



## **OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President Pia Kauma**

**Address to the OSCE Permanent Council  
8 February 2024 | Vienna**

*Check against delivery.*

Madam Chair,  
Your Excellencies,

I would like to begin by thanking you, Madam Chair, for inviting me to address the OSCE Permanent Council on behalf of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

Despite the challenges in reaching a decision on the 2024 Chairpersonship and the resulting impact on your work plan for the year, we appreciate your commitment to fostering strong collaboration between this Council and OSCE parliamentarians, by continuing the efforts of your predecessors.

I want to emphasize our unwavering support for your Chairpersonship. The circumstances under which you assumed leadership of the OSCE are unprecedented. We are grateful to the participating States providing additional personnel to assist you in this critical undertaking.

While recognizing the limited time you had to prepare for this responsibility, we are confident that it will not hinder your ability to effectively guide the OSCE. The recent address delivered by the Chair-in-Office two weeks ago showcased your capacity to lead despite the challenging circumstances.

Building on your principled engagement, your ability to build bridges, and your commitment to collaborative diplomacy, I welcome your ambition to ensure that the OSCE can play its full role in breaking the current cycle of violence, death, and destruction.

I welcome the Chair's unequivocal condemnation of Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine. His recent visit to Kyiv confirmed that this will remain at the top of the OSCE's agenda.

I have myself just returned from Kyiv, marking the inaugural visit of the OSCE PA's Parliamentary Support Team for Ukraine. This was a significant opportunity to reaffirm the PA's unwavering support for Ukraine and to engage directly with our colleagues in the Verkhovna Rada to explore how parliamentarians can help pave the way towards the delivery of a just peace answering Ukraine's aspirations and its sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally-recognized borders.

As we gear up to our next Annual Session in Bucharest, and prepare for the fiftieth anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act next year, Ukraine will continue to dominate our own political agenda.

Our attention will also remain closely attuned to developments in the South Caucasus, a region I had the opportunity to visit last November before our Autumn Meeting in Yerevan. I stand ready to work with the delegations from Armenia and Azerbaijan to identify avenues through which parliamentarians can contribute to the ongoing peace process.

If time allows in the coming months, I aspire to visit South East Europe and Central Asia to underscore the pivotal role of the OSCE in these regions.

Our recent Mediterranean Forum brought to light a prevailing concern about the escalating security challenges in the Middle East and beyond. There is a collective eagerness to actively contribute to identifying solutions. Although this conflict is not on the agenda of the OSCE, it is imperative that our work takes into account any major global security issue. This begs us to find ways to reinvigorate the OSCE's Mediterranean dimension and to strengthen our co-operation with our Mediterranean Partners. Malta is perfectly suited to this task.

In a broader context, our ongoing debates reflect concern regarding the increasing challenges to the fundamental rules and principles which govern international relations.

I had the opportunity to delve into these issues during discussions in Washington DC last week. Echoing Minister Borg, we must recognize that 1975 marked the inception, not the conclusion, of a political journey. Our collective adherence to the Helsinki principles should serve as a compass, directing us towards the fulfillment of our predecessors' vision. These values are sacrosanct and non-negotiable. It is therefore imperative that we take every necessary measure to safeguard them across all dimensions of security.

Looking ahead to my return to Vienna for the OSCE PA's Winter Meeting in two weeks, I want to highlight the importance of this event in our Assembly's annual work plan. These two days provide an excellent opportunity for meaningful engagement, highlighting the synergy between the OSCE's executive and legislative branches in achieving tangible results.

I extend my gratitude in advance to leaders of the executive structures, including Minister Borg and Secretary General Schmid, for their active participation in this event. Our Members look forward to exchanging with you on the best ways they can support the work of the OSCE.

Recognizing that the decisions made at the Ministerial Council in Skopje left unanswered questions regarding the OSCE's future, we will use this opportunity to reaffirm our unwavering support for the work of OSCE Institutions.

Secretary General Schmid had the opportunity to witness this during our Autumn Meeting in Yerevan. Our roles are complementary. We need to continue coordinating at all levels to ensure that the OSCE has the greatest impact.

Our close collaboration with the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights was illustrated yesterday through our observation of the early presidential elections in Azerbaijan. I am expecting the release of the Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions this afternoon. As always, our Assembly stands prepared to engage openly with our partners in Azerbaijan to address any identified shortcomings in a spirit of trust and honesty.

We remain committed to a robust partnership with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, with a specific focus on addressing and preventing violence against female journalists.

We look forward to working with the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities to integrate OSCE commitments in national legislative and policy frameworks.

In the same way that I affirm the PA's support for the crucial work of OSCE Institutions, I want to express our full support for the efforts of this Chairpersonship to identify viable solutions for their leadership beyond the summer.

As my predecessors have done before me, I need to emphasize the critical need to reach an agreement on a budget that enables the OSCE to carry out its mandate. The current financial state of the Organization is evidently unsustainable—not due to extravagant spending, but rather, political maneuvering that is impeding the OSCE's financial stability and threatening its immediate future.

These are urgent matters which I will continue to consider together with the Finnish Task Force preparing for the 2025 OSCE Chairpersonship.

Unfortunately, the OSCE PA has also begun to experience similar gamesmanship with its finances. Last year, the Russian Federation was the sole Delegation to not pay its agreed contribution, constituting 6 percent of our budget. While the OSCE PA's International Secretariat has initiated corrective measures, it is imperative to find a sustainable solution for the long term.

Our parliamentarians will continue to dedicate their time to champion the initiatives of the OSCE on the ground. Kyriakos Hadjiyianni, our Special Representative on South East Europe, was recently in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Kristian Vigenin, our Special Representative on Eastern Europe, will be in Moldova next week. Both visits are opportunities to promote the work of OSCE Field Operations.

We will remain actively engaged with all our partners. Our Special Representative on Fighting Corruption, Irene Charalambides, was last month in Brussels to coordinate this portfolio with the European Union. Our Special Representative on Combating Organized Crime, Eugenio Zoffili, was recently in Vienna to exchange with the OSCE Secretariat and the Office of the United Nations against Drugs and Crimes.

Our Ad Hoc Committee on Migration is gearing up for visits to Italy and Türkiye in the upcoming months. As with our Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism, these flexible instruments enable parliamentarians to gather and exchange first-hand information, foster collaborative solutions to significant transnational challenges, and make a distinctive parliamentary contribution to the overarching efforts in responding to these issues.

Several seminars and conferences planned for this spring will provide additional opportunities for our Members to reflect on OSCE issues. We extend our gratitude to the German Federal Foreign Office and the Bundestag, as we are privileged to hold another edition of our “Leinsweiler Seminar” in Berlin in April. Additionally, in May, at the invitation of the Assembly of the Republic of Portugal, we will resume a series of biannual conferences that were interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. We anticipate this spring’s conference to address issues relevant to the OSCE’s second dimension.

I express my gratitude to the participating States and their parliaments for their enthusiasm in hosting events for the Parliamentary Assembly. Given our packed annual calendar, I take this opportunity to urge advance coordination with the International Secretariat to guarantee the highest possible level of participation by our Members.

Madam Chair,

Ever since my election, I have worked closely with Secretary General Montella and his team to best exploit the expertise and energy of our Members. The visit to Ukraine this week is a clear example of effective support I have been enjoying despite limited resources, both from Copenhagen and Vienna. On a broader note, I look forward to regularly exchanging with you, with the Troika, and with the OSCE Secretariat on ways the OSCE as a whole can reap the benefits of our close co-operation.

Before I conclude, let me inform you that, amidst this flurry of activities, I have initiated a new process to assess the future work of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. Recognizing that we stand at a crossroads, it is crucial to take the time to understand our identity and envision what we aspire to become in the next decades. Members of our Bureau convened last month in Copenhagen to begin thinking of ways in which our Parliamentary Assembly can more effectively respond to the challenges we face.

I thank you for your attention this morning. I look forward to your comments and answering any questions you may have.

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