



Address to the OSCE Permanent Council OSCE PA President Margareta Cederfelt

Vienna | 27 October 2022

Check against delivery.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And thank you very much for your kind words about the work we do inside the OSCE Parliamentary. We very much appreciate co-operation with the Polish Chairmanship. We appreciate your focus on the important situation we have inside the OSCE and worldwide.

Your Excellencies,

I last addressed your esteemed body on the afternoon of the 24th of February, as Russian missiles rained on Ukrainian cities and military columns poured across the borders.

Since then: 245 days of terror for millions in Ukraine.

Indiscriminate missile strikes on civilian infrastructure. Cities nearly totally destroyed. Thousands of civilians buried under rubble. Millions displaced or deported. In the occupied territories: summary executions, torture, pillage, and looting. Widespread reports of war crimes and of crimes against humanity.

Who could have imagined this happening, in 2022, in the heart of Europe?

Our Birmingham Declaration, adopted last July, condemns in the strongest terms Russia's military aggression against Ukraine. It is a gross violation of the fundamentals of international law. It is a flagrant violation of the sovereignty of Ukraine and its territorial integrity. It is a blatant attack against the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the people of Ukraine.

As the Russian Federation doubles down in these clear and gross violations, including through sham referenda to illegally annex more territory, we must remain united and

determined. Our recent joint statements with Chairman-in-Office Rau, Secretary General Schmid, Secretary General Montella, and Heads of Institutions display the unity of the OSCE family on the matter.

Earlier this week, I participated in the first Parliamentary Summit of the Crimea Platform in Zagreb. Close to 40 parliaments and parliamentary assemblies coming together with the same message: we will continue to support Ukraine, diplomatically and politically. And we will continue to demand that the Russian Federation end this unprovoked and unjustified war.

Mr. Chair,

As you have rightly underlined since the 24th of February, this is not “business as usual.”

We are witnessing the most severe assault on European security since the signing of the Helsinki Final Act.

The war in Ukraine has widespread implications for the whole OSCE region and beyond. It has invited every country to rethink their defence posture and it has reshaped military alliances. It has exacerbated food and energy security challenges worldwide.

But even as all our countries face growing economic difficulties, we cannot give in. We must remain united and resolved to defend Ukraine, its people, its sovereignty, its independence, and its internationally recognized borders.

We must continue to stand up for the Helsinki Principles and defend the work of the OSCE.

We look forward to assisting North Macedonia in its upcoming Chairmanship. As we have repeatedly noted over the years, taking the helm of the OSCE is never an easy task. Chairing the OSCE today is an act of courage and valour.

Next month, I will visit Skopje to discuss with the incoming Chairman-in-Office, Foreign Minister Osmani, ways the OSCE PA can support your priorities and, together, strengthen our collective work. As challenges continue to mount, strong synergies are needed so that they can be overcome.

Mr. Chair,

The recent recurrence of fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan compels us to work towards a long-term cessation of hostilities. We must give diplomacy a chance to prevail over the use of force. In this regard, I commend ongoing efforts to delimitate the border between the two countries and to conclude a peace treaty. I also welcome efforts by third parties to support Armenia and Azerbaijan in these endeavours.

Yet, we need strong OSCE involvement in the South Caucasus to ensure long-lasting peace and stability. We must sustain our ongoing work, particularly in the framework of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism and the Geneva International Discussions, and continue to look for ways to support confidence-building.

Last month's border clashes between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are yet another reminder that peace is fragile. It can never be taken for granted. It takes courage to deliver. It takes wisdom and restraint to sustain.

Within the OSCE itself, I am extremely concerned at the imminent disintegration of the organization due to lack of consensus. Today, we face another leadership vacuum with no participating State in line to join the Troika in just two months, and to chair the OSCE in 2024.

For the third consecutive year, the OSCE was unable to hold its flagship human rights meeting. Although the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference was a great opportunity for all of us to reconnect with civil society representatives, I am concerned that we are sabotaging the instruments that help us promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy, and the rule of law.

Lack of consensus on this year's budget threatens the OSCE's ability to assist participating States in a number of key areas. While the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly is less constrained by the consensus rule, we are also preparing to suffer an unprecedented budget crunch, which will stretch our already limited resources and further restrict our ability to support our joint work.

As the OSCE PA is a strong supporter of OSCE Field Operations, we are particularly alarmed at the prospect of closures in the coming months.

This year has already seen the abrupt shutdown of our most visible asset, the Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, as well as the Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine, which for the last three decades had supported Ukrainian state institutions, civil society, and citizens.

I welcome the launch by the Chairman-in-Office, Foreign Minister Rau, and Secretary General Schmid of a new support programme for Ukraine, which will preserve the

OSCE's legacy work in Ukraine while also contributing to addressing humanitarian needs. But we must remain wary that these exceptional circumstances do not lead to a new normal, in which the OSCE is absent from where it is needed the most.

In Central Asia and in Southeast Europe, the OSCE has built trusted partnerships and amassed invaluable experience to support the implementation of OSCE commitments. We must ensure that these programmes are preserved and strengthened.

We must also remain mobilized to ensure that every OSCE staff is protected and cared for. It is our collective responsibility to make sure that our people can continue to carry out their mission despite all the hardships. I am appalled that two former employees of the SMM have been sentenced for performing their official duties in the occupied territories of Ukraine. And we will continue to act to get them released. I can promise that.

Your Excellencies,

In Łódź, my appeal to your Ministers will be clear: now is the right time to support the OSCE.

As we approach the fiftieth anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, we must continue to stand up for our shared values and principles. We must continue to call out blatant transgressions of international law and seek that they are corrected. We must continue to assist all participating States in the implementation of their OSCE commitments.

With much of our attention drawn towards Ukraine, we also cannot afford to overlook the numerous domains where the OSCE can make a difference in the lives of all our citizens. This remains our main drive as parliamentarians.

Our Birmingham Declaration adopted at our Annual Session outlines priorities where we see value in OSCE engagement, with the support of our parliaments and your governments.

Together, we must do more to combat global warming and accelerate the clean energy transition. We must continue to defend the socio-economic wellbeing of our populations. We must carry on defending individual rights and freedoms. Together, we can promote inclusive societies. We can tackle discriminations and extremism, including through the adoption of an OSCE Anti-Discrimination, Equity, and Inclusion Plan.

Mr. Chair,

We remain convinced that the OSCE can fulfil its role as an effective, all-inclusive platform where participating States can rebuild basic trust and confidence, through principles-based dialogue.

To this end, you can count on the continued support of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the multiple tools at our disposal. The leadership of our general committees meets on a regular basis to streamline our activities in the three OSCE dimensions. The flexibility of our Ad Hoc Committees on Migration and on Countering Terrorism enables us to enhance the work of the OSCE in these fields. Thanks to our Special Representatives, we continue to highlight regional and thematic areas of relevance for the OSCE in our work.

Our network of young parliamentarians provides a space where the voices of future leaders can be heard, and where we can promote the role of youth in peace and security. Likewise, our women's network, which will officially be launched this afternoon, should provide opportunities to amplify the role of female parliamentarians in decision-making processes. Promote women in politics and participation in security politics.

Several of you have participated in the events held in the framework of our "Call for Action / Helsinki+50" initiative, which will continue to provide an arena to debate ways to make the OSCE more effective and more impactful.

All these instruments feed valuable parliamentary input in the work of our organization. We look forward to working closely with you, with the OSCE Secretariat, and with OSCE institutions, so that we all pull together in the same direction.

Mr. Chair,

As our Assembly prepares to meet again in Warsaw next month for our Autumn Meeting, let me use this opportunity to commend Poland for its leadership – both at a governmental and a parliamentary level – throughout this year in the face of an unprecedented assault on security and co-operation in Europe.

Poland's support to Ukraine's defenders, to Ukrainian refugees, and before that to the Belarusian democratic movement, is admirable. Let me once more voice my personal appreciation for your stewardship of the OSCE in these times of grave crisis and wish you success as you carry out preparations for the Ministerial Council meeting.

Thank you all for your attention. I look forward to your comments and questions.

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