



**Winter Meeting of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly
Opening remarks by OSCE PA President Margareta Cederfelt
24 February 2023**

Check against delivery

Fellow parliamentarians,
Dear colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Everyone of us remembers where they were a year ago. Some of us met on this very day, in this very room, as Russian missiles rained on Ukrainian cities and military columns poured across the border.

We are still gripped by the shock of the aggression. We remember the emotion we felt when our dear colleague, Mykyta Poturaiev, left these halls to return to Kyiv and fight. We did not know whether we would see him again.

But a year later, here we are. And a year later, Ukraine still stands, resilient, strong, and free.

With each passing hour we hope to come closer to the day when the people of Ukraine will enjoy their full independence and sovereignty within their internationally-recognized borders. But each passing hour also brings countless victims - from the soldiers defending their homeland, to those sitting in their home as a Russian bomb erases their life. Their sacrifice calls on us to redouble our efforts to guarantee the right of all Ukrainians to live in peace and dignity.

Dear Members,

We have been steadfast in our support for Ukraine since the illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014. We have never shied away from denouncing the Russian Federation's clear, gross, and uncorrected violations of the Helsinki Final Act. Our political position is clear. Today's debate should serve to further reaffirm it.

But it is also clear that we all wish to go beyond mere expressions of solidarity. We want to act decisively in support of Ukraine. Many of us have done so in our national parliaments.

And we want to use the OSCE PA platform to do even more. We must fully utilize the Assembly as a common platform to gather support for Ukraine, while jointly calling out the Russian Federation's violations of OSCE commitments, the UN charter and international law.

However, we must remain realistic about what the Parliamentary Assembly can and cannot do. We should always consider where and when the OSCE PA is best placed to advance security. And we must remain conscious of its limitations.

In line with our commitments and capabilities, I have developed for the past year an "action plan on Ukraine" which outlines what messages we can amplify, what activities we can undertake, and how together we can translate our solidarity into concrete action. This plan is well complemented by the joint statement of action proposed by Vice-President Roger Wicker. This statement was shared with you ahead of our Winter Meeting. It was endorsed by our Bureau on Wednesday. I expect our debate to also signal overwhelming support for this document.

Dear colleagues,

The challenges brought to the fore by the Russian war in Ukraine are endless. Russia has shattered European security. We must think about how we can put these broken pieces back together. I look forward to the results of the ministerial meeting taking place today in New York.

To have the greatest impact, we must continue coordinating closely with our governments and international partners. Together, we can ensure that the Russian Federation is held accountable for the atrocities in the war against Ukraine, that war crimes are fully investigated, that reparations compensate for the incalculable damage caused by the war and that justice is delivered for victims.

Away from the battlefield, there are many issues to tackle today, from welcoming refugees to preventing illegal deportation, from ensuring energy security to preventing global hunger, and to support continued efforts to reinforce democratic governance and the rule of law.

V. 20/02/2023

On all of these issues, OSCE and the Parliamentary Assembly must continue to seek ways to reaffirm our support for Ukraine. This is where our energy must be directed.

Thank you.