



**REMARKS BY OSCE PA PRESIDENT GEORGE TSERETELI
EUROPEAN CONFERENCE OF PRESIDENTS OF PARLIAMENT**

Session I - Our Common European Home: the next 70 years

Strasbourg, 24 October 2019

Check against delivery.

Excellencies,

Speakers of Parliament,

Fellow Parliamentarians,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me thank President Maury Pasquier for the opportunity of being here today in Strasbourg to address this distinguished body on the 70th anniversary of the Council of Europe on behalf of OSCE parliamentarians.

As our regular co-operation demonstrates, our organizations have a lot in common.

We share the same values and principles, and a quite similar geographical focus. We also both constitute inclusive international fora animated by the search for dialogue, trust and mutual understanding among our members.

In these turbulent times, when multilateralism severely suffers from widespread mistrust and the breach of basic commitments, we need to step up as mediators to revitalize peaceful diplomacy and strengthen parliamentary engagement.

I think the presence of our continent's parliamentary leadership in Strasbourg today perfectly stresses this intention.

Dear friends,

When thinking of our common European home, we surely approach the future with mixed feelings.

On the one side, we must acknowledge that since 1949, we have enjoyed a period of unprecedented peace and prosperity.

In the past 70 years, Europe has truly become a common home after so many wars and conflicts.

And this happened greatly thanks to the determined political will to preserve peace, advance human rights and fundamental freedoms, enshrined in the foundation of institutions such as the Council of Europe.

But, on the other side, a number of worrying setbacks in our democratic and security commitments need to be addressed urgently.

While we have managed to build a common home with strong foundations, we sometimes seem unable to live in it together.

While many of our challenges have been lingering for decades, we must be worried by growing unpredictability.

Disdain for our house rules has made it more complicated to maintain our harmonic coexistence.

Breaches of commitments, violent extremism and human rights violations are on the rise, accompanied by broad popular dissatisfaction, radical nationalistic trends and the rejection of the very concept of a "common home".

If we look at the 70 years ahead of us, the picture will be sadly gloomy if we do not resolve the conflicts affecting our region and neighbourhood, where, first and foremost, our people are suffering and losing hope.

Only in the OSCE area: in Ukraine, we are witnessing continued military activity despite the exiting roadmap for a peaceful solution. In Georgia, illegal borderization is going on in blatant breach of international law and agreements. The situation concerning the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is still extremely fragile, and the Transdniestrian settlement process, while there have been some positive steps, needs further acceleration.

But we also must look beyond our frontiers.

For instance, we are more than concerned to follow the current critical situation at the Turkey-Syria border.

While all our countries have their own legitimate security concerns, we must not compromise on our rule-based order, and rearm diplomacy to achieve and maintain stable peace.

When necessary, we must work rapidly and decisively to prevent crisis.

Dear Colleagues,

This year marks another anniversary.

Thirty years ago, East and West celebrated in the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The Helsinki Process and the OSCE's predecessor, the CSCE, played an important role in the events that led to November 1989.

Since then, the OSCE has reflected a new hope for peace and security in a region spanning three continents and 57 countries, all striving to share the same approach towards comprehensive security.

If we believe in the process that led to the fall of the Berlin Wall, we must pursue its spirit also in addressing the many divisions that still affect us today.

So complex are our joint challenges that they require even unprecedented cooperation and partnerships.

It is not by chance that the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly held this year, for the first time in its history, a plenary meeting in a partner Mediterranean country, Morocco.

This underlined the need for common action linkage between the two shores of the Mediterranean on issues such as migration management, the fight against terrorism and extremism, the mitigation of climate change, the promotion of human rights and consolidation of democracy.

Still, more is needed to safeguard our common home.

Dear friends,

That's why the OSCE PA continues to be very active in extending hands across the OSCE region.

During our latest Annual Session in Luxembourg, our Members have adopted a wide range of recommendations for our governments, covering issues from hard security to gender equality and

environment. While it is ultimately up to them to decide upon binding policies, we must remain steadfast in ensuring that the right decisions are taken and that they are then implemented correctly.

Parliamentary oversight is a unique competence. We must make full use of it.

As elected representatives, we carry the additional responsibility of restoring the confidence of our citizens towards politics.

Politics with a capital P, that passionate commitment to public affairs for the benefit of the societies.

Our citizens are increasingly disillusioned and participation in the public life and discourse is shrinking. Reverting this trend is an imperative and we can only do it by giving the example.

Mr. President,

I believe that it is only by being frank and honest with each other that we can overcome our hardships and transform challenges into opportunities.

Europe as a common home remains more relevant than ever, but we must truly believe in it.

We need to engage youth and prove to the new generations how much international co-operation can achieve. However, we have to be consistent and care about the credibility of our institutions, delivering on our promises.

You can rest assured of the full support of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly towards this goal.

I pride myself in the friendship and strong partnership our Assembly enjoys with many of you. I also wish to thank the French Chairmanship of the Council of Europe and welcome the incoming one of my home country, Georgia.

I look forward to continuing this dialogue to bring an added value to the end users of parliamentary diplomacy: our citizens.

Thank you!