



**Remarks by OSCE PA President Pia Kauma**

**Conference on Deported Ukrainian Children: European Actions**

**Helsinki, 15 May 2025**

*Check against delivery.*

Panel: Illegality of Deportation of Ukrainian Children –  
Accountability and Restoration of Justice

Excellencies, distinguished colleagues,

Let me begin by sincerely thanking our hosts for organizing this important event, and for placing the issue of the deportation of Ukrainian children at the centre of today's discussion. I would also like to thank my fellow panellists for their tireless work and dedication to justice, child protection, and the rights of victims.

It is an honour to join all of you here today for this important discussion.

The forcible transfer and deportation of Ukrainian children to the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and Russia remains one of the most disturbing and consequential violations of international and humanitarian law.

From the earliest months of the full-scale invasion, the OSCE has worked to document and expose the extent of these crimes. In the Moscow Mechanism reports of April and July 2022, and of May 2023, independent experts brought some clarity to the events. They concluded that these transfers represent serious violations and abuses of international humanitarian and human rights law and may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, through its annual declarations in Birmingham, Vancouver, and most recently Bucharest, has also responded with urgency and clarity. We have condemned these actions and expressed grave concern over the forced

assimilation of Ukrainian children, the imposition of Russian citizenship, and the attempted extinguishing of their Ukrainian identity.

Furthermore, the OSCE PA Parliamentary Support Team for Ukraine, most notably through its Special Rapporteur, Ödebrink of Sweden, has been closely examining this issue. Special Rapporteur Ödebrink is gathering critical information on the forced relocation of Ukrainian children and preparing a report, which she will present at our upcoming Annual Session in Porto. This ongoing work is an essential step toward justice and accountability.

We understand that close to twenty thousand children have been identified as having been deported. Many of them have been placed in so-called filtration camps or forcibly adopted under legal frameworks designed to obscure their origins. This is a strategy not only of physical displacement but of cultural erasure.

Every such case is a rupture in a child's life and a violation of their rights.

Our Assembly has welcomed the establishment of the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children and urged all OSCE countries to join this effort. Reuniting children with their families must remain the priority for all of us.

The OSCE PA also called for a unified international tracking system for unaccompanied or separated minors and child refugees, to ensure that these children do not disappear into administrative or legal ambiguity. We have called for the development of child protection mechanisms both within Ukraine and in countries hosting refugees—including social assistance, safeguards against human trafficking, and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.

We must also address the psychological trauma caused by separation, displacement, and identity manipulation. The Assembly has encouraged OSCE countries to support trauma recovery programs to this end.

I must admit that have difficulty with the idea that we can seek justice when children have been separated from their families. We must seek their return. We must seek accountability for the perpetrators. But justice in the face of such a terrible crime seems difficult.

While all our efforts should be focused on protecting and reuniting these children with their families, at the political level, these crimes demand sustained visibility and principled accountability. The International Criminal Court has taken a step forward, but broader international coordination is still needed. In the interests of accountability, we cannot allow this issue to fade from public view or become entangled in geopolitical fatigue.

As parliamentarians, we must continue to raise our voices. We can legislate for action, shape public discourse, and keep pressure on governments and institutions to uphold their commitments under international law.

As President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and Chair of our Parliamentary Support Team for Ukraine, I remain committed to advancing these efforts. The topic will continue to be a focal point of discussions in the OSCE PA, as we seek to ensure it is also on the agendas of national parliaments. We will continue to make this a priority in public communications, ensuring sustained visibility and engagement.

I want to reaffirm my personal commitment—and that of the Assembly—to supporting Ukraine and to standing up for the rights of children. I call on us all to continue to speak clearly, act collectively, and pursue accountability without hesitation.

Let us match that determination with action. Let us ensure that no child is forgotten, no family abandoned, and no crime left unpunished.

Thank you.