



2023 Autumn Meeting of the OSCE PA
Opening address
by OSCE PA President Pia Kauma

Yerevan | 18 November 2023

Check against delivery.

***Mr. President,
Mr. Prime Minister,
Madam Secretary General,
Fellow parliamentarians,
Dear friends,***

We meet in times of unprecedented uncertainty.

The war in Ukraine rages for a six-hundred and thirty-second day.

The atrocities committed by Hamas on October 7th, and Israel's military response since, have brought the Middle East to a boiling point.

They have also unveiled strong divides in our societies.

And old mechanisms of hatred.

This region has not been spared.

Less than two months ago, more than a hundred thousand fled their homes to seek refuge here, in Armenia.

Over the past few days, I have heard their stories.

Their distress echoes stories heard all across the OSCE - in Georgia, in Azerbaijan, in Ukraine, in the Balkans.

They illustrate universal truths:

That the price of justice cannot be the continued suffering of civilians.

That sustainable peace and true security require trust and reconciliation.

And that political leaders have a responsibility to lead the way.

Dear colleagues,

We see it clearly day after day:

Raw power politics increase antagonism.

Rivalries prevent compromise.

And coercion leads to violence.

The pattern is familiar.

It repeats throughout history.

As we seemingly navigate from crisis to crisis, failing to anticipate major events, we should remind ourselves that, almost half a century ago, our countries came together once more to break this destructive cycle.

Through shared values and effective multilateralism, the OSCE has since strived to achieve greater stability and security throughout our vast region.

But without strong political will, multilateralism will always be limited.

This could not ring more true than in the Caucasus.

For decades, the OSCE operated field missions throughout this region - here in Yerevan, but also in Baku, in Tbilisi, and in Grozny.

The OSCE helped strengthen state institutions.

It helped promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

It helped develop civil society.

The OSCE fulfills this mission everywhere it still operates.

But it can no longer do so here.

Our Autumn Meeting is therefore a great opportunity to reflect on how the OSCE can find lasting solutions to challenges across our region.

On how it can help rebuild trust.

And on how - together - we can help overcome old divides.

Fellow parliamentarians,

Unfortunately, there is very little that we can do together if our governments cannot agree on the most basic steps.

Financing the Organization.

Confirming Heads of Institutions.

Entrusting a Chair.

Without a solution to these simple problems, the OSCE will continue to operate in the dark.

Your message at our Annual Session in Vancouver was plain and simple:

The OSCE is facing an existential crisis fueled by the politicized withholding of financial resources and a systematic misuse of the consensus rule.

In other words: it is our countries themselves who are diminishing the OSCE's ability to positively impact the lives of our people.

I have delivered this message loud and clear since my election as your President.

I will bring it with me when the Ministerial Council meets in less than two weeks.

But, even though we all hope for some positive agreements, we must prepare for unprecedented uncertainty within the OSCE itself.

To face this disastrous scenario, it is crucial that our Assembly steps up to advocate for a functional OSCE.

We have to continue generating political interest in the OSCE at the highest level.

We have to continue to speak up in defense of OSCE values.

And we must continue to keep our people at the center of it all.

Dear friends,

Amidst all this uncertainty, the purpose of the OSCE emerges more clear.

Throughout the OSCE region, we have realized how much we depend on each other.

We see that short-term solutions rarely solve intricate problems.

Preventing radicalization.

Fighting hate crimes.

Assisting refugees and displaced persons.

Protecting human dignity.

Rebuilding trust.

Time and again, we see the relevance of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security.

So, rather than reinventing the OSCE, let us all make sure we first use its full potential.

Let us make sure we provide it with what it needs.

And let us make sure that it is able to respond to new security realities.

With these thoughts in mind-

Let me once again thank our hosts and wish us all three days of fruitful discussions in Yerevan.

Thank you.