



**OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President
Pia Kauma (MP, Finland)**

**Address to the Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council
Skopje, 30 November 2023**

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Thank you, Mr. Chair,
Madam Secretary General,
Ministers and Ambassadors,
Ladies and gentlemen,

In a world forever altered by Russia's unprovoked invasion and ongoing war against Ukraine, the impact of aggression reverberates across our entire region. The Ukrainian people, brutalized and suffering, remain at the forefront of our attention. We cannot turn a blind eye to these clear, gross and uncorrected violations of the Helsinki Final Act. Simultaneously, we confront a mosaic of challenges in all corners of the OSCE.

As we attempt to navigate this unknown landscape, we must acknowledge the multifaceted nature of the crises at hand. As we see in the South Caucasus, regional development cannot be guaranteed without peace and stability. Tensions in the Western Balkans persist, serving as a stark reminder of the fragility of peace in the region. Old wounds can resurface, threatening the hard-won progress towards stability. Central Asia demands our continued attention, as the region faces its own unique set of challenges that contribute to this overall complexity. The 7 October terrorist attacks and Israel's military response in Gaza have intensified tensions in the Middle East, with a ripple effect in all our countries.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's latest Annual Session in Vancouver saw fruitful exchanges on the challenges we face. Yet the conclusions are sobering. For the first time in our 30-year history, parliamentarians added a fourth chapter to our main declaration, addressing the institutional crises plaguing our organization.

This unprecedented step reflects not only the gravity of the situation within the OSCE as an organization, but rings alarms on our inability to respond effectively to the broader geopolitical complexities we face.

We recognize the unwavering commitment of North Macedonia to finding a solution. A country whose peoples laid down their weapons to build an inclusive, multiethnic society. A country which demonstrated successful diplomacy with its neighbors. A country, which - as the host of a Field Operation for the past 31 years - best understands the value of positive engagement with the OSCE.

In this critical context, as a Finn, I am also acutely aware of our collective responsibility as we approach 50 years since the signing of the Helsinki Final Act. Finnish President Urho Kekkonen described August 1st, 1975, as "a day of joy and hope," ushering in a new era. While the joy may be elusive today, the hope must endure.

Despite the challenging environment created by Russia's unjustified war of aggression on Ukraine, and the fact that the Russian Federation continues to violate all ten principles of the Helsinki Final Act, the OSCE has managed to carry on with its work. However, the obstacles we face, such as delaying agreements on a Chair and Heads of Institution, blocking the adoption of the budget, and additional limitations on Field Operations, threaten our collective security. Our constituents expect results. As their elected representatives we cannot deflect blame. We must work together towards tangible solutions.

In the face of such unprecedented uncertainty, I maintain that the OSCE is more crucial than ever. Our Vancouver Declaration outlines recommendations that underscore our widespread commitment to supporting Ukraine through all means necessary. Real accountability,

focusing on victims of conflicts, is paramount. To do this and be more responsive to our colleagues in Kyiv, we have established a Parliamentary Support Team for Ukraine, which I have the honour to lead.

As the executive structures grind to a halt, I will make sure that the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly continues to move forward. My presidency will continue to prioritize strengthening our engagement. The OSCE PA is a forum for political dialogue. We will continue to address challenging topics, offering recommendations to the OSCE and its governments on ways to address our Organization's shortcomings. Cooperation with the entire OSCE family, especially with the ODIHR, remains crucial. Strong partnerships in areas like election observation highlight the effectiveness of the OSCE's work.

But let us not forget that the OSCE's mission goes beyond crisis management. It extends to shaping a future where the principles of the Helsinki Final Act, born in times of heightened geopolitical confrontation out of a shared commitment, are not just words on paper but the cornerstone of a stable, peaceful, and just world.

With the 2024 and 2025 Chairpersonships agreed to, we must use this momentum to advance concrete work. Looking ahead, our commitment to the OSCE's mission must guide us in addressing not only the immediate crises but also the systemic challenges facing our region. Our ability to foster dialogue, build trust, and uphold the principles of the Helsinki Final Act will determine our success in creating a secure and just future for generations to come.

Thank you for your attention.