

European Conference of Presidents of Parliament Strasbourg | 20 March 2025

Remarks by OSCE PA President Pia Kauma (MP, Finland)

Theme 1: safeguarding democracy

Check against delivery.

Honourable colleagues,

Democracy is under pressure – challenged both from within and from external threats.

The Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine has made it undeniably clear:

Peace and security in our region depend on strong, resilient democracies that uphold the rule of law and fundamental rights.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly is uniquely positioned to address these challenges.

As a transatlantic forum, we bring together democracies from Europe, North America, and beyond, united by our commitment to the principles of the Helsinki Final Act.

This transatlantic dimension is a strength, reminding us that the fight for democracy does not stop at regional borders – it is a global effort.

The Russian Federation remains part of the OSCE, yet its actions blatantly violate the commitments it made half a century ago.

As parliamentarians, we must persist in holding it accountable while standing in solidarity with those within its society who continue to fight for democracy.

Our engagement with the states of Central Asia is equally important.

These countries face distinct challenges in democratic governance, but their participation in the OSCE PA offers an opportunity for dialogue, exchange, and progress.

We must support their democratic aspirations while reinforcing the principles that unite us.

At the heart of these efforts is the role of parliaments in safeguarding democracy.

In particular, we must ensure that strong executives remain accountable to the people's representatives.

Across our region, we see a growing concentration of power in the hands of the executive, often at the expense of parliamentary oversight.

Left unchecked, this trend can lead to policies driven by short-term political calculations rather than long-term democratic stability.

It is our collective responsibility to push back.

Policies – especially those with global consequences – must be subject to rigorous scrutiny and open debate.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly remains committed to supporting your parliaments in defending and strengthening democratic institutions.

Through our election observation work, our commitment to political dialogue, and our promotion of democratic norms, we will continue to uphold the principles that bind us together.

Safeguarding democracy is a shared duty – one that demands vigilance, engagement, and a commitment to action.

Thank you.