



## **Address to OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Plenary by President Pia Kauma (MP, Finland)**

Porto, Portugal | 29 June 2025

*Check against delivery.*

Dear colleagues,

It is a great honour for me to be the first one to welcome you to Porto, and I particularly want to voice my thanks to the Portuguese Parliament and Government for hosting us in such an impressive fashion.

Portugal has long been a strong contributor to international peace and security, with its engagement projecting far beyond these borders. Today Portuguese leaders serve at the head of both the United Nations and the European Council, bringing Portuguese experience and perspectives to the world.

I am sure that we will all benefit from this in the coming days, as this historical city provides an excellent setting for our coming debates. I was recently reminded that the Portuguese parliament hosted a major OSCE PA meeting in Sintra just days after the 9-11 attacks in the United States. It was an exceptionally difficult time, but our Assembly rallied and took on the challenge.

Just as then I think we can all agree that we have much to consider today. The threats to peace and security are numerous.

First and foremost, our friends and colleagues in Ukraine continue to face barrages of missiles and drones. On a daily basis, regular people who just want to go about their lives are killed and maimed. This brutal aggression by Russia must stop.

In this Assembly, Ukraine must remain top of our agenda. We must keep the pressure on and do all we can to bring an end to the fighting. All of Europe will continue to suffer from insecurity as long as Russia's war against Ukraine continues.

But we must also do what we can to prepare for the day after the fighting has stopped. The OSCE will be especially important on that day.

Please don't think I'm being naïve or idealistic here. When the guns finally stop, and when peace is finally reached in Ukraine, it does not mean that everyone will suddenly be close friends and Europe will be unified.

But on the eve of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, I see current events through the prism of this historical event. The signatories of the Final Act were not close friends. Brezhnev and Ford, Trudeau and Ceausescu, Honecker and Giscard d'Estaing. These were not allies. But they still aligned for the greater sake of security of their people, and with the perspective that security was in their interest.

And to this day, we are benefiting from the fact that the founders of the Helsinki process recognized the complexity of security. It is not only about bullets and missiles. Their foresight in acknowledging the fields of economics, science, technology and the environment as security issues is exceptionally relevant to our current world. I'm pleased that colleagues have presented resolutions for us to discuss disinformation, demographics, corruption and other topics.

The inclusion fifty years ago of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms as security issues relevant for discussion among countries was almost revolutionary at the time. But it laid the groundwork for us today to discuss minorities' rights and electoral standards as an integral part of our work to build stability and security.

Our Parliamentary Assembly must continue to serve as an embodiment of the Helsinki Spirit of dialogue, because this is how we build security.

Colleagues,

We are a pluralistic Assembly that brings together many different perspectives, challenges and geopolitical concerns. We should not hide that we are not always unified. As long as our discussions are focused on the principles underlying our Organization, we can contribute to security. The leaders that founded the OSCE fifty years ago would applaud such an approach.

I firmly believe that this Assembly must be maintained as a collegial body. This is what will allow us – together – to tackle developing challenges like climate change. This will allow us to benefit from each others' experience and expertise when figuring out how to legislate on social media platforms or on the use of artificial intelligence. This is what will enable us to push countries to improve their human rights records, when we come as friends and colleagues.

And to anybody that has not been paying attention: this is an incredibly vibrant Assembly, dealing with these topics and many more.

In just the span of three weeks last autumn, we deployed more than 300 observers to provide leadership for election observation missions in four countries. We are now also engaging in a series of discussions related to modern challenges in the electoral sphere that can help to shape this work in the future.

We are on the front-lines of policy discussions on how to combat terrorism and the frightening directions this is taking by abusing modern technologies. And we are literally on the front-lines of policy discussions on migration management, with our committee regularly visiting particularly impacted locations.

Our Assembly is also a collecting point for engaged parliamentarians on a range of topics, recently seen in Rome and the conference addressing the connections between corruption, organized crime, and terrorism.

We have also expanded our outreach to OSCE field missions, recently sending high-level delegations to support their work in Serbia and Tajikistan. These OSCE offices represent our organizations in a range of countries across the Balkans and Central Asia, and have remarkable and positive impact. I hope that parliamentarians will continue to support this operational dimension of the OSCE, where it really is possible to see the building of a more secure region.

In the past year our Assembly has twice had senior visits to the Middle East. I think it is important that we have been engaged, and our Assembly should continue to be available, even if it is not our core business and region. Both the tragic humanitarian toll in Gaza and the security implications of the expanded conflict will, I'm sure, weigh heavily on our deliberations in coming days.

Dear colleagues,

What I have briefly described here is our collective work, and is something I think we can all be proud of. But of course there is so much more to do.

In this 50th anniversary year for the OSCE, it is natural for us to consider the continued relevance and value of the organization. Personally, I'm reassured that Assembly Members have demonstrated – with their increasing engagement, and time dedicated to the OSCE – that the Organization is relevant and contributing to our constituents' security.

With your leadership, and with the support and counsel from our Secretariat whose professionalism I have greatly appreciated during my presidency, I am sure that we can channel this energy to great successes.

If I may quote my Portuguese predecessor, Joao Soares, speaking in Helsinki, we now need to activate the same strategic vision that led to the Final Act, and be bold and find new solutions to the new problems facing us.

So let's get to work.

I wish you all a successful and productive Annual Session here in Portugal, and I thank you for your contributions.