

**Address to the OSCE Permanent Council**  
**by OSCE PA President Margareta Cederfelt**  
**Thursday, 26 January 2023**

**AS DELIVERED**

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Thank you, Mr. Chair. Let me first wish you every success in your Chairpersonship.

Your Excellencies,  
Ambassadors,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to return to Vienna and the Permanent Council for my fourth appearance. At the onset, I would like to thank you all for our fruitful co-operation between OSCE and OSCE PA. I look forward to continuing our close collaboration in the coming months, as our Assembly prepares for its Annual Session in Vancouver.

I have had the pleasure to sit down with several of you this week. These exchanges have been useful to make sure that the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly stays in tune with the priorities and concerns of participating States. But also, to inform you about the priorities of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. By this, we continue to play the instrumental role as the Parliamentary Dimension of the OSCE. Today, when the Helsinki principles and the European Security order are under pressure, our collaboration is more important than ever.

Your Excellencies,

As parliamentarians, we write and pass laws, scrutinize the government, the implementation of regulations and laws and decide over the budget. Here in the OSCE PA, our duties are a bit different. We are not scrutinizing the OSCE, we are not adopting any laws nor the OSCE budget.

But we are very strong in our positions, our goal. As representatives of the people, we have the mandate of more than 1 billion people to support the European Security order,

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including its three pillars. We debate, we make statements and adopt declarations, we report back to our national parliaments and use our engagement in our constituencies. By this, I say that we are elected by the people, we act on the behalf of people, and we are responsible in front of the people.

The 24<sup>th</sup> of February will be a day of horror, marking one year of Russia's illegal war against Ukraine. The OSCE PA was gathered for the Winter Meeting when the terrible news of Russia's invasion reached us. The atmosphere was unrealistic, but we stood firm. The OSCE PA has been clear in its position since 2014 – we continue to stand side by side with the people of Ukraine.

The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine constitutes the most prominent threat to the European Security Order and the very foundation on which the OSCE was founded. As the OSCE PA concluded in the Birmingham Declaration, the Russian Federation, with the support of Belarus, has violated all principles of the Helsinki Final Act. And it continues to do its illegal war and assault Ukraine.

During the Ministerial Council I called on the Council to recognize that the Russian Federation has committed gross, and still uncorrected violations of the Helsinki Final Act by pursuing the illegal war of aggression in Ukraine. I would once again like to call on the participating States to join the Parliamentary Assembly in using this language.

The war against Ukraine - and its incalculable impact on peace, security, and co-operation in every corner of the OSCE region - will, of course, feature prominently on our agenda of the upcoming Winter Meeting. Our special debate will help determine what the OSCE can do and highlight some of our Assembly's contributions to peace and security based on respect for Ukraine's right to its internationally recognized territory.

I will now focus on some critical issues of Russia's war against Ukraine where the OSCE PA takes action. Approximately 8 million Ukrainians have fled the war, 90 percent of them are women and children. Our Ad Hoc Committee on Migration has prioritized sharing solutions to the challenges associated with large numbers of refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine. Last month, the Committee visited the Czech Republic, which shelters the largest number of Ukrainian refugees per capita. In the coming months, it will continue to identify best practices to ensure that our participating States can welcome refugees with dignity and provide them with the conditions to pursue their lives as productive members of society. The Committee is as well in contact with the European Commission and the OSCE.

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Our goal as members of the PA is to speak out against the ongoing war crimes, keep ourselves informed and act as an alarm bell wherever we are. Almost every day each of us receives reports on new alleged war crimes performed by Russia against the Ukrainian people. The OSCE PA will continue to put collective pressure to pursue accountability for atrocities committed in Ukraine.

We are also holding an eye and acting for the release of political prisoners. And let me once again recall the illegal arrest of Vladimir Kara-Murza. I do kindly ask you, dear Ambassadors, to support the release of Vladimir Kara-Murza. I have heard that his health is weakening, and I think it's important to support his release. I do also say that all those employees from the OSCE who are under arrest should be released, and this is something we stand behind as the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

So far neither dialogue nor diplomacy has managed to bring the aggressor, Russia, to the same table with Ukraine. The OSCE PA stands ready to support Parliamentary Diplomacy and is very active in promoting a return to peace in conformity with international law and the Helsinki Principles.

Evidently, there is a great desire within the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to support Ukraine to the best of our ability in this struggle for its independence, sovereignty within its internationally recognized borders, and the dignity of its people.

During our Autumn Meeting in Warsaw, our Standing Committee debated a proposed amendment to the Rules of Procedure that would have established a suspension mechanism for Delegations from participating States who committed clear, gross, an uncorrected violation of the Helsinki Final Act as a result of large-scale military operations. While the formal conditions for the adoption of this proposed amendment were not met, our debate clarified how we can translate our overwhelming support for Ukraine into acts.

However, while most of our attention is focused on Ukraine, we must also make sure that other regions and thematic priorities remain high on the PA's agenda in 2023.

I am pleased that our Central Asian colleagues have urged us not to forget about the multiple challenges their countries continue to face as a result of the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, the energy crisis, as well as the multifaceted impacts of the war in Ukraine. To do so, we will continue to promote intra-regional co-operation and parliamentarism

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through the active participation of Members from Central Asia and Mongolia in the work of our Assembly.

I am particularly encouraged by the resumed engagement of Turkmenistan in our activities. We must not lose this momentum. But also, the other Central Asian countries have increased their activity inside the OSCE PA. I believe it is important that the OSCE PA is relevant for the 1 billion people living in the region, perspectives of all its members must be heard.

As I noted in my last address, we need a stronger OSCE involvement in the South Caucasus to ensure long-lasting peace and stability. The leadership of our third committee recently visited Georgia to highlight the human impact of Russia's occupation of the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions. The OSCE PA will continue to explore how parliamentarians can support ongoing efforts to ensure a comprehensive peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan. In addition, an economic conference, hosted by the Second General Committee and the Milli Majlis of Azerbaijan, will provide space for our members to discuss opportunities for sustainable growth and development.

We are closely monitoring political developments in the Western Balkans. The OSCE PA observed the elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina and have taken action to support an interparliamentary forum to be held in Skopje. The OSCE PA intends to reinforce our partnership with the Assembly of North Macedonia during its Chairpersonship this year.

Mr. Chair,

As Chairperson-in-Office, Foreign Minister Osmani, underlined in his inaugural address, North Macedonia can testify firsthand to the benefits of the OSCE's field presence. Therefore, I warmly welcome the Chairpersonship's goal to reinforce the OSCE's attention to the people on the ground.

I welcome the fact that it was possible to extend by one-year most of these mandates, but I must express concern over the limited prolongation granted to the OSCE Mission to Moldova. I can personally attest to the remarkable assistance that the OSCE has provided to the people of Moldova for the past thirty years. We must protect this legacy. If we are serious about the future of the OSCE, we cannot afford to weaken our assets.

Ambassadors, you can count on our full support in placing the people at the center of the OSCE. We will also continue to be reliable partners to promote greater engagement with civil society and the empowerment of women and youth.

In 2023 we will carry on with our efforts to promote greater youth engagement. In the coming year the priority is the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security and the role of parliamentarians in addressing the specific needs of youth in their contribution to peace and security issues, as outlined in the OSCE PA's Birmingham Declaration. Our network of young parliamentarians will continue to meet regularly, including here, during our Winter Meeting. I do as well underline that it is important to involve young parliamentarians in the work of the Assembly, to bring their perspective in the work of General Committees, Ad Hoc Committees and Special Representatives.

Building on the pioneering work on Gender Issues, the OSCE PA has initiated a gender network bringing parliamentarians together to identify and overcome the key obstacles preventing a more complete gender equality in the OSCE region.

Dear Ambassadors,

May I also mention that the participation of women in national delegations is highly important. It's nothing that we at the OSCE PA have influence over. It's the national parliaments who nominate their delegates but I could see the importance of more women delegates, as women are half of the population, and women's perspective is very important when it comes to security and peace.

Ladies and gentlemen,

These synergies are possible thanks to the close coordination that has been achieved over time between our Parliamentary Assembly, successive Chairpersonships, and the OSCE Secretariat and Institutions. These harmonious relationships serve to ensure that all the different elements of the OSCE machinery work together to achieve concrete results.

We are eager to contribute with our parliamentary perspective to the upcoming OSCE High-Level Conference on Climate Change in March 2023, yet another topic which is very high on our shared agenda.

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Democracy and free fair elections are important for the European Security order. The OSCE PA will continue its engagement in election observation and looks forward to further cooperation with the ODIHR to prepare for the deployment of sizable delegations for the elections we anticipate observing this year, including in Kazakhstan and in Türkiye.

Another important topic is the work to counter corruption. Corruption is a mindset and we as parliamentarians have a duty to continue and increase our efforts against corruption. It's naive to believe that corruption belongs to history. Corruption is a poison that reduces people's trust in politics, while wrongfully misappropriating resources that could be used to advance economic growth and welfare of people. The OSCE PA will continue to work closely with the OSCE executive structures in promoting transparency and accountability across the region.

Also, with the ODIHR, and together with the Representative on Freedom of the Media, we will continue to highlight the safety of female journalists online through joint events and publications and the active engagement of our members.

Countering Terrorism is highly prioritized. Terrorism does not stop at national borders and is therefore an important issue on the OSCE PA's agenda. The OSCE PA will deepen its partnership with the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism and engage assemblies from across the globe to better address terrorism and violent extremism.

Your Excellencies,

This is a comprehensive - but not exhaustive - overview of the OSCE PA plans leading up to our Annual Session in Vancouver, during which a new President and Bureau will be elected. We look forward to an ever-closer working relationship with the executive structures of the OSCE and will continue to engage with national parliaments to increase high-level political attention to the OSCE. Through our Annual Declaration, we will carry on raising awareness of the many policy-making tools that the OSCE possesses and which participating States should make full use of.

Ambassadors,

I have heard that several of you are interested in contacting the Bureau, Special Representatives, Leadership of the Committees.

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Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe  
PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

You will find a list of members of the Bureau, Special Representatives, Leadership of the Committees, Ad Hoc Committees and Special Representatives at the OSCE PA website so you can get in touch with the elected leadership and appointed representatives. We are all eager to cooperate in the framework of the OSCE.

And let me also when concluding just mention again that Russia's illegal war against Ukraine is the most serious threat against security and safety in the OSCE region and the OSCE PA stands firm in our support for the Ukrainian people.

As a word of conclusion, let me again warmly thank you for our valuable co-operation since I assumed the presidency of the Parliamentary Assembly in the summer of 2021. I look forward to carrying on with the same energy during the remaining period of my presidency.

Thank you.

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