



OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President
Pia Kauma (MP, Finland)

Address to the OSCE Permanent Council
5 September 2024 | Vienna

Check against delivery

**Thank you, Madam Chair.
Your Excellencies,
Madam Director,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Thank you for welcoming me back to address this Council. Last September, I expressed the deep concern of parliamentarians about the OSCE's institutional crises. Sadly, these concerns persist as the OSCE's capacity to fulfill its mandate diminishes. Despite safeguards in place, it's troubling that there are still four leadership vacancies, which weakens our ability to address other crises effectively.

Madam Chair, we deeply appreciate and fully support your efforts to find a sustainable solution. We're encouraged by the progress toward consensus among participating States and urge continued constructive engagement. We hope for a swift resolution, to be confirmed by the Ministers in Valletta, which should also help resolve other issues like the unified budget and future OSCE chairmanships. I also take this opportunity to thank Secretary General Schmid and the other outgoing Heads of Institution for our good co-operation over the years. I wish them all the best in their next mission.

Let me reiterate: the OSCE cannot meet expectations without the necessary financial, human, and political resources. In the absence of leadership, our Assembly will continue to raise key issues and advocate for the OSCE's needs in our member parliaments. You can rely on our support in advancing comprehensive security across all dimensions.

Your Excellencies,

With our membership constantly evolving, I recognize the ongoing need to educate our members about the vital work of the OSCE. To address this, starting this autumn, we will launch a series of visits aimed at bringing groups of parliamentarians to countries hosting an OSCE Field Operation. These visits will provide a firsthand understanding of their work and demonstrate how co-operation with the OSCE benefits the host country and enhances regional security. I am especially looking forward to joining our first visit to Serbia in October, and I am eager to explore the work of Field Operations in Central Asia next spring.

Participating in our election observation missions is a crucial way for parliamentarians to actively support the OSCE's mission. I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to our colleagues in the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), as well as to our institutional partners, for their outstanding co-operation during what promises to be an exceptionally busy election season. We deployed our first delegation last weekend in Azerbaijan, and preparations are already in full swing to observe elections in Moldova, Georgia, Uzbekistan, and the United States. In total, we anticipate that approximately 300 parliamentarians will dedicate their time and expertise to observing elections on behalf of the OSCE this autumn. Their commitment highlights the critical role the OSCE plays in strengthening democratic institutions across all participating States.

However, we must also seek ways to enhance our responsiveness and improve early warning systems to prevent disagreements from escalating into crises. As a strong advocate of the OSCE toolbox, I consistently call for the full utilization of all existing OSCE mechanisms. For example, this past spring, I raised concerns with the Prime Minister of Georgia regarding the law "On Transparency of Foreign Influence" and encouraged full engagement with ODIHR. Maximizing the use of the OSCE's instruments is the most effective way to serve our populations and support the Organization's mission.

Our commitment to democracy will echo the very high levels of engagement we experienced during our last Annual Session in Bucharest with the participation of some 250 Members from 55 parliaments. I take this opportunity to again thank Romania for bringing this project to fruition.

Our Bucharest Declaration expressed deep collective concern over the escalating trend of noncompliance with international rules, as evidenced by the Russian Federation's ongoing aggression against Ukraine. To uphold the OSCE's promise, it is essential that all participating States strictly adhere to our shared commitments. In this context, our parliaments must champion

a culture of compliance and accountability through robust parliamentary advocacy, legislative action, and rigorous oversight.

As said many times before, including in my reaction yesterday on the RF attack on Poltava when at least 50 people lost their lives, the repeated missile attacks against Ukraine, particularly those targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure, have highlighted the grave consequences of ignoring the international law. These heinous acts, which target the most vulnerable, serve as a stark reminder of the urgent need for our collective action. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has unequivocally condemned these attacks, emphasizing the importance of immediate cessation and adherence to international obligations. It is imperative that we continue to support Ukraine and ensure that such violations are met with strong and unified responses from the international community.

In addition to our three general committee resolutions, our Declaration addressed a wide range of OSCE-related topics. We examined emerging issues, such as artificial intelligence, by highlighting potential risks and exploring how international cooperation can enhance its benefits while mitigating misuse. The appointment of our first Special Representative on Artificial Intelligence will play a crucial role in identifying effective ways for parliamentary collaboration on this important issue and will complete the work of other Special Representatives, the list of which will be distributed.

Our Assembly remains committed to strengthening its core functions, particularly in conflict mediation and resolution. I will continue to devote time and energy to fostering dialogue between parliamentarians from countries in conflict. For instance, I am hopeful that co-operation between Members of the National Assembly of Armenia and the Milli Majlis of Azerbaijan can lead to tangible improvements in the lives of people in both countries. Only through sincere and open dialogue can we address the root causes of conflict, build trust, and secure lasting peace in the region.

Our Assembly has remained deeply engaged with the situation in the Middle East. During our special debate in Bucharest, we heard a broad spectrum of perspectives on the issue, including directly from Israel. Our discussion emphasized the importance of proportionality, minimizing the humanitarian impact of the conflict, adhering to international law, and working towards a peaceful resolution. The suffering of innocent civilians caught in the conflict - including the ongoing plight of Israeli hostages held by Hamas - was a recurrent theme. We stressed the need to unite against rising anti-Semitism within the OSCE area. I intend to follow up on these critical issues during my upcoming visit to Israel and the West Bank. Additionally, the conflict will be on our agenda at the Autumn Meeting next month, kindly hosted by the Irish parliament, where we will also hold our Mediterranean Forum. I encourage representatives of Mediterranean partners to urge their parliaments to actively participate in these crucial discussions. I also invite

the OSCE to explore ways to refine its Partnership for Co-operation to better engage and attract the interest of our Partners from the southern shore of the Mediterranean.

I would be remiss not to mention that in Bucharest, our Standing Committee reelected Secretary General Roberto Montella for another five-year term. We are delighted that he will continue his invaluable work, given his outstanding track record of leading our Secretariat in support of the Assembly through challenging times and enhancing its activity, relevance, visibility, and effectiveness. We take pride in having his continued leadership at the helm of our Secretariat. In this context, I will soon propose to our Standing Committee that we consider extending the term of future Presidents to two years to ensure greater continuity.

Given the array of initiatives on our agenda for the coming year, securing adequate financial resources has become crucial to sustaining our level of activity. I am first pleased to share that our next budget was approved in Bucharest with a slight increase. Additionally, we have broadened our sources of extra-budgetary contributions. Throughout the rest of my mandate, I will continue to seek innovative ways to secure additional funding to strengthen parliamentary diplomacy and advance comprehensive security.

Your Excellencies,

As a word of conclusion, I would like to reflect on the unique perspective that my home country, Finland, brings to our discussions on multilateral co-operation and peacebuilding. I often reflect on the wisdom of our former President, Martti Ahtisaari, who observed that true security requires more than silencing weapons - peace also requires justice and mutual understanding. I am convinced that this motto will guide our country's chairpersonship of the OSCE in 2025, which I also view as a vital opportunity to further strengthen the partnership between our Assembly and the OSCE's executive structures. I look forward to building on the progress achieved in the past years for our OSCE family to address the challenges that lie ahead with renewed determination and collaborative spirit.

I thank you all for your attention and I look forward to your comments and questions.
