



**Address to the OSCE Permanent Council by  
OSCE PA President Pia Kauma  
30 January 2025 | Vienna**

*Check against delivery*

**Excellencies,  
Distinguished Chair,  
Secretary General,  
Ladies and gentlemen,**

It is an honour to again address the OSCE Permanent Council today, at the start of the Finnish chairpersonship of the OSCE. Allow me to begin by expressing my gratitude to Ambassador Häkkinen for the excellent co-operation we have personally shared over the years. The collaboration between the OSCE Chair and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly is essential for advancing our shared priorities. Year after year, this partnership has been invaluable, and I have full confidence that it will remain strong under Finland's leadership.

It is rather uncommon that the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and the OSCE PA President hail from the same country, even more so that they sit next to each other in parliament. Therefore, over the next six months and before I leave the presidency of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, I will make the most of our special relationship to deliver meaningful results for the people we serve.

Last week, the day after she was addressing you in Vienna, I was delighted to welcome Minister Valtonen at a meeting of the OSCE PA Bureau which I hosted in Helsinki. I recognize this reciprocal willingness to engage in discussions as a mutual commitment to fostering synergy across our Organization and ensuring a cohesive approach to addressing the challenges before us.

**Mr. Chair,**

Having had numerous opportunities since my election as OSCE PA President to promote this year's Chairpersonship, I would like to take this moment to reflect on Finland's priorities and how our Assembly will actively support these objectives.

As we commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act this year, I wholeheartedly agree with the need to uphold and advance the OSCE's enduring principles and commitments, particularly in the face of the Russian Federation's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine. In Bucharest, our Assembly voiced profound concern over the erosion of trust in multilateral institutions and the alarming trend of non-compliance with international rules and commitments. These developments have not only weakened the OSCE's ability to address regional security challenges but have also intensified geopolitical competition, even in regions like the Arctic – once considered exceptional territories of dialogue and co-operation. The increased strategic interest in Greenland is a reminder that no region is immune to these pressures.

Reversing this trend and reaffirming the core values of the Helsinki Final Act must therefore be a collective priority for every participating State – both in the East and the West. These principles must be upheld across the entire OSCE region, without exception. Paying lip service is no longer enough – we must actively defend the principles of self-determination, territorial integrity, and the broader foundation of our security architecture. In this effort, our transatlantic partnership must play a crucial role in supporting the Organization's goals, strengthening its ability to respond to today's challenges, and fulfilling its conflict prevention mandate.

Mr. Chair, I particularly welcome your emphasis on “resilience.” Since 2022, our Organization has faced its greatest test, yet it remains active and steadfast in its mission. Through your collective efforts, the OSCE's mechanisms and institutions have been preserved without compromising its core principles. This resilience stands as a powerful testament to the enduring strength and unity of the OSCE. I acknowledge Malta's remarkable accomplishments during its 2024 Chairpersonship. Despite limited time for preparation, Malta achieved significant milestones, including the appointment of a new Secretary General and Heads of Institutions, the renewal of mandates for Field Operations, and securing an agreement for Switzerland to chair the OSCE in 2026. This ensures a fully functional Troika this year, which is vital for ensuring the effective operation and continuity of the OSCE.

Reflecting on the visit of Minister Valtonen to Ukraine earlier this month, I would like to reaffirm the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's full support to the government, civil society, and people of Ukraine as they continue to face the immense challenges brought on by Russia's ongoing aggression. In two weeks, I will travel to Kyiv together with members of the OSCE PA Bureau and our Parliamentary Support Team for Ukraine to demonstrate our unwavering solidarity and support.

Holding an official Bureau meeting in the Verkhovna Rada will be a powerful statement of our commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty, democracy, and resilience. During this visit, we will also highlight the urgent need for the release of the three OSCE officials detained in Donetsk and Luhansk. As OSCE parliamentarians, we will continue to raise their case at every available opportunity, ensuring it remains high on our agenda.

The change of administration in Washington, DC has undoubtedly raised expectations for a settlement. However, any such resolution must involve Ukraine at its core, just as any discussion about the future of European security must involve close co-operation with Europeans. This underscores the need for our Organization to continue proving its relevance in tackling the complex challenges posed by the war in Ukraine. We must remain prepared to contribute meaningfully – whether through fact-finding missions, monitoring activities, or confidence-building measures – to support a just and sustainable peace. In doing so, we must address the critical human dimension of the conflict: the tens of thousands of missing persons who remain unaccounted for, those detained individuals whose release must remain a priority, and the numerous human rights violations that demand accountability. These efforts are essential not only for achieving peace but for fostering justice, reconciliation, and lasting stability in the OSCE area.

### **Ambassadors,**

In three weeks, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly will convene in Vienna for its Winter Meeting, offering a unique platform for parliamentary delegations to engage directly with the governmental side of the OSCE. I deeply appreciate the invaluable support you provide to our parliamentarians in facilitating these vital interactions.

I am especially eager for our Members to meet and exchange ideas with the new leadership team now in place. Mr. Secretary General, we look forward to our collaboration. The work of the Secretariat is indispensable in ensuring that the OSCE remains a vital instrument of multilateralism and co-operation, with a tangible impact on the ground. Together with Secretary General Montella, whose mandate was renewed last summer, I am confident that we will work effectively to advance our shared goals.

I recognize the broad consensus on the critical importance of safeguarding the OSCE's Field Operations, which are essential for maintaining stability and security across our region. When I last addressed the Permanent Council, we were preparing to launch a new series of country visits aimed at reinforcing the work of

OSCE Field Operations. In Serbia, a delegation from 12 parliaments underscored our unified commitment to the OSCE's mission and values. The professionalism of OSCE field staff, coupled with the strong support from local authorities, highlights the indispensable role our Organization plays in participating States. Building on this momentum, we are planning a visit to Tajikistan this spring to further deepen our engagement and support in Central Asia.

**Mr. Chair,**

The OSCE PA remains deeply committed to supporting democracy through election observation. In the coming months, we plan to observe parliamentary elections in Albania and Moldova, continuing our close co-operation in this field with the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

Building on the exceptional engagement of parliamentary observers last year, which included elections in North Macedonia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Georgia, Uzbekistan, and the United States, we are committed to ensuring that our efforts go beyond short-term observations. We consistently advocate with all stakeholders for the importance of addressing the concerns highlighted in our reports, while working to strengthen public trust in electoral processes.

Earlier this month, I had hoped to contribute directly to these efforts through a visit to Georgia. Unfortunately, the conditions in Tbilisi did not permit constructive engagement. What was intended as an institutional visit of good will to defuse tensions by engaging all sides in the implementation of the OSCE's recommendations regrettably became politically untenable. At the same time, I am concerned that policies of disengagement risk undermining the essential work of our Organization. At its core, the OSCE is committed to fostering good-faith dialogue to address challenges and advance adherence to OSCE commitments. Parliamentary diplomacy is a key instrument in this endeavor, complementing other mechanisms such as the Vienna Mechanism, invoked last month, and the ODIHR final report. To preserve democracy, parliaments must continue to play a crucial role in navigating these challenges by driving accountability and advancing reforms.

**Ambassadors,**

The months ahead are packed with activities that will highlight both the OSCE's vital role and the potential of parliamentary diplomacy. Since the horrific attacks of October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, our parliamentarians have eagerly debated developments in the Middle East, which have dramatically accelerated in recent weeks and months. In

response to these pressing challenges, our Assembly will continue working in the region to promote international co-operation and support efforts aimed at achieving stability and development. Next week, I will travel to Ankara to underline Türkiye's key role in our Organization. I am especially grateful for the generous offer from the Turkish parliament to host our Autumn Meeting in 2025. In March, the Assembly's leadership will travel to Israel and the West Bank to assess the situation on the ground and explore avenues for constructive engagement.

The unfolding events in the Middle East have significant implications for many areas of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's work. Both the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration and the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism are closely monitoring these developments, which intersect with their mandates. Our Special Representatives continue to play a vital role in shaping our Assembly's response on topical and regional issues. Addressing the complex and sensitive challenges on the OSCE agenda requires coordinated international efforts, and our Assembly is committed to contributing to these discussions.

**Mr. Chair,**

As we look to the future, the OSCE finds itself at a defining crossroads. The fiftieth anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act presents not only a moment to reflect on the enduring principles that have guided our Organization but also a call to action – a challenge to adapt and reaffirm these principles in the face of unprecedented global pressures.

In 2008, as he opened the last Finnish Chairpersonship, then Foreign Minister and later OSCE PA President Ilkka Kanerva remarked, "Helsinki has always had a special role tied to turning points in the history of this Organization. I trust that this year will be no different." Today, those words resonate with even greater significance as we confront new and evolving threats to European security.

In this pivotal year, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly will remain a strong partner in advancing our shared goals. We will continue to leverage the power of parliamentary diplomacy to address the pressing challenges facing our region and the world. Whether through our election observation missions, support for Field Operations, or our direct engagement with governmental actors, we are committed to ensuring that our efforts translate into tangible benefits for the people we serve.

As we move forward, it is crucial that we strengthen collaboration across all pillars of the OSCE. This means fostering even stronger partnerships between the governmental and parliamentary sides, enhancing the efficiency of our

mechanisms, and cultivating unity among participating States. The months ahead will be challenging, yet they also present significant opportunities.

Mr. Chair, distinguished Colleagues,

Allow me to conclude by expressing my confidence that under Finland's leadership and with the continued efforts of this Assembly and the broader OSCE community, we can make meaningful progress toward recapturing the spirit of Helsinki.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions and comments.

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