



2022 Winter Meeting of the OSCE PA

Joint Session of the Three General Committees

Address by OSCE PA President Margareta Cederfelt

25 February 2022 | Vienna

As delivered.

Mr. President,

Dear colleagues and friends,

We gather today as major conflict threatens the future of Europe.

The destructive decisions taken by Moscow and Mr. Putin since the start of this week have buried years of careful diplomacy to find a peaceful solution to the conflict in Ukraine.

My thoughts are with the people of Ukraine in these tragic hours.

As the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has insisted since the onset of the crisis eight years ago, following the illegal annexation of Crimea, the development in Donetsk and Luhansk the conflict needs to be resolved in full respect for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, in line with the principles of the Helsinki Final Act.

Our Assembly will stand firm on this.

The Russian military invasion of Ukraine is an armed aggression in clear and gross violation of the most basic norms of international law and OSCE principles and commitments.

An overwhelming majority of OSCE participating States recognizes this reality. Our Bureau has condemned this action this morning and we stand firmly on Ukraine's side.

I am sad that, despite intense high-level efforts to de-escalate tensions and address security concerns, dialogue has not managed to preserve peace.

For years now, we have decried a deep level of mistrust among OSCE participating States.

This has actively worn out security in Europe and led to this dark day.

Without trust, there is no transparency.

And without transparency there is no predictability.

Without trust, the implementation of our commitments will always fall short.

Without trust, we will remain unable to fully exploit, in good faith, all the OSCE mechanisms that can prevent and defuse tensions.

This includes the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, which for the past eight years has provided reliable information from the ground to the international community.

Our support today goes especially to the staff of OSCE Field Operations in Ukraine.

You have just as well as I read the daily and weekly reports and noticed how their space has been tightened, less and less room for observations, more restrictions. And here we are today, with a full-scale war.

Diplomacy is the only tool that can build sustainable peace.

I deeply appreciate the emphasis that the Polish Chairmanship have placed from the start of the Chairmanship on using the full potential of the OSCE as a platform for dialogue.

I welcome the Renewed OSCE European Security Dialogue as an initiative that can help rebuild trust and mutual understanding.

In the present context, all participating States should engage openly in these discussions. ...

And we, parliamentarians, should encourage our governments to do so.

Clearly, in today's environment, this is a challenge.

But: we need to cooperate.

We must keep open all lines of communication.

We must continue to bridge differences, and, together, build the trust essential to achieving comprehensive security, rooted in the Helsinki Principles, in the OSCE region.

And we can never accept military aggression and lack of respect for other countries integrity.

Dear colleagues,

Our Parliamentary Assembly is diverse.

Three-hundred and 323 Members representing the 57 OSCE participating States, joined by our colleagues from the Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation.

We have different languages.

We have different cultures.

We are from different generations.

And within our own Delegations, we come from different political backgrounds.

But we have two things in common: We are all parliamentarians.

And we are all committed to the OSCE.

Everyone of us is guided by one mission: At our core, we want what we believe is best for our citizens.

This is not always without contradictions.

And this is why the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly must remain this unique forum where we can respectfully confront these differences and seek to find common ground.

While we must continue to debate vigorously, while we must continue to oversee the implementation by governments – including and especially our own – OSCE commitments, while

we must continue to denounce violations of the Helsinki Principles, we must also ensure that we fully accomplish our core mission.

The Charter of Paris recognized the “important role that parliamentarians can play” in the work of the OSCE in ending “confrontation and division” and in promoting relations “founded on respect and co-operation.”

Our Rules of Procedure clearly give us a responsibility to promote conflict mediation.

They call on us to support the key objectives of the OSCE, ... chief of which is the promotion of better relations between our participating States

But all states need to participate and be engaged.

Unfortunately, I must deplore that national parliaments are being used to endorse radical solutions and to pour more oil on the fire.

Today more than ever, parliamentarians must exercise their oversight role, rather than enable their governments to breach international commitments.

Parliaments must be tools for de-escalation, not weapons of confrontation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly been a setback for parliamentary diplomacy. It has been a setback for our societies. Just as we saw the light, there is this terrible war from one OSCE country against another. We have to continue and pick up the dialogue again and work for cooperation, but also to fight the light in the tunnel. This is extremely important.

Dear Members,

Although a majority of you are participating online, we must make the most out of this Winter Meeting to re-establish parliamentary diplomacy as an effective tool for peace-making.

Numerous challenges and conflicts remain unresolved.

We will face more on our way towards peace and stability in Europe.

Beyond our sharp disagreements, there is much that we can achieve on issues of shared concern.

Our work on migration and countering terrorism clearly demonstrates this.

Many other areas, in particular climate change, provide additional opportunities to work together. I really regret that the current work takes focus away from other issues that need to be handled. But when it is a situation like this, we as parliamentarians, we know how to prioritize what is most important.

Today marks a first stage towards the first fully-fledged Annual Session since 2019.

Our General Committees will provide moments to exchange with representatives from the OSCE executive structures.

We will have ample time to debate and hear each other.

In the months to come, we must remain mobilized to defend our shared values to make the OSCE work and to effectively tackle all the challenges affecting our participating States.

I thank you for your strong commitment to the OSCE and to your Parliamentary Assembly, to democracy and the rule of law and I wish us all productive meetings over the next two days.

Thank you.

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