



Address to the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference

**OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President
Pere Joan Pons (MP, Spain)**

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Check against delivery.

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen,

Being the last to speak has its advantages — but also the challenge of not repeating what’s already been said... and of keeping your attention.

Since July, I have served as President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

323 parliamentarians from 57 countries, representing more than one billion citizens — from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

Today marks a hopeful moment for all who believe in democracy and peace.

We welcome the U.S. plan for Gaza and the peace talks in Egypt.

I condemned the October 7 attacks, and today, two years later, I believe the hostages will soon return home.

A peace plan that was presented on the same week that thousands took to the streets across Europe — and around the world — to denounce the genocide in Gaza.

The same week in which a humanitarian flotilla, standing at the gates of Palestine, gave voice to the victims

That must give hope to activists and social movements everywhere.

Because peace can also be born from dialogue — and from crowded public squares.

For months now, thousands of democrats have raised their voices to stop the systematic killing and starvation carried out by Netanyahu's government. Voices that, not long ago, were barely audible, are now opening a door to real hope for peace in the Middle East.

And that is good news. Good news for democracy — and for democracies everywhere.

Especially in a time like this, when what we built after Bretton Woods and the creation of the United Nations is under threat.

Threatened by powerful digital regimes — by those who manipulate truth, spread hate, and take advantage of a regulatory vacuum to push ideas that go directly against democracy, human rights, and freedom of expression.

The best answer to this is more democracy.

More rights. More dialogue. Stronger societies. Stronger media. And yes — clear rules to limit the dangerous overlap of technological, political, and financial power.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am not naive. Hope is still far from certain.

Since the summer, more than 40 drone-related incidents have taken place across OSCE airspace. And especially here in Poland.

And with them, the sense that Europe's security is under threat has only grown.

Under threat from one regime — and one leader: Vladimir Putin.

Putin will not intimidate us in any case.

Through an unjustified war of aggression — in violation of every principle of international law — he has shown clearly: his fight is not only against Ukraine, but against his own people, against Europe, and against democracy itself.

Our Assembly has condemned this aggression time and again since 2022. And this week, I will be in Kyiv once more — to stand with Ukrainian society, to support a European Ukraine, and to insist that any solution must include Ukraine at the table.

The Assembly I represent believes in a European Ukraine — and in a secure Europe. Because security is the foundation of hope.

And the best security is built through dialogue and peace.

Without democracy, without human rights, without a fair and inclusive green transition, without multilateralism — global security is just an illusion.

A drone wall is a priority today, but won't be enough without all these elements I mentioned.

And of course, none of this is possible without funding.

Without resources, we cannot protect these values.

That's why I urge participating States to support our work — from election observation to field missions.

Conflicts are connected. Elections are connected. Democracies are connected. Trade is connected.

Ukraine and Gaza are connected.

In both, we see the same disregard for shared values.

The same violations of human rights. The same contempt for international law.

And since I am the last to speak, allow me to go one step further:

If we want to be credible in defending the principles of the Helsinki Final Act, we must act without double standards.

We are now in the second quarter of the 21st century — a defining moment for global democracy.

Last year, over half the world's population went to the polls. Liberal democracies remain the mirror many still want to look into.

But we must not be naïve.

Today, technology, capital, algorithms, and concentrated political power are reshaping even our strongest democracies — threatening their very core.

Our response must be blunt: more regulation to ban this digital authoritarianism that has one target only: our democracies.

We face a wave that aims to dismantle the ecosystem we built: based on multilateralism, peaceful conflict resolution, human rights, and a plural, independent media.

If our democracies deliver real improvements in people's lives, then we will have the tools to counter authoritarian populism.

If not, history — wiser than us — already knows what happens.

Before closing, let me raise one more point that cuts across everything:

Without gender equality, there is no true democracy.

Too often, women bear a double burden — for being women, and for daring to take part in politics, journalism, activism, or justice.

This must be confronted.

And I take also this opportunity to call on all participating States — especially legislators — to adopt and implement the Istanbul Convention, to protect women who are murdered simply for being women.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Without courageous activists defending the common good and protecting minorities, democracy cannot stand.

This forum remains the most vital space in our region for defending human rights.

And the Assembly I represent is here to ensure those voices are heard — in every country, in every parliament — and to help turn that voice into lasting change.

Thank you.