



OSCE Parliamentary Assembly
President Margareta Cederfelt (MP, Sweden)

Address to the OSCE Permanent Council

Vienna, 20 January 2022

As delivered

Thank you, Ambassador Hałaciński, for these kind words of introduction.

Let me already wish you and the rest of your team success in chairing the Permanent Council this year.

Mr. Chair,
Madam Secretary General,
Your Excellencies,
Dear Ambassadors,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I hope that the winter recess gave you the opportunity to return to your homes safely to see your families and your close ones, and that all of you are in good health. I am glad to have met with several of you since yesterday, and I will continue to meet with you today and tomorrow.

It is a pleasure for me to be back in Vienna to address the Permanent Council. I am grateful for the opportunity to exchange with you today, following the opening events of the Polish Chairpersonship.

I hope you will agree that this established practice helps strengthen the overall complementarity of the OSCE. I find it beneficial to strengthen the partnership between the Chairpersonship, the executive structures, and the Parliamentary Assembly. Despite the

difficult circumstances, I hope that the Parliamentary Assembly's Winter Meeting next month as well will permit these valuable exchanges.

Let me thank Albania for their dedication over the past three years, and to congratulate North Macedonia for joining the Troika. I wish North Macedonia every success in preparing to chair the OSCE next year. As it has been the case with several other countries who have led our Organization whilst also hosting OSCE field operations - Albania, Serbia, Ukraine, or Kazakhstan - I look forward to North Macedonia using its own experience to help the OSCE respond to our common challenges.

My thanks go to Sweden and to the Chair-in-Office, Foreign Minister Ann Linde and the Swedish ambassador to the OSCE, for our good co-operation in 2021. I welcome the decision taken during the Ministerial Council in Stockholm to entrust Finland with the OSCE Chairpersonship in 2025, the year we will also celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act. I hope consensus will be found in the coming months regarding the 2024 Chairpersonship to ensure continuity in the leadership of the OSCE.

As you well know, OSCE parliamentarians are strong advocates of high-level discussions about the work and future of the OSCE. Over the next three years, through our productive collaboration with the Chairperson-in-Office, in concert with the successive chairs, Secretary General Schmid, and leaders of the OSCE Institutions, from the OSCE PA we are ready to continue to support, give energy and dedication of parliamentarians to contribute to build strong consensus for the planning and implementation of a Summit, which we consider necessary to revitalize the OSCE.

And I think here as well it is important to continue with good traditions, like the HDIM. It has been cancelled one year, two years, but not the third, I hope, dear Ambassadors.

Mr. Chair,

I closely followed the address made last week by Foreign Minister Rau. I wholeheartedly agree with the diagnosis that he made on today's challenges for the OSCE region.

Yes, European security can evolve.

Yes, issues related to European security - and security guarantees - have to be debated.

And the worst that can happen is to be quiet, to not let the debate go on, to not let the discussion go on. You, Ambassadors, and your Ministers, are very crucial for this. And I can ensure you that from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, we will also contribute to

highlight the debates, to take part, and to support the important work done inside the OSCE.

But discussions must remain rooted in the principles of international law and the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter, which are the result of extensive and patient processes. We cannot tolerate that these principles be violated, and it is our common responsibility to speak up when they are violated.

And here, as parliamentarian, I see this as crucial. Not only for my constituency, not for my neighbour's constituency. I see it for all constituencies, for all citizens in the OSCE regions. And that is what we want as parliamentarians and elected.

The position of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly is clear and has been reiterated on numerous occasions. For instance, we have repeatedly condemned the Russian violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We have repeatedly called for a comprehensive settlement of the conflict based on full implementation of the Minsk Agreements. Last July, we also called on the Belarusian authorities to rethink their approach to dissent and engage with the opposition, rather than harass and intimidate them.

I look forward to the day when there is full democracy in Belarus and it is possible to talk and exchange views just as it should be in all the other countries inside the OSCE region.

These resolutions were not adopted to single out a participating State, but to clearly rebuff the transgression of commonly agreed commitments. At the same time, the OSCE PA has spared no efforts to build bridges and promote avenues for dialogue. This is the message we have shared with all members on several occasions and that I will bring with me in planned meeting and visits to Moscow, Washington DC, and Kyiv, this spring.

The security situation remains precarious throughout the wider OSCE region – in Ukraine, in the South Caucasus, or in and around Afghanistan. As painfully illustrated by the events in Kazakhstan earlier this month, we must remain vigilant. I appreciate the presence today of Foreign Minister Tileuberdi and his outreach to the OSCE community to inform us of the measures taken by the authorities of Kazakhstan to respond to what happened earlier this month. I would also like here to send my condolences to the people of Kazakhstan.

We must work together to maximize the use of all OSCE tools to prevent and resolve tensions. In this vein, I appreciate the emphasis placed by the Chairperson-in-Office on the timely adoption of the OSCE budget. In these uncertain times, we cannot afford to fail the

OSCE by not providing it with the resources needed to accomplish its mission. And, dear Ambassadors, I hope you will succeed with the timely decision and also look over the level of the budget. In particular, I again call on all participating States to find consensus to extend the mandate of the Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine and to guarantee the safe, secured, and unhindered access of monitors throughout the territory of Ukraine. And to also install the border mission again.

As the host of the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Poland demonstrates strong support for the human dimension. I welcome Poland's call to protect civilian populations from the consequences of armed conflicts. This echoes the emphasis that the Parliamentary Assembly places on putting our citizens at the heart of the OSCE's mission. As elected representatives, we, parliamentarians, always keep a focus on our citizens and their wellbeing regardless of gender, age, religion, or ethnicity.

Your Excellencies,

Evidently, the COVID-19 pandemic remains a critical threat to all OSCE participating States. I am deeply concerned by forecasts that some 50 per cent of the population of Europe and Central Asia will be infected in the next two months. This spread prevents a return to normal life, risks to overwhelm our healthcare systems, as well as other vital functions, and accentuates dividing lines in our societies. But there will be a day when the COVID is no longer, and at that time we need to go back to the principles we have all agreed to, to open up societies, and to return to a normal life, including all the freedoms and democracy as we know it.

We see growing disconnections as I said in quite a lot of our countries in the daily life. And I have heard – and I have read – that in some parts it is also difficult to find what you need in stores, to find the day-care for the children when going to work, to get a place for the elderly people. And this shows the importance of the decisions taken by governments and parliaments to act responsibly. As the OSCE PA has said since the beginning of this pandemic, we should try to find a reasonable balance between protecting public health and ensuring the return to respect for fundamental rights and democratic principles.

Despite progress with the vaccination and prevention measures, the pandemic also continues to undermine the regular functioning of the OSCE. Poland will be the third chair to face these obstacles. I wish you success in overcoming them to successfully implement your priorities.

Above all, we cannot let the present circumstances continue to erode our ability to exchange with each other. Technology has become an important tool to ensure that dialogue remains open at all times. And on this note, let me sincerely thank the staff of the Secretariat, and in particular the Conference Services for their hard work in allowing the OSCE to continue to function as best as possible. But on-screen discussions cannot replace face-to-face engagement in the long run. And what I hear my colleagues from the Parliamentary Assembly say: “we look forward to the small talk around the coffee machine.” And I am sure this is a view you also share, dear Ambassadors.

In the context of high tensions on the borders of Ukraine, the discussions in Geneva and Brussels have had the merit of confronting divergences at the diplomatic table rather than through military maneuvers. These consultations must carry on. Yet, as many underlined during the Stockholm Ministerial Council: de-escalation is a necessary step to engage in a constructive dialogue on the European security order.

These are complex issues which require patience and diplomacy. As they progress, they also need greater inclusivity. European security cannot be discussed without Europeans, without the countries that are involved.

These are matters for which the OSCE is clearly the most useful platform. In fact, the OSCE already has the toolbox to address the issues that are currently being debated.

In 1999, our participating States laid out in Istanbul the key principles at the crux of today’s debates: That each participating State is free to choose or change its security arrangements. That each participating State own their own decision about security. That no one can have any pre-eminent responsibility for maintaining peace and stability in the OSCE area or can consider any part of the OSCE area as its sphere of influence or decision. And that the security of one State cannot be strengthened at the expense of another State.

The Vienna Document on Confidence- and Security-Building has also offered concrete measures to promote greater military-to-military dialogue, prevent incidents, and ensure more transparency on military maneuvers. Today, renewed efforts are necessary to support its modernization and application.

Likewise, we must work together to reaffirm the importance of the Open Skies Treaty, which has been a cornerstone of the European security architecture and continues to provide added value to our common security.

Consultations through the Structured Dialogue can also pave the way for greater mutual understanding and reverse the deterioration of European security.

Long-lasting peace and stability also require that we carry on strengthening the OSCE's implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security agenda.

Dear Ambassadors,

Progress is easier to achieve with genuine political will. This is true regarding the military escalation around and in Ukraine, as much as it is for all the other conflicts in the OSCE area, and the multitude of challenges facing us.

In all fields relevant to the OSCE, you, honoured Ambassadors, can continue to count on the strong engagement of OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, its Committees, its Special Representatives, its Delegations. We will carry on contributing to peace and security by generating political interest in our capitals and with our international partners, because we believe in multilateral work, both on the governmental side and on the parliamentary side.

As we, parliamentarians, have for the past year and a half, we will continue to discuss how to make the OSCE more effective through our "Call for Action" events. This spring, we will for instance discuss the ways in which OSCE parliamentarians can contribute to reconciliation and the normalization of interstate relations in post-conflict environments. I look forward to your continued participation. It is highly appreciated.

Beyond the immediate threat of armed conflict, we must continue to mobilize to guarantee climate security. Decisive action is needed now to mitigate and adapt to global warming and to protect OSCE citizens. I welcome the Ministerial Decision on *Strengthening Cooperation to Address the Challenges Caused by Climate Change*. We, parliamentarians, will also follow up on the COP26 outcomes to ensure that climate goals are met.

Of course, the OSCE PA will also continue with its valuable mission to observe elections and promote democracy. And we do this together with ODIHR. Human rights and the rule of law in all OSCE participating States are important issues when it comes to elections and election observations. We must continue to demonstrate that democracy delivers true security.

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, I will continue to encourage the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to be as active as possible this spring. I sincerely hope that the Assembly will be able to meet fully in-person for our Annual Session in Birmingham this coming July. Three

years after our last Annual Session in-person, there is a dire need for us to meet, to debate, and to adopt action-oriented resolutions that can further guide the work of the OSCE and promote the spirit of the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter.

Mr. Chair,
Your Excellencies,

I thank you for your attention this morning, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have about the work of the Parliamentary Assembly.

And Mr. Chair, once again, I wish you every success and a successful leadership of the OSCE during your Chairmanship.

Thank you very much.
