



European Conference of Presidents of Parliament
Remarks by OSCE PA President Margareta Cederfelt

Athens, 22 October 2021

Theme 3: “The common future of all European citizens”

As delivered

Mr. President,
Your Excellencies,

Let me first extend my warmest thanks to the Hellenic Parliament for its hospitality this week.

And let me also thank the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe for bringing us all together today.

Although many hurdles remain, I greatly appreciate the opportunity to be here, in Athens, in person.

Yesterday’s discussions highlighted the many challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic on our region.

Recovery remains uneven across our countries.

We are still searching for ways to return to normalcy.

But we have also heard some blueprints for success.

The recipe, it seems, is quite simple:

Strong international solidarity is needed to overcome the pandemic.

On the eve of the UN Climate Change Conference, our discussions have also called on our countries to work even more closely together to mitigate the effects of global warming.

Since their inception, our two organizations – the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe – have kept the search for international co-operation at their core.

This has helped our region and our member countries deal with a multitude of old and emerging challenges.

Looking back at the foundations of the new Europe, we can sense enthusiasm and optimism.

Yet, our predecessors remained realistic.

They were fully aware of the many challenges lying ahead.

They knew that the possibility of conflict could not be ruled out.

That some old tensions would re-emerge.

That new challenges would appear.

That the abuse of fundamental rights and freedoms would persist.

And that democracy would be challenged.

In 2021 (twenty twenty-one), armed conflicts have not gone away.

Our people still strive for greater freedoms and equality, for a safe life, for human decency.

They still strive for the right to stand for elections, for the right to vote, and the right to oppose the majority.

Political power is built on trust, transparency, and accountability.

And we still struggle with building, preserving, and improving the quality of democracies throughout our region. And respect for internationally agreed borders.

However, this does not mean that we are headed the wrong way.

Tensions and conflicts do not mean that we cannot achieve a common future.

New global challenges do not need to lead to the erosion of fundamental rights and freedoms.

On the contrary, this should encourage us to redouble our efforts.

Within the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, our Members have carried on actively engaging in the work of our general and ad hoc committees to address pressing international and transnational challenges.

Through closer interactions with the executive structures of the OSCE, we have reinforced synergies to deepen the footprint of our parliamentary work and improve the impact of our Organization on the lives of our citizens.

In our 57 countries we have approximately 1 billion people.

We have continued to seek stronger relations with our partner institutions:

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, of course, but also the European Parliament, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, and the United Nations.

And, although we have been unable to meet fully in-person for close to two years, we have continued to offer a much-needed space for dialogue.

Despite this, we need to start meeting in person again.

I want to thank all of you for encouraging your Delegations to actively participate in the activities of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

But I also come with an appeal:

To be fully effective, our Organization needs greater attention from national parliaments and governments.

We need to keep discussions about international challenges on our domestic agendas.

We need to highlight the work of the OSCE in our national debates.

And we need to regularly question our governments on the implementation of their international commitments, including the OSCE fundamental agreements such as the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter.

Without your political support, we cannot explore the full potential of parliamentary diplomacy, and what international organizations can achieve will remain limited.

So, let's use this conference to recommit ourselves to our shared principles, our shared commitments, and our common goal to achieve a free, democratic, and indivisible European community.

Thank you.

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