>

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 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.<sup>56</sup>

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



<sup>56</sup>Assembly 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>



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 institutions.<sup>57</sup>

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.<sup>58</sup>

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 Pirshtuk, and representatives from opposition parties and civil society.<sup>59</sup>

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



<sup>57</sup> 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>

<sup>58</sup> 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-international-observers-say>

<sup>59</sup> 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>

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.<sup>60</sup>

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 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.<sup>61</sup>

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.



<sup>60</sup> *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>

<sup>61</sup> *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>



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.<sup>62</sup>

## **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.<sup>63</sup>

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.<sup>64</sup>



<sup>62</sup> 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>

<sup>63</sup> 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>

<sup>64</sup> 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>

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.<sup>65</sup>

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.

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



<sup>65</sup> *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>



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.<sup>66</sup>

## **July 2019**

During our Luxembourg Annual Session, I was grateful of your confidence in re-electing me for a second full term as President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. Together, we also adopted the Luxembourg Declaration, which emphasized the commitment of OSCE PA members to implementing the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>67</sup>

Immediately following our latest Annual Session, I travelled to the High Tatras Mountains of Slovakia to take part in the Informal Ministerial meeting convened by Slovak Foreign Minister and then-OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Miroslav Lajcak. I underlined that our Parliamentary Assembly, armed with our newly adopted Luxembourg Declaration, remains ready to provide key input to the work of the organization in all fields of security, leveraging the distinct contributions and added value of parliamentarians. I explained that our Declaration covers a wide range of topics reflecting issues of concerns for OSCE citizens, in particular the suffering of people in conflict zones. This gathering also provided a good opportunity for informal exchanges with a number of foreign ministers, including those from Sweden, Spain, Luxembourg, Kazakhstan, Albania, and Armenia.<sup>68</sup>

The following week, I was in Vienna, Austria to address the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting. There, I stressed



<sup>66</sup> 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>

<sup>67</sup> Luxembourg Declaration stresses link between security and sustainable development, urges commitment to multilateralism, 8 July 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/osce-pa-s-luxembourg-declaration-stresses-link-between-security-and-sustainable-development-urges-parliaments-and-governments-to-commit-to-multilateralism>.

<sup>68</sup> Prompt and effective action needed to help people suffering from conflicts and human rights violations, says Tsereteli in Slovakia, 9 July 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/prompt-and-effective-action-needed-to-help-people-suffering-from-conflicts-and-human-rights-violations-says-osce-pa-president-tsereteli-in-slovakia>.

that a broad outlook to multilateral diplomacy, involving parliamentarians, civil society, academia and others, is needed in order to ensure a strong and principled approach to human rights. I am firmly convinced that many different actors, beyond state governments, have a legitimate voice. We must therefore listen to them if we want to find lasting solutions to the challenges facing us. This inclusive approach also adds strength and legitimacy to international relations that can otherwise appear distant from the real needs of the people we serve.<sup>69</sup>

### **August 2019**

Over the summer, we coordinated a plan of activities together with the International Secretariat. I also proceeded with several appointments to better place our Assembly on some key issues identified during our Luxembourg Annual Session. I therefore appointed Irene Charalambides (Cyprus) as Special Representative on Fighting Corruption and Pia Kauma (Finland) as Special Representative on Civil Society Engagement. I also tasked Stefana Miladinovic (Serbia) as Special Rapporteur on the Digital Agenda and Luca Santolini (San Marino) as Special Rapporteur on Disinformation and Propaganda.<sup>70</sup> Following the departure of Makis Voridis (Greece) from the Assembly, I also appointed Abid Raja (Norway) and Lisa Chambers (Ireland) as Co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism.<sup>71</sup>

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.

At the end of August, I attended the opening session of the Verkhovna Rada in Kyiv, Ukraine to express solidarity with the Ukrainian people as the new parliament committed to ambitious reforms in the face of continuous challenges in the East. I was able to exchange with the new Chairman of the



<sup>69</sup> *Inclusive multilateralism needed to meet challenges and strengthen human rights, PA President Tsereteli says in Vienna, 16 July 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/inclusive-multilateralism-needed-to-meet-challenges-and-strengthen-human-rights-pa-president-tsereteli-says-in-vienna-2>*

<sup>70</sup> Mr. Santolini's parliamentary mandate ended following the 2019 Sammarinese general election.

<sup>71</sup> Mr. Raja has since been appointed Minister of Culture. Ms. Chambers' parliamentary mandate ended following the 2020 Irish general election.



Verkhovna Rada, Dmytro Razumkov. I underlined the vital role of the OSCE in Ukraine and encouraged continued strong engagement by Ukrainian parliamentarians in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. I also exchanged with other foreign dignitaries, including European Parliament Vice-President Klara Dobrev, on ways to boost co-operation with the PA.

As on previous occasions, my visit to Kyiv allowed me to hold fruitful talks with the Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, Ambassador Yaşar Halit Çevik, and thank the SMM for the support provided on parliamentary visits to eastern Ukraine, their tireless efforts to support people's humanitarian and human rights' needs, reduce tensions, and foster peace and security throughout Ukraine. I also met with the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine, Ambassador Henrik Villadsen, to exchange on ongoing PCU initiatives to reform the judiciary, foster dialogue, protect human rights and safeguard the environment.<sup>72</sup>

## **September 2019**

Early in September, I was in Copenhagen, Denmark for a series of meetings at the International Secretariat, the Danish Parliament, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I thanked the Danish parliament and the Danish Delegation for its continued support to the Assembly, noting that as the host of the International Secretariat, Denmark is the single biggest contributor to the OSCE PA's budget. I also welcomed Head of Delegation Peter Juel Jensen's new role as Assembly Treasurer. At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we also had interesting conversations on the role of parliamentarians in mitigating the effects of climate change, ongoing conflicts in the OSCE area, including in Ukraine, OSCE PA work in the human dimension, and the situation in Georgia.<sup>73</sup>

I then travelled to Andermatt, Switzerland to participate in the third international parliamentary conference of the OSCE PA



<sup>72</sup> In visit to Kyiv, President Tsereteli expresses solidarity with people of Ukraine, urges continued efforts to strengthen democratic institutions, 30 August 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/in-visit-to-kyiv-president-tsereteli-expresses-solidarity-with-people-of-ukraine-urges-continued-efforts-to-strengthen-democratic-institutions>

<sup>73</sup> OSCE PA President Tsereteli visits Danish capital for meetings at Secretariat, Parliament and Foreign Ministry, 5 September 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/osce-pa-president-tsereteli-visits-danish-capital-for-meetings-at-secretariat-parliament-and-foreign-ministry>

Silk Road Support Group. This event provided a useful follow-up on our Luxembourg discussions on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and I stressed that, through our defense of freedom, democracy, strong principles, shared commitments and common goals, our Organization already makes strong contributions towards their fulfilment. I also emphasized that parliaments can further help advance sustainable development and security by adopting relevant legislation, providing oversight, ratifying treaties, approving budgets and setting agendas that prioritize the need to comply with international commitments. Furthermore, this conference was the occasion to strengthen interparliamentary oversight over the Belt and Road project, and I welcomed the opportunity to exchange with officials from the People's Republic of China on some of the concerns expressed by our Assembly.<sup>74</sup>

I addressed the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) in Warsaw in mid-September, where I deplored a downward trend in the struggle to respect and promote human rights and human security in the past decade. This requires increased dedication and focus by all, and I thank our Assembly's human rights committee Chair Kyriakos Hadjiyianni (Cyprus) and our new Special Representative on Civil Society Engagement Pia Kauma (Finland), who accompanied me and Secretary General Roberto Montella at this important gathering.<sup>75</sup> This edition of the HDIM also enabled us to engage further with civil society by holding a side-event on priority recommendations formulated by the PA in the human dimension.

Towards the end of the month, I returned to Central Asia by first participating in the Fourth Meeting of Speakers of Eurasian Countries' Parliaments in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan together with Vice-President Pascal Allizard (France).

On the margins of the parliamentary conference, we held several bilateral meetings with Armenian Speaker Ararat



<sup>74</sup> *Sustainable development in focus at Switzerland conference, featuring high-level OSCE PA participation*, 9 September 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/sustainable-development-in-focus-at-switzerland-conference-featuring-high-level-osce-pa-participation>

<sup>75</sup> *Civil society engagement essential to advance human rights, says OSCE PA President at Warsaw meeting*, 16 September 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/civil-society-engagement-essential-to-advance-human-rights-says-osce-pa-president-at-warsaw-meeting>



Mirzoyan, Azerbaijani Speaker Ogtay Asadov, Moldovan Speaker Zinaida Greceanii, North Macedonian Speaker Talat Xhaferi, Tajik Speaker Shukurjon Zuhurov, and Uzbek Speaker Nurdinjon Ismoilov. We also exchanged with the Speakers from Austria, Belarus, Cyprus, and Turkey.

We also met with Mazhilis Chairman Nurlan Nigmatulin and Senate Chairwoman Dariga Nazarbayeva, who serves as the Head of Kazakhstan's Delegation to the OSCE PA, as well as with Kazakhstan's First President Nursultan Nazarbayev. The conversations underlined Kazakhstan's long-standing commitment and contributions to international dialogue and to the effectiveness of the OSCE and its Institutions, including through good co-operation with the OSCE Programme Office in Nur-Sultan.

As the Special Co-ordinator and leader of short-term OSCE observers for the early presidential election of June 2019, I also took the time to meet with NGO representatives and opposition figures to discuss post-election developments, including concerns related to limitations on freedom of expression, association, and assembly, as well as the state of co-operation between civil society and public authorities.<sup>76</sup>

I then took part in a seminar organized by the United Nations Development Programme in Kyrgyzstan, together with the support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), and the Bishkek-based Legal Clinic "Adilet," which aimed to take stock of the current status of parliamentary oversight functions in the Kyrgyz Republic and in other countries. In my keynote speech, I pointed out that political will remains a key requirement for the effective implementation of parliamentary oversight. This compels us, parliamentarians, to lead by example and adhere to the same strict standards which we demand of members of government.

In a meeting with the Speaker of the Jogorku Kenesh, Dastanbek Dzhumabekov, I recalled Kyrgyzstan's strong



<sup>76</sup> *Respect for rules-based order key to achieving peace across Eurasia, OSCE PA President underlines at Speakers' meeting*, 25 September 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/respect-for-rules-based-order-key-to-achieving-peace-across-eurasia-osce-pa-president-underlines-at-speakers-meeting>

engagement within the OSCE PA, as demonstrated by its hosting of the 2018 Autumn Meeting in Bishkek. I also noted that the negative trend of deterioration of the media environment, which occurred in the run-up to the 2017 presidential election, seemed to have been reversed. I expressed the hope that Kyrgyz authorities will continue to promote respect for freedom of the media and expression, enable an engaged civil society, and promote fundamental rights and freedoms.

I also visited the OSCE Academy to meet its leadership and the new cohort of students, as well as the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek, headed by Ambassador Pierre Von Arx, to discuss how the PA can further support the work of the OSCE in the country.<sup>77</sup>

## **October 2019**

Our 2019 Autumn Meeting in Marrakesh strongly reaffirmed our Mediterranean dimension. This first OSCE PA statutory meeting held outside of the OSCE region and organized by an OSCE Partner for Co-operation was the result of several years of preparation between the Moroccan parliament and our International Secretariat. I want to thank in particular our Moroccan colleagues for their continued engagement in our work and for driving this project.<sup>78</sup>

Back in Georgia, I had the pleasure to take part in the 16<sup>th</sup> South Caucasus Media Conference organized by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media under the theme “Strengthening media freedom and safety of journalists in a changing environment.” In my remarks, I recalled that our Luxembourg Declaration calls upon OSCE participating States to ensure that efforts to protect journalists should not be limited to those formally recognized and documented as such, but should also cover support staff, citizen journalists, bloggers and others active in this field. It also urges that OSCE countries develop strategies to eliminate the harassment of



<sup>77</sup> Strong parliamentary oversight essential for democracy and good governance, says OSCE PA President Tsereteli in Bishkek, 27 September 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/strong-parliamentary-oversight-essential-for-democracy-and-good-governance-says-osce-pa-president-tsereteli-in-bishkek>

<sup>78</sup> Security, environment, economic development and religious tolerance in focus at OSCE PA's Autumn Meeting in Morocco, 6 October 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/security-environment-economic-development-and-religious-tolerance-in-focus-at-osce-pa-s-autumn-meeting-in-morocco>



women journalists. On the margins of the conference, I exchanged with Harlem Désir to further discuss opportunities for further co-operation and common strategies to strengthen the impact of the OSCE's work.<sup>79</sup>

Together with Secretary General Roberto Montella we then took part in a series of meetings and engagements in Belgrade, meeting with the President of the Serbian National Assembly, Maja Gojković, Prime Minister Ana Brnabić, Foreign Minister Ivica Dačić, representatives of the political opposition, civil society, and the Serbian Delegation to the OSCE PA. I noted the excellent co-operation with the OSCE Mission to Serbia, notably in the field of legislative reform and encouraged meaningful dialogue between all political factions to deliver concrete reforms.<sup>80</sup>

In Belgrade I also addressed the Inter-Parliamentary Union's 141<sup>st</sup> Assembly, speaking about the importance of parliamentary diplomacy and strengthening international law. Together with Secretary General Montella, we had an interesting meeting with Martin Chungong, Secretary General of the IPU, for discussions on how to enhance co-operation between the OSCE PA and the IPU.<sup>81</sup>

I exchanged with a number of parliamentary leaders on the margins of the IPU Assembly, including with the President of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, Mustafa Şentop, as Turkey carried military operations in Northern Syria. Notwithstanding the complex issues involved, particularly terrorism and border control, I emphasized the need to normalize the situation in northeastern Syria and expressed hope for a quick end to the military operations. The Turkish Speaker provided useful information on Turkey's actions and objectives in Syria.<sup>82</sup>



<sup>79</sup> *Attacks on journalists are attacks on democracy, says OSCE PA President Tsereteli in Tbilisi*, 10 October 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/attacks-on-journalists-are-attacks-on-democracy-says-osce-pa-president-tsereteli-in-tbilisi>

<sup>80</sup> *In high-level meetings in Belgrade, OSCE PA President and Secretary General emphasize dialogue, co-operation and reform*, 16 October 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/in-high-level-meetings-in-belgrade-osce-pa-president-and-secretary-general-emphasize-dialogue-co-operation-and-reform>

<sup>81</sup> *OSCE PA President Tsereteli and SG Montella build co-operation with Inter-Parliamentary Union in Belgrade*, 21 October 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/osce-pa-president-tsereteli-and-sg-montella-build-co-operation-with-inter-parliamentary-union-in-belgrade>

<sup>82</sup> *Situation in N. Syria must be urgently normalized to avoid another humanitarian crisis, says OSCE PA President with Speaker of Turkish Parliament*, 17 October 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press->

With Secretary General Montella, we were in Strasbourg later that month and met with Klara Dobrev, Vice President of the European Parliament, and the Chair of the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs, David McAllister, to discuss OSCE-EU relations as well as common challenges of the European continent. We agreed on the need to enhance co-operation between the OSCE PA and the European Parliament and invest more on joint projects, including on election observation and conflict prevention efforts. On the margins, we held useful meetings with a number of MEPs from across the region and also met with former members of the OSCE PA leadership, including then-Commissioner Christos Stylianides and MEPs Isabel Santos, Ignacio Sanchez Amor, Tonino Picula and Roman Haider.<sup>83</sup> In Strasbourg, I also took part in the European Conference of Presidents of Parliament, hosted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The event, which gathered Speakers of Parliament from 47 countries on the Eurasian continent, provided an opportunity for productive discussions on common challenges in the region and on the role of parliaments and parliamentary diplomacy in international relations.

On the margins of the conference, we met with the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Liliane Maury Pasquier, the Secretary General of PACE, Wojciech Sawicki, and with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Marija Pejcinovic Buric. Our discussions underlined the excellent co-operation between our organization, as well the challenges we face in addressing effectively current political and security issues.<sup>84</sup>

At the very end of the month, I delivered my fourth address to the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna, where I appealed to strengthen co-operation between all OSCE institutions in an



[2019/situation-in-northern-syria-must-be-urgently-normalized-to-avoid-another-humanitarian-crisis-says-osce-pa-president-with-speaker-of-turkish-parliament](https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/situation-in-northern-syria-must-be-urgently-normalized-to-avoid-another-humanitarian-crisis-says-osce-pa-president-with-speaker-of-turkish-parliament)

<sup>83</sup> Tsereteli and Montella meet European Parliament officials, highlight importance of OSCE-EU relations and parliamentary diplomacy, 24 October 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/president-tsereteli-and-sg-montella-meet-european-parliament-officials-highlighting-importance-of-osce-eu-relations-and-of-parliamentary-diplomacy>

<sup>84</sup> Restoring citizens' trust a key responsibility of parliamentarians, says Tsereteli at European Conference of Presidents of Parliament, 25 October 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/restoring-citizens-trust-a-key-responsibility-of-parliamentarians-says-tsereteli-at-european-conference-of-presidents-of-parliament-in-strasbourg>



effort to close the gap between what governments have committed to and what they do in practice. I underlined specifically the importance of conflict resolution in order to ensure security and peaceful development for the people in all OSCE countries. In this context, I highlighted the Assembly's efforts in Ukraine, where OSCE parliamentarians have offered assistance to those who are ready to engage in conflict settlement and worked to raise awareness about human suffering in the conflict-affected areas. I also drew attention to the suffering of Georgians as a consequence of the continued illegal occupation of territories of their country, and the urgent need for progress regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict.<sup>85</sup>

### **November 2019**

Following up on the success of our Autumn Meeting in Morocco, I was in Egypt with Vice-President Pascal Allizard, our Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs, and Secretary General Roberto Montella for the first visit by an OSCE PA delegation since 2009. In Cairo, we met the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Ali Abdel Aal Sayyed Ahmed, and we held talks with Deputy Foreign Minister Hamdi Loza, as well as the Assistant Ministers in charge of Human Rights, Parliamentary Affairs, and Multilateral Affairs. We all agreed that stronger ties between both sides of the Mediterranean Sea are necessary to tackle security challenges in the OSCE area, including the fight against radicalization and terrorism, and the migrant and refugee crisis. We also met with Coptic Pope Tawadros II to exchange on the role of interfaith dialogue in promoting stability in Egypt. This visit was essential to nurturing personal relationships with our Partners for Co-operation, which are key to better understanding the realities on the ground and to build the trust necessary to work together.<sup>86</sup>

In preparation for Albania's Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2020, I was in Tirana with Secretary General Montella to meet



<sup>85</sup> *Three decades after historic changes in Europe, PA President stresses effective multilateralism in speech to OSCE Permanent Council*, 31 October 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/three-decades-after-historic-changes-in-europe-president-tsereteli-underlines-need-for-effective-multilateralism-in-speech-to-osce-permanent-council>

<sup>86</sup> *High-level OSCE PA visit to Egypt highlights security, individual freedoms and Mediterranean co-operation*, 8 November 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/high-level-osce-pa-visit-to-egypt-highlights-security-individual-freedoms-and-mediterranean-co-operation>

the President of the Republic, Ilir Meta, the Prime Minister, Edi Rama, the Speaker of the Assembly, Gramoz Ruci, as well as members of the Assembly and with representatives of the political opposition. This was the occasion to reiterate our full support for Albania's endeavour and to welcome the government's commitment to nurture the OSCE in a spirit of collective responsibility. I also encouraged all political forces to join efforts in contributing to the country's commitment to guide the OSCE in 2020.<sup>87</sup>

To close the month, I visited Yerevan for meetings with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Speaker Ararat Mirzoyan, Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, and Members of the Armenian Delegation to the OSCE PA led by Hayk Konjoryan. We had interesting exchanges on the deep and comprehensive reforms launched by Armenia following a peaceful transition of power in 2018, and I welcomed sustained efforts to firmly establish democratic institutions and practices in the country. I encouraged our Armenian colleagues to continue working closely with all OSCE institutions, and I offered the assistance of the Assembly's Special Representatives and Rapporteurs on relevant issues such as the fight against corruption, engagement with civil society, or combating disinformation.

Our meetings in Yerevan further offered an opportunity to discuss the status of negotiations in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and assess the added value of parliamentary diplomacy in this context. We all agreed on the need to build mutual confidence and refrain from inflammatory public statements in order to foster an environment conducive to greater regional co-operation.<sup>88</sup>

## **December 2019**

Our Bureau met in Bratislava prior to the OSCE Ministerial Council for productive discussions on our work and our priorities for 2020. We also used this opportunity to organize



<sup>87</sup> OSCE PA President and SG visit Albania for discussions on 2020 OSCE Chairmanship, domestic reforms and foreign policy priorities, 19 November 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/osce-pa-president-and-secretary-general-visit-albania-for-discussions-on-2020-osce-albanian-chairmanship-domestic-reforms-and-foreign-policy-priorities>

<sup>88</sup> Democratic reforms and regional dialogue at crux of OSCE PA President's visit to Yerevan, 27 November 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/democratic-reforms-and-regional-dialogue-at-crux-of-osce-pa-president-s-visit-to-yerevan>



a separate discussion on the reform of our Rules of Procedure, considering the issues that arose during our Luxembourg Annual Session.

In my remarks to OSCE Ministers, I deplored the continued shortcoming in the implementation of OSCE commitments and called on political leaders to demonstrate resolve in joint efforts to overcome conflicts and other challenges. I underlined that recent tangible achievements in Ukraine were a sign of hope that progress can be made with the help of the OSCE, but that in several countries, anti-democratic attempts to consolidate state power limit what the OSCE can do. I above-all stressed that it has become necessary to renew obligations to provide real security.<sup>89</sup>

I further discussed developments in Ukraine during a visit Kyiv in mid-December, accompanied by human rights committee Chair Kyriakos Hadjiyianni (Cyprus) and economic and environmental committee Rapporteur Elona Gjebrea Hoxha (Albania). This was the sixth time that a PA delegation visited Ukraine in 2019, underlining the high priority we have attached to the conflict.

In discussions with the Chair of the Verkhovna Rada, Dmytro Razumkov, Foreign Minister Vadym Prystaiko, members of Ukraine's OSCE PA Delegation and the Foreign Affairs Committee, as well as the leaders of two parliamentary groups, David Arakhamia and Artur Gerasymov, we also explored ways the Assembly can continue to support Ukraine as well as the incoming OSCE Albanian Chairmanship's priorities. We welcomed the resumption of dialogue between the leaders of Ukraine and the Russian Federation and the outcomes of a recent Normandy Four summit in Paris, and we expressed our continued support for a full and comprehensive ceasefire, additional disengagement zones, exchange of detainees, and further humanitarian and confidence-building measures to advance efforts to restore peace and Ukraine's territorial integrity in eastern parts of the country.



<sup>89</sup> Political leaders must unleash OSCE's potential to benefit citizens, PA President Tsereteli says at Bratislava Ministerial Council, 5 December 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/political-leaders-must-unleash-osce-s-potential-to-benefit-citizens-pa-president-tsereteli-says-at-bratislava-ministerial-council>

We also met again with the Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission, Ambassador Cevik, and Deputy Chief Monitor Antje Grawe, to be briefed about the challenges the SMM faces. We commended the crucial role the SMM continues to play in the disengagement process through dialogue facilitation, as well as reporting and verification at all stages of the process. We also stressed that it is imperative that the SMM gets unhindered access to effectively monitor all areas.<sup>90</sup>

I closed 2019 by serving as the Special Co-ordinator and leader of the OSCE short-term observers for the election observation mission to Uzbekistan. This was the first time that the OSCE PA observed elections in Uzbekistan, after several years of good co-operation with our Uzbek colleagues. We welcomed improvements to Uzbekistan's election law and greater acceptance of freedom of expression, but the absence of opposition parties, a continuing lack of respect for fundamental rights, and some serious irregularities on election day underlined that much work remains. We saw that the wide-scale reforms being pursued by the authorities in Uzbekistan have had a real and direct impact on these elections, but democratic development requires increased competition and respect for basic rights and freedoms, and we look forward to continuing our support for this process.<sup>91</sup>

## **January 2020**

In the middle of January, I joined Members of the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism (CCT) in Norway. This was an emotional visit which paid tribute to the 77 victims of the July 2011 attack in Utøya and Oslo. I noted that at times of increasing political divides and rising extremist ideologies, it is important to be extremely vigilant not to lose sight of our common goal to protect citizens from any terrorist threats.



<sup>90</sup> In Kyiv, OSCE PA delegation encourages Ukraine to implement Normandy Four commitments to maintain conflict resolution momentum, 19 December 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/in-kyiv-osce-pa-delegation-encourages-ukraine-to-implement-commitments-made-by-normandy-four-leaders-to-maintain-momentum-toward-conflict-resolution>

<sup>91</sup> Important progress in election legislation could not offset lack of real contest in Uzbekistan's parliamentary elections, international observers say, 23 December 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2019/important-progress-in-election-legislation-could-not-offset-lack-of-real-contest-in-uzbekistan-s-parliamentary-elections-international-observers-say>



Our discussions with members of the Storting (Norwegian Parliament), including its President, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Justice and Public Security, the Minister of Environment, the Mayor of Oslo, the Norwegian Correctional Services and the Norwegian Police Security Services, outlined how the Norwegian criminal justice system and legislative framework have been improved to address emerging threats. This encouraged us to work together to harmonize legislation among OSCE countries and improve mechanisms for data exchange.

Our inspiring exchanges with members of the Workers Youth League (AUF) and family members of victims of the 22 July attack also compelled us to redouble our dedication to democracy and tolerance, and do everything in our power to ensure that such cruel acts of violence do not happen again.<sup>92</sup>

I was then in Vienna for my fifth and final address the OSCE Permanent Council. There, I reiterated the PA's support for the priorities of the Albanian OSCE Chairmanship and expressed appreciation for Chair-in-Office Edi Rama's stated intention to further strengthening the Chairmanship's work with parliamentarians.

While the OSCE region continues to suffer from serious disagreements on key political and security issues, I underlined that multilateralism is the only way forward, and pledged the continued efforts of our Parliamentary Assembly in support of that objective.<sup>93</sup>

Ahead of the country's early parliamentary elections, I was in Azerbaijan for a series of high-level meetings with President Ilha Aliyev and Speaker Ogtay Asadov, as well as other officials, electoral stakeholders and representatives of political parties. I stressed the importance of a transparent and competitive election to enable voters to fully enjoy their fundamental rights, to uphold Azerbaijan's commitment to



<sup>92</sup> OSCE PA members pay tribute to 22 July 2011 victims in Norway, stress need for effective counter-terrorism strategies, 15 January 2020, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/osce-pa-members-pay-tribute-to-22-july-2011-victims-in-norway-stress-need-for-effective-counter-terrorism-strategies>

<sup>93</sup> Overarching goal of Parliamentary Assembly to help overcome differences, says President Tsereteli in address to OSCE Permanent Council, 16 January 2020, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/overarching-goal-of-parliamentary-assembly-to-help-overcome-differences-says-president-tsereteli-in-address-to-osce-permanent-council>

OSCE principles, and to produce a representative parliament able to support Baku's ambitious reform agenda.<sup>94</sup>

## **February 2020**

To begin February, I was in Washington, DC with Secretary General Montella for a series of engagements, starting with a seminar on "Future Leadership for Political inclusion in the OSCE Region" hosted by the U.S. Helsinki Commission. I found this to be an excellent opportunity to follow up on a call made by our Assembly during our Berlin Annual Session to establish a forum of young parliamentarians in order to foster greater mutual trust between OSCE participating States. Events like this strengthen the role of young leaders in the OSCE region and in the world, and it is my wish that we explore effective ways to institutionalize this kind of initiative.<sup>95</sup>

I also testified in front of the Helsinki Commission alongside the acting President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Attila Mesterhazy, at a hearing on "The Power and Purpose of Parliamentary Diplomacy." I discussed the OSCE PA's activities, challenges and achievements, and ways OSCE parliamentarians support and add value to the multilateral diplomatic efforts of governments and OSCE institutions. Our conversation discussed the role the Assembly plays in upholding our shared principles, in promoting democratic values, and in preventing and settling conflicts.<sup>96</sup> I was able to further present the work of our Assembly during a roundtable discussion on "Strengthening Democracy, Security and Transatlantic Cooperation" hosted by the German Marshall Fund, where I noted interest in our response to the emerging role of China in the international scene. Concerns over the deployment of the 5G technology were also on display in a forum on cyber security in South East Europe.



<sup>94</sup> *Implementation of OSCE commitments is key to achieving credibility and trust in newly elected parliament, said President Tsereteli visiting Azerbaijan*, 31 January 2020, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/implementation-of-osce-commitments-is-key-to-achieving-credibility-and-trust-in-newly-elected-parliament-said-president-tsereteli-visiting-azerbaijan>

<sup>95</sup> *Young parliamentarians gather in Washington D.C. to discuss the role of youth in leading responses to emerging crises*, 4 February 2020, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/young-parliamentarians-gather-in-washington-d-c-to-discuss-the-role-of-youth-in-leading-responses-to-emerging-crises>

<sup>96</sup> *President Tsereteli testifies in front of United States Helsinki Commission on the power of parliamentary diplomacy*, 6 February 2020, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/president-tsereteli-testifies-in-front-of-united-states-helsinki-commission-on-the-power-of-parliamentary-diplomacy>

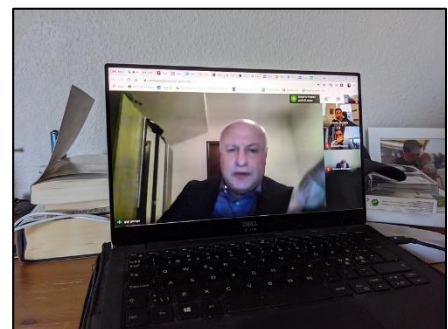


As part of this visit to Washington, Secretary General Montella and I met with Members of Congress, officials from the State Department, and Helsinki Commission staff to discuss current priorities of the Assembly and efforts to ensure security and stability in the OSCE region. I warmly welcomed the leadership and engagement of the U.S. Congress and government in the work of the OSCE and the OSCE PA, including through the continued support of the U.S. Helsinki Commission and the U.S. Permanent Mission to the OSCE.<sup>97</sup>

I was glad to see many of you during our 19th Winter Meeting in Vienna, where we were able to exchange freely with OSCE Institutions and Ambassadors on how to best leverage the tools and mechanisms of the OSCE to resolve protracted conflicts, the security implications of climate change, and multilateral human rights co-operation. We were grateful to host this year the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Michelle Bachelet, to advance co-operation between our Parliamentary Assembly, in particular our Third Committee, and her Office. In the wake of a racially motivated attack in Germany, we also held a very timely debate on combating anti-Semitism, discrimination and intolerance in the OSCE region. On the margins of meeting, I also met with several Members, OSCE Ambassadors, or civil society representatives to ensure that our work remains as inclusive as possible and best reflects the collective priorities of our Delegations.<sup>98,99</sup>

### **March 2020**

The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, which triggered states of emergency across the OSCE area in the days and weeks following our Winter Meeting in Vienna, logically cancelled many planned activities in the spring of 2020.



<sup>97</sup> In Washington, OSCE PA President underlines need for multilateralism and transatlantic co-operation to meet current challenges, 10 February 2020, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/in-washington-osce-pa-president-underlines-need-for-multilateralism-and-transatlantic-co-operation-to-meet-current-challenges>

<sup>98</sup> OSCE parliamentarians can build bridges and ensure implementation of commitments, say speakers at Winter Meeting opening, 20 February 2020, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/osce-parliamentarians-can-build-bridges-and-ensure-implementation-of-commitments-say-speakers-at-winter-meeting-opening>

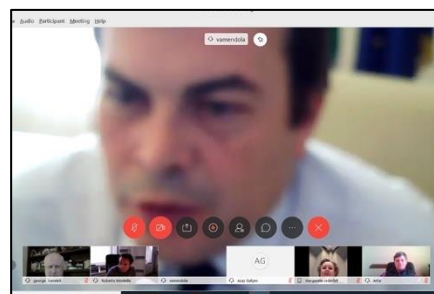
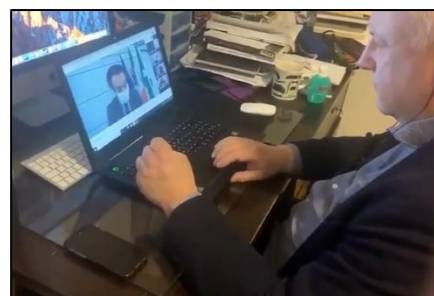
<sup>99</sup> At OSCE PA Winter Meeting, parliamentarians tackle anti-Semitism, intolerance, protracted conflicts, climate change and human rights, 21 February 2020, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/at-osce-pa-winter-meeting-parliamentarians-tackle-anti-semitism-intolerance-protracted-conflicts-climate-change-and-human-rights>

In spite of this unprecedented challenge, I was glad to see that many of our Members remained engaged in our activities and eager to use the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly as a platform to exchange experience and best practices to elicit a more comprehensive response.

As the crisis spread throughout the OSCE region and the rest of the world in mid-March, I issued a statement calling on governments to coordinate with one another as much as possible, and on individuals to follow expert advice on social distancing. I noted that as states of emergency were being declared, it was vital that human rights be fully upheld, and that derogation to these rights be proportionate, non-discriminatory, and time-limited. I also urged governments and parliaments to work together to prioritize the need for emergency economic measures, including assistance to those most in need, to prevent a catastrophic economic crisis.<sup>100</sup>

In order to strengthen the Bureau and respect previous political agreements, I seized the opportunity to appoint the Vice-Chair of the Committee on Countering Terrorism, Mr. Richard Hudson (United States), as Chair of the First Committee and our former Treasurer, Ms. Doris Barnett (Germany), as Chair of the Second Committee. They formally joined our political leadership as the International Secretariat began to facilitate informal meetings of the Bureau online and on a regular basis, in order to exchange views and work on concrete proposals.

As part of our first virtual Bureau discussion, we were able to hear from the President of the Lombardy Region, Mr. Attilio Fontana, who briefed us about the situation in his region and appealed for assistance. Our discussion highlighted the importance of using the OSCE PA to channel international requests for help, to co-ordinate with other international organizations, and exchange information and best practices. I noted that at such a critical moment it is crucial to maintain



<sup>100</sup> OSCE PA President urges co-ordination and solidarity in response to coronavirus crisis, with emphasis on human rights and economic measures, 17 March 2020, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/osce-pa-president-urges-co-ordination-and-solidarity-in-response-to-coronavirus-crisis-with-emphasis-on-human-rights-and-economic-measures>



regular communication and for OSCE parliamentarians to work together towards resolution of the crisis.<sup>101</sup>

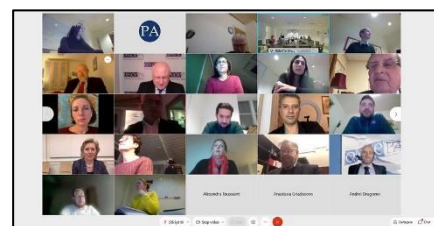
## **April 2020**

This was also the essence of the letter I sent to the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, on the occasion of World Health Day. As I recognized the work that has been undertaken by the WHO in helping countries fight back against the pandemic, I noted that this moment in our history offers an opportunity for our countries to reassess the state of our health care and services, and that parliamentarians are essential partners to make our health systems better prepared and more resilient.

As part of our second informal Bureau meeting, we welcomed the Italian Minister of European Affairs, and former OSCE PA Member, Vincenzo Amendola, who provided an update on the situation in his country and the European institutions' reaction to the crisis. We agreed that multilateralism is needed now more than ever and emphasized the need to reshape multilateral tools and decision-making procedures to adapt to the exceptional circumstances of the pandemic, which had by then led to the cancellation of our 2020 Annual Session.

Following this meeting, Secretary General Montella and I co-signed a letter informing UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres that our Bureau had endorsed his call for a global ceasefire to help contain the spread of COVID-19. We again underlined the need to put aside political differences to foster greater international co-operation for a global response.<sup>102</sup>

Faced with the need to provide a global response to this global crisis, the OSCE PA has encouraged close co-ordination with parliaments at the national and the international level to promote democratic, effective, and coherent public policy responses, and to address our citizens' concerns.



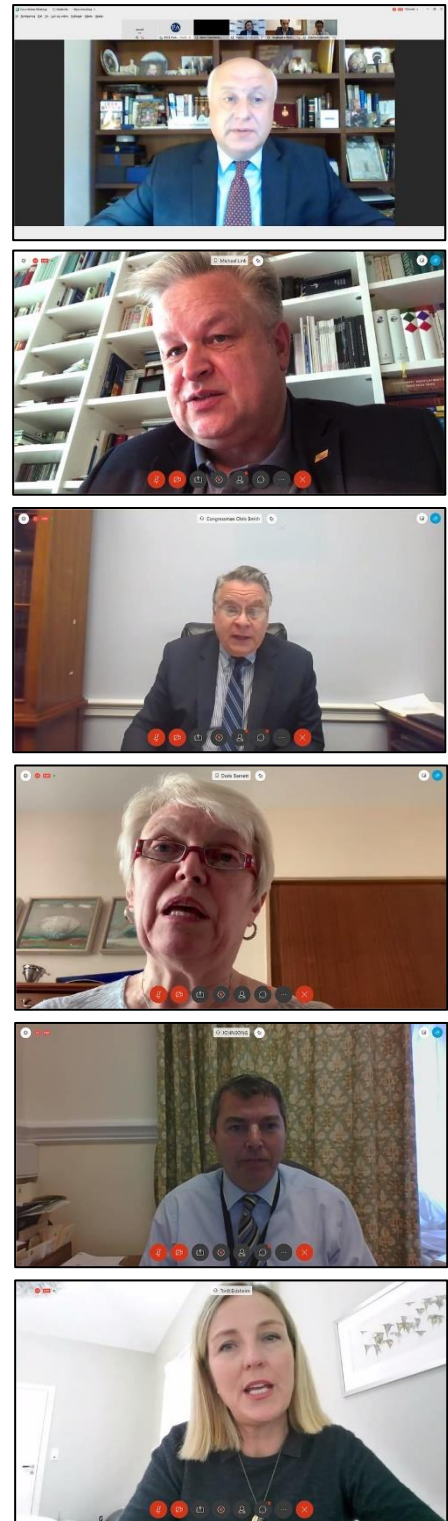
<sup>101</sup> Briefed by Lombardy Region President, OSCE PA leadership discusses steps forward during coronavirus crisis, 27 March 2020, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/briefed-by-lombardy-region-president-osce-pa-leadership-discusses-steps-forward-during-coronavirus-crisis>

<sup>102</sup> OSCE parliamentarians endorse UN SG's global ceasefire call, discuss European response to COVID-19 pandemic and plan PA activities, 9 April 2020, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/osce-parliamentarians-endorse-un-sg-s-global-ceasefire-call-discuss-european-response-to-covid-19-pandemic-and-plan-pa-activities>

It is also in this spirit that I signed an op-ed<sup>103</sup> and issued a joint statement with the President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Mr. Attila Mesterhazy, and the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Mr. Rik Daems, in which we highlighted that close co-ordination with parliaments at national and international level is necessary to promote democratic, effective and coherent public policy responses and to address citizens' concerns. We underscored that our parliaments play an essential role as guardians of democratic values, processes and fundamental freedoms, and as enhancers of public confidence. It is therefore important that parliaments continue to function as normally as possible to ensure that emergency measures are implemented properly, that restrictions on freedoms are proportionate and temporary, that economic relief funds are disbursed where they are needed, and that security and stability are upheld.<sup>104</sup>

Our annual spring Bureau meeting being unable to convene in-person in Copenhagen, we met online to hear presentations from the OSCE Chair-in-Office, Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama, and EU Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarcic. In light of the continued crisis, we noted the need for exceptional levels of co-operation between executive and legislative branches, stressing that parliaments have an important role to play and that every effort must be made to ensure they can carry out their core roles of legislation and oversight.<sup>105</sup>

In light of the cancellation of our Annual Session scheduled to take place in July 2020 in Vancouver, Canada, our Bureau took note of the impossibility to hold regular elections. The mandates of PA and Committee Officers, including mine as President of the OSCE PA, were therefore extended until the next Annual Session, scheduled for July 2021 in Bucharest, Romania.



<sup>103</sup> *Op-ed by President Tsereteli on the Role of Parliaments in the Coronavirus Crisis*, 31 March 2020, <https://www.euronews.com/2020/03/31/parliaments-must-continue-to-function-serve-the-people-during-coronavirus-pandemic-view>

<sup>104</sup> *Joint Statement on the Role of Parliaments in a Time of Pandemic*, 16 April 2020, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/joint-statement-on-the-role-of-parliaments-in-a-time-of-pandemic>

<sup>105</sup> *PA Bureau leaders meet online, hear from OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and EU Commissioner, discuss activities in the period of COVID-19*, 28 April 2020, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/pa-bureau-leaders-meet-online-hear-from-osce-chairperson-in-office-and-eu-commissioner-discuss-activities-in-the-period-of-covid-19>.



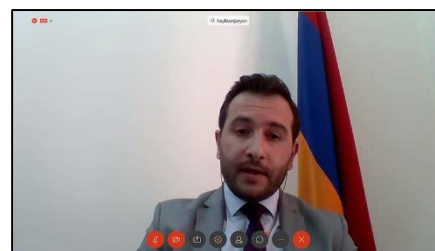
Together with former Presidents of the OSCE PA, we also discussed ways the experience and knowledge of former members of the OSCE PA can benefit the work of the Assembly in such challenging times when increased efforts, political leadership and parliamentary oversight are needed. This first meeting kickstarted efforts to institutionalize an advisory resource for the PA.<sup>106</sup>

## **May 2020**

Although the pandemic has canceled our meetings and conferences, including our Annual Session and our Autumn Meeting as well as a number of planned election observation missions, we have managed to navigate through uncharted territory for our Parliamentary Assembly, thanks to regular consultations with our elected leadership and advice from Secretary General Roberto Montella and his team. These discussions have been complemented by regional talks with many Delegations to ensure that the OSCE PA remains an inclusive forum for dialogue.

At the end of the month, we convened another Bureau meeting to exchange with OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger, who reported that at the organization has adapted well to new realities, with videoconferencing continuing to provide a platform for inclusive diplomatic dialogue. OSCE field operations have also quickly adapted to the new situation, offering both a range of short-term and medium-term support to their host countries. Overall, we agreed that COVID-19 has demonstrated the need to revitalize multilateralism and build a co-operative international order.

I noted that the OSCE has demonstrated its effectiveness during the pandemic, highlighting in particular the areas in which the institutions of the OSCE have collaborated. Going forward, the OSCE must be even more united, while we need to consider reforms of rules and working procedures in order to adjust for possible crises in the future.<sup>107</sup>



<sup>106</sup> Former OSCE PA Presidents establish panel to support the work of the Assembly, 29 April 2020, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/former-osce-pa-presidents-establish-panel-to-support-the-work-of-the-assembly>.

<sup>107</sup> Lessons learned from COVID-19 crisis should help revitalize multilateralism, OSCE Secretary General Greminger tells PA leaders, 29 May 2020, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/lessons-learned-from-covid-19-crisis-should-help-revitalize-multilateralism-osce-secretary-general-greminger-tells-pa-leaders>.

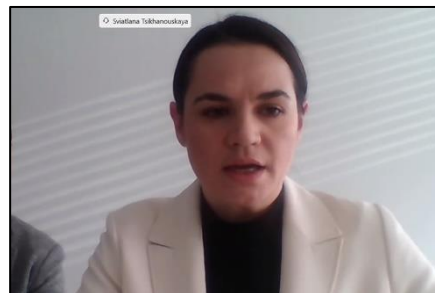
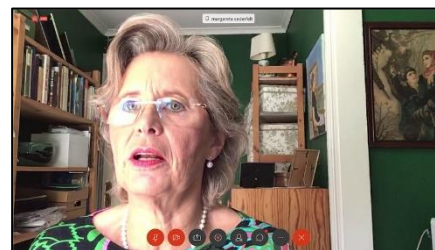
## June 2020

Our first series of *Parliamentary Web Dialogues*, which ran from April to July, provided new platforms for our Members to hear from experts, and share experience and best practices, in order to learn lessons from this crisis and enhance preparedness, resilience, and response for an eventual new pandemic. In these important discussions, we dealt with subjects relating to the pandemic's effects on conflicts in the OSCE area, economic and environmental impacts, human rights and democratic governance, counter-terrorism, gender issues and more.

## July 2020

Being unable to meet for our Annual Session, we convened an online Standing Committee meeting to debate on international issues in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and chart a way forward for the rest of the year 2020. I noted that recent crisis situations have demonstrated the unmatched value of the OSCE, including its versatility and ability to respond rapidly and efficiently, and faced by lack of consensus over the extension of the Heads of OSCE executive structures, I urged governments to ensure that the pandemic is not used as an opportunity to undermine the OSCE.<sup>108</sup>

In July, we also published a report compiling findings from our spring's Parliamentary Web Dialogues. During the COVID-19 crisis, we saw that parliamentarians have played an essential role as a link between citizens and their governments, as well as providing oversight of governments' actions, promoting good governance and preventing corruption, and by enhancing dialogue on the international level. Looking into the post-COVID era, I noted that we will be invited to make the full use of our parliamentary prerogatives, in particular oversight.<sup>109</sup>



<sup>108</sup> Heads of OSCE parliamentary delegations meet online for discussions on activities during COVID-19, organizational reform and geopolitical challenges, 7 July 2020, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/heads-of-osce-parliamentary-delegations-meet-online-for-discussions-on-activities-during-covid-19-organizational-reform-and-geopolitical-challenges>.

<sup>109</sup> New OSCE PA report offers comprehensive recommendations stemming from series of Parliamentary Web Dialogues on COVID-19, 13 July 2020, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/new-osce-pa-report-offers-comprehensive-recommendations-stemming-from-series-of-parliamentary-web-dialogues-on-covid-19>.

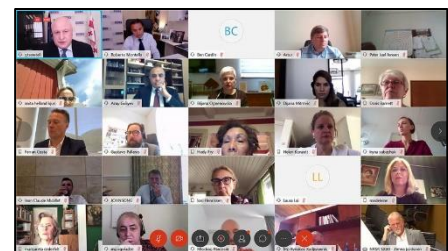
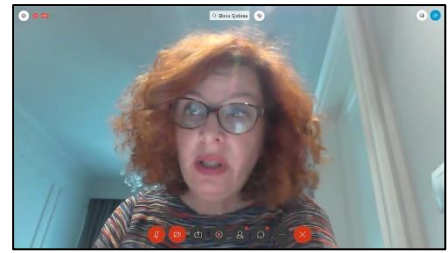


Alarmed by armed clashes, I closely followed the situation along the border of Azerbaijan and Armenia and was in contact with the countries' OSCE PA delegations and relevant international actors. I expressed the PA's full support for the Minsk Process, including the work of the Co-Chairs and the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office, and recalled UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres's recent call for a global ceasefire in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the following months, I urged both sides to urgently de-escalate and to engage in substantive negotiations.<sup>110</sup>

Together with Members of the Bureau, we urged the personal attention of the Foreign Ministers of OSCE participating States to address the institutional crisis currently impacting the organization. We noted that the inability to reach agreement earlier this month on the OSCE Secretary General, the Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the Representative on Freedom of the Media and the High Commissioner on National Minorities, and the subsequent failure to find an interim solution with the incumbents, left a leadership vacuum that damages the collective security of North America, Europe and Central Asia. We pointed out that the PA has long advocated for greater dialogue at the political level on OSCE matters, and this remained more important than ever. We also pledged to support efforts to restoring the ability of the OSCE to serve as a key platform for common engagement in overcoming our differences and advancing co-operative security, based solidly on a renewed commitment of the participating States to respect the ten principles of the Helsinki Final Act.<sup>111</sup>

## **August 2020**

On the forty-fifth anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, I issued, together with former Presidents of the OSCE PA, a statement reiterating our extreme concern about the present state of the OSCE. We noted that since 1975, significant progress has been achieved throughout the OSCE



<sup>110</sup> OSCE PA President Tsereteli urges de-escalation between Armenia and Azerbaijan, return to substantive negotiations, 16 July 2020, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/osce-pa-president-tsereteli-urges-de-escalation-between-armenia-and-azerbaijan-return-to-substantive-negotiations>.

<sup>111</sup> Parliamentary leaders call on Foreign Ministers to rectify institutional crisis facing OSCE, 24 July 2020, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/parliamentary-leaders-call-on-foreign-ministers-to-rectify-institutional-crisis-facing-osce>.

region, but the principles of the Helsinki Final Act continue to be violated, and, for many of our over one billion citizens, comprehensive security remains a distant dream. Most sorely lacking today are the original spirit of co-operation and willingness to compromise, both of which condition the realization of a Europe whole, free, and at peace. We encouraged our political leaders to reinvigorate security co-operation and dialogue in Europe and repeated our commitment to encouraging high-level discussions on the OSCE, so that together, we may one day finally live up to the promises of Helsinki.<sup>112</sup>

I participated in the Samarkand Human Rights Web Forum, where I stated that it is necessary to actively include youth, as well as women and minorities, in decision-making mechanisms to address challenges such as armed conflicts, climate change, widespread poverty and inequality.<sup>113</sup>

Following the presidential election in Belarus, and throughout the autumn, we discussed the situation the country and possible avenues for engagement for the OSCE PA.<sup>114</sup> I emphasized that repression and persecution of opponents are not acceptable and against the principles of the OSCE, and instead encouraged de-escalation and dialogue.<sup>115</sup>

## **September 2020**

The situation in Belarus was also on the agenda of discussions I had in Copenhagen, Denmark with the Danish Foreign Minister and the Speaker of Parliament, during one of my rare visits of 2020. These meetings were again the opportunity to thank Denmark for hosting our International Secretariat.<sup>116</sup>



<sup>112</sup> *Statement on the 45th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act*, 1 August 2020, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/statement-on-the-45th-anniversary-of-the-helsinki-final-act>.

<sup>113</sup> *Youth engagement essential for sustainable development and human rights, OSCE PA President says in online forum*, 12 August 2020, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/youth-engagement-essential-for-sustainable-development-and-human-rights-osce-pa-president-says-in-online-forum>.

<sup>114</sup> *OSCE PA leaders discuss ways to support Belarusian people in light of current crisis*, 20 August 2020, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/osce-pa-leaders-discuss-ways-to-support-belarusian-people-in-light-of-current-crisis>.

<sup>115</sup> *Belarus must uphold international obligations and respect fundamental freedoms in wake of disputed election, OSCE PA President says*, 13 August 2020, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/belarus-must-uphold-international-obligations-and-respect-fundamental-freedoms-in-wake-of-disputed-election-osce-pa-president-says>.

<sup>116</sup> *Belarus, OSCE matters in focus during PA President and SG's visit to Danish Foreign Ministry and Parliament*, 10 September 2020, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/belarus-osce-matters-in-focus-during-pa-president-and-sg-s-visit-to-danish-foreign-ministry-and-parliament>.



Later that month, we hosted a web meeting today with Belarusian Head of Delegation Andrei Savinykh, Belarusian opposition presidential candidate Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya. Following weeks of increased polarization characterized by street protests, violence and mass arrests, we underline that what is needed is to find common ground and pursue a way forward, even if efforts are pursued outside of official channels.<sup>117</sup>

I participated in an online forum initiated and hosted by the Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, focused specifically on the Moldovan experience with regional autonomy. In my remarks, I noted that balanced integration policies, supported by carefully negotiated forms of territorial autonomy, are key to preventing the risks, crises and conflicts possibly resulting from the increasing diversity within our societies. I emphasized the importance of well-equipped local institutions, noting that a continuous dialogue between national and subnational authorities is key to building more resilient regions.<sup>118</sup>

### **October 2020**

Due to my involvement in the political campaign as a candidate for the parliamentary elections in Georgia, I was unable to maintain a high-level of engagement in PA activities during the month of October, but I continued to follow committee activities and relevant developments throughout the OSCE region.

### **November 2020**

Appalled by the bloodshed in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone, as well as beyond the line of contact, I reiterated calls during the autumn to cease hostilities in the interest of civilians and recommit to negotiations towards a peaceful solution of the conflict according to OSCE principles and



<sup>117</sup> OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Bureau holds discussion with Belarusian Head of Delegation and exiled opposition leader, urges further dialogue, 23 September 2020, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/osce-parliamentary-assembly-bureau-holds-discussion-with-belarusian-head-of-delegation-and-exiled-opposition-leader-urges-further-dialogue>.

<sup>118</sup> OSCE parliamentarians share national experiences on questions of autonomy at high-level forum, 29 September 2020, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/osce-parliamentarians-share-national-experiences-on-questions-of-autonomy-at-high-level-forum>.

commitments. I was in direct contact with the Speakers of Parliament of Armenia and Azerbaijan, to underline the position of the OSCE PA and to urge both sides to resume the negotiation process.<sup>119</sup>

Following the signature of a trilateral statement between Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the Russian Federation to end fighting in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, I encouraged the sides to proceed without delay with exchanges of prisoners of war, detainees, and the bodies of fallen combatants. I also urged all sides to recommit themselves to peaceful negotiations, in good faith, to allow the safe return of internally displaced persons and refugees, reach a long-term and comprehensive settlement of this conflict, and at long last build a future together.<sup>120</sup>

Our Standing Committee met again online in November to discuss the Assembly's activities in previous months and debate issues high on the OSCE PA's agenda, including the situation in Belarus and the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. We also had the opportunity to exchange with David Beasley, Executive Director of the UN World Food Programme, recipient of the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize.<sup>121</sup>

To commemorate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe, I participated in a roundtable co-organized by the French Delegation to the OSCE PA and encouraged political leaders to fully exploit the potential of parliamentary diplomacy, as outlined in the Charter of Paris, as an inclusive and constructive tool to break political deadlock. I also noted that we must remain outspoken in our commitment for more transparency and accountability within the OSCE as a way to make the Organization stronger and more effective.<sup>122</sup>



<sup>119</sup> Nagorno-Karabakh bloodshed must end, says OSCE PA President, urging a return to negotiations, 6 October 2020, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/nagorno-karabakh-bloodshed-must-end-says-osce-pa-president-urging-a-return-to-negotiations>.

<sup>120</sup> With new agreement over Nagorno-Karabakh war, PA President hopes for long-lasting peace, condemns violence against parliamentarians, 10 November 2020, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/with-new-agreement-over-nagorno-karabakh-war-pa-president-hopes-for-long-lasting-peace-condemns-violence-against-parliamentarians>.

<sup>121</sup> Food security, election observation, Belarus and Nagorno-Karabakh top agenda of OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Standing Committee meeting, 12 November 2020, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/food-security-election-observation-belarus-and-nagorno-karabakh-top-agenda-of-osce-parliamentary-assembly-standing-committee-meeting>.

<sup>122</sup> Parliamentarians celebrate Paris Charter's 30th anniversary, recall OSCE's successes and urge renewed commitment to principles, 20 November 2020, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/parliamentarians-celebrate-paris-charter-30th-anniversary>.



One week before the Ministerial Council, I addressed ambassadors at an online meeting of the Permanent Council. I regretted that the OSCE area remains plagued by confrontation and division and that the limited political-level engagement in the organization has led to a leadership vacuum in the executive structures. I noted that the outbreak of war over Nagorno-Karabakh has been a painful reminder of the urgency in resolving protracted conflicts throughout the OSCE region. I informed the ambassadors of the outcomes of the PA's series of Parliamentary Web Dialogues this year, as well as its efforts to resume election observation activities after a hiatus in the spring and summer due to the pandemic. I explained that our readiness to actively take part in these missions is yet another reminder of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's dedication to help governments live up to their human rights commitments.<sup>123</sup>

## **December 2020**

I addressed an online meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council and underlined that thirty years after the signing of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe, and despite the OSCE's notable contributions to strengthening security and promoting stability, the level of distrust is probably higher than it has ever been since the fall of the Iron Curtain. I stressed that the Assembly wants to make full use of the OSCE's potential to help build a safer and more stable future by highlighting the PA's initiative, a "Call for Action: Reaffirming our Common Purpose," which has been endorsed by more than 50 former and present OSCE leaders.<sup>124</sup> Pointing to the numerous challenges facing all OSCE countries, including climate change, scarcity of natural resources, geopolitical conflicts, migration, terrorism, and international organized crime, I implored the governments of the OSCE to invest into common efforts regarding these issues. This requires political support



[releases/2020/parliamentarians-celebrate-paris-charter-s-30th-anniversary-recall-osce-s-successes-and-urge-renewed-commitment-to-principles.](#)

<sup>123</sup> *We must reinvigorate the OSCE in these challenging times, Parliamentary Assembly President Tsereteli says at Permanent Council*, 26 November 2020, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/we-must-reinvigorate-the-osce-in-these-challenging-times-parliamentary-assembly-president-tsereteli-says-at-permanent-council>.

<sup>124</sup> *OSCE Call for Action: Reaffirming a Common Purpose*, <https://online.flippingbook.com/view/779749/>

and adequate resources to all OSCE executive structures, and in particular to the activities of the OSCE Institutions.<sup>125</sup>

Following the Ministerial Council meeting, I welcomed the appointment of a new Secretary General, Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, High Commissioner on National Minorities, and Representative on Freedom of the Media, and expressed hope that the filling of these positions marks the beginning of an era of renewed commitment to co-operation and dialogue.<sup>126</sup>

In order to better place our Assembly on specific regional issues and provide advice to our leadership, I appointed three new Special Representatives: Ditmir Bushati (Albania) as Special Representative on the South Caucasus, Reinhold Lopatka (Austria) as Special Representative on Central Asia, and Daniela De Ridder (Germany), as Special Representative on Eastern Europe.<sup>127</sup>

Following the 31 October parliamentary elections and the new convocation of the Parliament of Georgia on 11 December, I left the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly after more than three years as its President. My presidency ended as our Assembly continues to deal with numerous challenges and urgently needs to address global crises, including the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, armed conflicts, growing threats to democracy and human rights, climate change, radicalization and terrorism, and large-scale human migration. It remains crucial that OSCE PA Members continue to work hard to pursue our unfinished agenda and safeguard the fundamental values and principles of the OSCE.<sup>128</sup>



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<sup>125</sup> Greater political support needed to strengthen OSCE and meet current challenges, PA President says at Ministerial Council opening, 3 December 2020, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/greater-political-support-needed-to-strengthen-osce-and-meet-current-challenges-pa-president-says-at-ministerial-council-opening>.

<sup>126</sup> PA President and SG welcome appointments of top four posts at the OSCE, urge renewed commitment to multilateralism, 4 December 2020, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/pa-president-and-sg-welcome-appointments-of-top-four-posts-at-the-osce-urge-renewed-commitment-to-multilateralism>.

<sup>127</sup> OSCE PA Special Representatives appointed to work on regional issues in the South Caucasus, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, 9 December 2020, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/osce-pa-special-representatives-appointed-to-work-on-regional-issues-in-the-south-caucasus-eastern-europe-and-central-asia>.

<sup>128</sup> OSCE PA President George Tsereteli steps down, Vice-President Bowness to serve as President, 14 December 2020, <https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/osce-pa-president-george-tsereteli-steps-down-vice-president-bowness-to-serve-as-president>.



Throughout my presidency, 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.

Together with Secretary General Montella, we have rebuilt honest and strong partnerships and reinforce synergies with the other parts of our Organization. In Vienna, we continue to enjoy excellent working relations with the Chairmanship and Secretariat, as again demonstrated throughout this year by regular participation in virtual events. Despite the current situation, we have forged stronger partnerships with the Representative on Media Freedom, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, and the ODIHR.

Together we have made the PA more functional. We have opened new areas of work and expertise: for instance, we now have Special Representatives dealing with civil society, anti-corruption, or disinformation. We have also given more importance to non-statutory activities by engaging in major debates at our Winter Meetings. I have aimed to promote greater gender equality in our Assembly, including through these appointments, leadership for election observation missions, or the filling of vacancies in the Bureau.

We have built valuable working relationships with strong and credible actors in the international arena, including the United Nations, European institutions, in particular the European Parliament, and traditional partners like the NATO PA, PACE, and other parliamentary organizations like the IPU, PAM, or PABSEC.

In my tenure as President of the PA, I will have led over seventy visits to more than thirty OSCE participating States. This has increased engagement with the PA at the highest political level and helped make sure that our voices are heard.

Our Assembly remains engaged throughout the OSCE region, including through strong transatlantic ties and our excellent partnership with the U.S. Helsinki Commission.<sup>129</sup> Beyond the OSCE's borders, we remain eager to extend our hands to Partners in Asia and the Mediterranean.



<sup>129</sup> *A word of thanks to Georgian parliamentarian and OSCE PA President George Tsereteli*, by Hon. Richard Hudson, U.S. Congressional Record, 18 December 2020, <https://www.congress.gov/116/crec/2020/12/18/CREC-2020-12-18-pt1-PgE1183-3.pdf>

We have enacted guidelines that complement the Code of Conduct for Election Observation Missions regarding potential conflicts of interests to preserve the overall credibility of this exercise. I have also served as Special Co-ordinator for four election observation missions, both East and West of Vienna.<sup>130</sup>

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

We have also launched inclusive discussions to continue to modernize our Rules of Procedures and working practices. Even as these projects remains unfinished, you can rest assured of my full and unwavering support for the work of the Parliamentary Assembly. I look forward to carrying on with our meetings and conversations in a different capacity. I will continue to assist you and my successor to the best of my ability to achieve the goals for which we have fought together as a team.



George Tsereteli



<sup>130</sup> General elections in the United States of America (November 2018), parliamentary elections in the Republic of Moldova (February 2019), presidential election in the Republic of Kazakhstan (June 2019), parliamentary elections in the Republic of Uzbekistan (December 2019).