



## The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's 18th Winter Meeting



2019  
20-22 February

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# Summary

Nearly 300 parliamentarians from some 60 countries participated in the OSCE PA's 18th Winter Meeting 21-22 February in Vienna.

The meeting included speeches by President of the Austrian National Council Wolfgang Sobotka, OSCE PA President George Tsereteli, OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovakia Miroslav Lajcak, and OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger. It featured lively debates on migration, counter-terrorism, gender issues, and combating corruption. Chairs of OSCE PA ad hoc committees, Special Representatives, and leaders of recent election observation missions presented reports at the closing plenary session.

President Tsereteli and Secretary General Roberto Montella held a series of bilateral meetings while in Vienna, including with the U.S. and Russian delegations, and the Chairman of the Kazakh Mazhilis Nurlan

Nigmatulin. They also met with OSCE CiO Lajcak and Secretary General Greminger.

The general committees of the OSCE PA met for discussions on issues such as restrictions on human rights during emergencies; fighting corruption, money laundering and the financing of terrorism; and how to best leverage the tools and mechanisms of the OSCE to resolve protracted conflicts. The Standing Committee met on 21 February and heard a report from the OSCE PA President, the Treasurer and the Secretary General. The meeting also featured a review of current international political issues and a discussion of the OSCE PA's working practices.

In meetings of the three general committees, Rapporteurs presented their ideas and intentions for the reports and draft resolutions they will be preparing for this summer's Annual Session, to be held in Luxembourg on 4-8 July.





# Joint Session of the General Committees

Opening the meeting on 21 February 2019, OSCE PA President George Tsereteli welcomed the President of the Austrian National Council Wolfgang Sobotka who emphasized the importance of co-operation and parliamentary dialogue to deal with current complex global challenges. Also speaking at the session were Chairperson in Office Miroslav Lajcak and OSCE Secretary General Ambassador Thomas Greminger.

## Joint Session of the General Committees



### **Wolfgang Sobotka** *President of the National Council of Austria*

Addressing the plenary, Sobotka stated that the current security situation is very fragile and that multilateralism is important on all levels and especially in conquering terrorist threats posed by ISIS and other groups. He reiterated the importance of cooperation and parliamentary dialogue in confronting challenges in the areas of digitalization, migration and

conflict prevention. The OSCE is irreplaceable and parliaments have a decisive role in creating a positive future. He concluded by urging parliamentarians not to become discouraged by governments who do not respect international agreements and who may manipulate social media to extend influence across borders.

### **George Tsereteli** *President of the OSCE PA*

Tsereteli expressed concern at the tensions and violence characterizing the protracted conflicts in the OSCE region. The escalation of violence in Eastern Ukraine as well as the Kerch Strait incident and the lack of progress in finding a solution to the conflict in Georgia were given as examples of this negative trend. He, however, noted the positive resolution of the Macedonian name conflict as a template for further regional co-operation.

Tsereteli urged members of the committee to not allow domestic issues to detract from a positive foreign policy. Major questions are being raised regarding the scope of the challenges, from possible tensions at the Irish border due to Brexit to the collapse of Brexit, Tsereteli warned: "With uncertainty characterizing our political landscape, we are faced with even more uncertain times ahead."

Tsereteli called for increased transatlantic and pan European cooperation and the increased need to fulfill our international commitments and use the wide range of instruments we have at our disposal to move forward to a brighter future for our citizens.

## Joint Session of the General Committees

**Miroslav Lajcak** *Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovakia*

Lajcak implored the utmost sense of urgency at the alarming current state of international affairs. He stated that the recent Munich Security Conference was evidence of a cooling off of relations between countries. He highlighted the need to use old and new tools for conflict resolution and to get more women involved in the security sector. As multilateralism is one of the Chairmanship's priorities,

Lajcak emphasized need to strengthen multilateralism and to be able to adapt for future emerging threats and new vulnerabilities. He concluded by naming three important areas where parliamentarians are needed in the OSCE: bringing the organization closer to the people it serves, adding credibility and visibility to election observation and as a source of innovation and information to solve new challenges.



**Thomas Greminger**  
*Secretary General of the OSCE*

Greminger updated participants on developments within the OSCE and the OSCE region. He commended the optimism from the Ministerial Council Meeting in Milan in December 2019 although no political declaration was adopted. He stated that the OSCE is committed to a peaceful resolution of the conflicts covered by the Geneva International Discussions and the Minsk Process. He commended the commitment of Azerbaijan to find a constructive solution to the border conflict in their region and said that a resolution of the conflict in and around Ukraine remains the top priority for the OSCE.

"Statecraft and diplomacy can prevail over nationalism and populism," he said.

Amb. Greminger emphasized that the security situation remains tense and is characterized by mistrust. The only solution must be multilateral which is difficult in a world where the very idea of multilateralism is in question. Greminger presented a number of reform processes within the OSCE such as a consultation and transformation process to modernize management structures and a reformed OSCE budget process and secondment system. He stated that this and more gender mainstreaming is essential for the OSCE to prepare for the future and remain a current and efficient organization. He concluded by commending the work of the PA and ODHIR in facilitating dialogue and election observation.

**Nurlan Nigmatulin** *Speaker of the Parliament of Kazakhstan*

Nigmatulin presented his remarks on the everchanging geopolitical situation in Europe and Asia and cited some of the main issues for Kazakhstan. He raised concerns about terrorism, trafficking and cyber-attacks.

He stressed that Europe and Asia are inextricably linked and the OSCE should not be seen as purely European in nature. Nigmatulin also reiterated the importance of parliamentary dialogue.

## Joint Session of the General Committees

### Debate

In their remarks, parliamentarians raised a number of issues including returning foreign terrorist fighters and the rise of anti-Semitism in the OSCE region. Returning foreign terrorist fighters is an issue that many states are facing now that the war against ISIS is winding down and one delegate highlighted the need for prevention and de-radicalization when managing returnees.

The Chairmanship's focus on youth and the inclusion of more women in conflict resolution were commended by a few delegates. One delegate suggested giving the Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine a broader mandate in order to avoid "remaining passive" in resolving the armed conflict and increasing female representation in the mission.



# General Committee on Political Affairs and Security

Chair Filippo Lombardi (Switzerland) opened the session of the General Committee on Political and Security Affairs on 22 February highlighting the importance of dialogue between the PA and OSCE officials in the field of security. He emphasized the importance of cooperation and multilateralism in resolving protracted conflicts and in the shadow of the current threat of a new nuclear arms race. He introduced the speakers and new members of the committee and welcomed Rapporteur Alan Farrell to take the floor.



## General Committee on Political Affairs and Security

**Alan Farrell** (Ireland) *Rapporteur of the First Committee*

Alan Farrell also emphasized the important role of the PA and the OSCE as part of the world's largest regional security organization. He referred to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, specifically goal number 16 to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development through accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels" as a focus for his report and the work of the Committee. He underlined the inextricable link between sustainable development and security and focused specifically on the importance of transparent and inclusive democratic processes in order to strengthen sustainable institutions. He highlighted that youth and gender inclusivity are crucial for enhancing institutions and the democratic

process and said that we can learn from youth involvement in parliament through the work of other youth organizations. He underlined that female participation in decision making and institution building is inextricably linked to lasting security and peace and commended the work of Special Representative on Gender, Hedy Fry. He further expressed that the role of parliaments in advancing security through sustainable development is multifaceted. Facilitating dialogue, implementing legislation, providing accountability and a direct link between parliaments and the people they represent are all ways in which parliamentarians can contribute to a sustainable peace.

**Maria Victoria González** (Spain)

*Acting Chairperson of the Security Committee of the OSCE Permanent Council*

Amb. González presented the activities of the OSCE Security Committee and summed up the Committee's priorities from the previous year. Countering terrorism and illicit trafficking and cybersecurity through building trust and encouraging public-private partnerships were high on the agenda in 2018. For 2019, the committee is focused on Security Sector Governance (SSG) reform, developing and reforming critical infrastructure in the field of cybersecurity and combatting terrorism and violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism (VERLT).

She thanked the PA and particularly the work of Makis Voridis in the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism. Amb. González highlighted the importance of women's participation in the security sector in continuing to improve the comprehensive security concept.



## General Committee on Political Affairs and Security

**Claude Wild** (Switzerland) *Chairman of the Foreign Security Council (FSC)*

Amb. Wild opened by conveying his appreciation of the interest of the PA in the work of the FSC and the importance of the work of national parliamentarians in difficult political-security situations:

The first cluster covers new topics of the politico-military dimensions such as private military and security companies and the second cluster covers established topics of the FSC, such as Small Arms and

**In times where continuing erosion of trust stops us from moving forward, the political support of elected national parliamentarians is of great importance.**

Amb. Wild stated that we need a more efficient use of existing tools and need to implement existing commitments in order to explore their full potential and rebuild mutual trust and military cooperation in Europe. The conflict in and around Ukraine has put these tools and mechanisms to a serious test. The Swiss Chairmanship of the FSC will be centered around the principles of cooperation and pragmatism. He explained that the topics selected by the Swiss Chairmanship were separated into two main clusters:

Light Weapons, the Vienna Document 2011 and regional confidence and security building measures.

Amb. Wild reiterated that the FSC is a key forum for building trust in the OSCE and a platform to share experiences and update existing tools. He welcomed a renewed commitment to security at a parliamentary level as well as the exploration of the potential of new initiatives.



**Lamberto Zannier** (Italy) *OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities*

Amb. Zannier's presentation expressed concern at the overall security environment in Europe and the effect that this has on minorities. Nationalistic trends and identity politics are leading to the exclusion of minority groups and polarization of societies.

"...the erosion of multilateralism contributes to weakening the tools which have been developed over time to protect minorities."

He argued that minorities are being used as pawns on the geopolitical map where they should be included in conflict prevention to create a balance for sustainable integration. Education and political representation are key to solving integration issues, said Amb. Zannier, as he gave the example of the recipients of the Max van der Stoep Award who stood up against the project for a segregated school in their local municipality in Bosnia and Herzegovina and establish a joint school for ethnic Bosniaks and Croats.

# General Committee on Political Affairs and Security

## Debate

The debate was opened by the Deputy Directors of the Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC), Charles Lonsdale and Paul Picard, who detailed the OSCE conflict resolution mechanisms for resolving protracted conflicts. Picard focused on the OSCE information monitoring, early warning systems and mediation, particularly the work of the PA in facilitating dialogue and mediation through the Special Representative on Mediation.

Lonsdale presented the different mechanisms for conflict resolution in Ukraine, Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia and for the Nagorno-Karabakh. He emphasized that, although efficient tools and mechanisms for conflict resolution are important, we must remember that the conflicts are unique and we must be wary of comparing different mechanisms across conflicts. He concluded by highlighting the importance of gender sensitive approaches to conflict resolution and gave the example of an information session on women in peace and security issues as part of the Geneva International Discussions.

The members of the committee raised several ongoing issues including the Ukraine crisis, particularly the violent incident in the Kerch Strait, protracted conflicts and underlying tensions in the Balkans and Central Asia which have the

potential to become protracted conflicts. A number of MPs expressed support of the positive steps being taken to resolve the

Transnistrian conflict and support of the work of the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine though condemned the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Ukraine.

The collapse of the INF treaty was also regretted by several MPs and there were calls for enhanced dialogue and improved multilateral efforts to de-escalate these and other conflicts in the region.



# General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment

Chaired by Artur Gerasymov on 21 February, the General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment heard remarks from Rapporteur Elona Gjebrea Hoxha, Ambassador Kairat Sarybay, Ambassador Vuk Zugic. It featured a debate on good governance in the area of fighting corruption, money laundering and the financing of terrorism in the OSCE area.



## General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment

**Elona Gjebrea Hoxha** *Rapporteur of the Second Committee*

Elona Gjebrea Hoxha (Albania) started by noting the rapid digitalization process changing significantly the OSCE region and the necessity for policy makers to stay ahead of these changes, while “human beings should remain at the center of the digitalization process.” Outlining the Ministerial Council decision that highlighted corruption as a key challenge, she stated that the OSCE PA will focus its activities on good governance in the interest to combating these threats.

Hoxha then described financing terrorism as an area that needs drastic attention, and quoted the 2017 Minsk Declaration calling for inter-agency cooperation on combating organized crime and corruption in the interest of fighting terrorist financing routes. About migration, in the interest of facilitating border control policies, Hoxha described transport security as a priority and human capital development as a key theme. She also expressed her support to a gender sensitive migration policy and to the exchange of best practices. Then she put the emphasize on the importance of prioritizing food and water security, and raised concern that world hunger is still on the rise.

“Conflict, drought and disasters linked to climate change are among the key factors causing this reversal of progress,” she said. Hoxha concluded by calling all participating States to address the threat of climate change and asking for further action in the PA.



**Ambassador Kairat Sarybay**

*Chair of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Committee*

Ambassador Sarybay informed the committee of the 2019 EEC agenda that will contain eight meetings, four of which being thematic ones: disaster risk reduction, sustainable development, technology, industrial revolution impact on society and anti-corruption. He thanked the PA for their continued cooperation and the role of Nilza de Sena, Chair of the Committee, in providing a unique perspective to these issues. He further welcomed the active

engagement of the OSCE PA by underlining the fact that “our independent world requires an inclusive and multi-stakeholder approach as the main path for a fruitful cooperation”. Ambassador Kairat Sarybay finally briefed of 27th Economic and Environmental Forum, of which the first preparatory committee will take place in May in Bratislava, and the concluding meeting in September in Prague.

## Ambassador Vuk Zugic

*Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental activities*

After presenting the work plan of the EEC for the coming year linked to the unified budget and mainly covering corruption, connectivity on trade, migration and human capital, Ambassador Zugic noted that the majority of the challenges we are facing today call for gender mainstreaming, which can be a key area for cooperation between the PA and the executive structures.

laundering, corruption, terrorist financing, digital economy, climate change and the role of armed conflicts on environmental damage. A special focus was put on the Russian gas project Nord Stream 2, with exchanges between Russia, the United States, Lithuania and Latvia.

**“We have to realize that the gender inequality exacerbates women’s abilities, increases security risks and limits the effectiveness and responsiveness of policies.”**

He also noted that the PA has been closely involved in the EEC’s activities, and informed on the success of the recent Preparatory Committee on the EEF and Nilza de Sena’s participation in this meeting. He then concluded by calling for further interaction with the private sector which should be a priority for the future. Discussions mainly focused on money

## Special debate about good governance in the area of fighting corruption, money laundering and the financing of terrorism in the OSCE area

Amb. Zugic introduced this special debate by highlighting that corruption seriously affects the economies in the OSCE area and greatly threatens development, and by assuring that “investment in corrupted countries is almost 5 per cent less than in countries that are relatively corruption-free” and that “corruption increases the cost of doing business by up to 10 per cent on average”. He further underlined the importance of the Maastricht Treaty which addressed corruption.

He then encouraged the participating States to increase transparency and accountability in the public sector, and informed that the OSCE has been providing assistance to field presences on establishing economic transparency mechanisms in their respective States. Amb. Zugic also asked the participating States to share experience in fighting corruption, especially in the use of new technologies in facing these challenges. He concluded by stating that all these problems are ongoing and should be addressed both nationally and internationally.



## General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment

Discussions about this special debate notably put the spotlight on the importance of strong institutions to fight corruption, the link between money laundering and funding of terrorism and the necessity of prioritizing good governance efforts.

Some participating States also asked for further work on counter terrorism, strict punishment measures for corruption cases and international cooperation in prosecuting those guilty of corruption. Also mentioned was the importance of promoting the role of civil society in investigations, and the role of international companies in corruption.



# General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions

Opening the meeting of the General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions on 21 February, Chair Margareta Kiener Nellen (Switzerland) updated members on her recent activities, including her visit to Ukraine in December 2018. Kiener Nellen highlighted the special focus on the human rights and humanitarian situation of people in conflict-related areas. Thanking delegations for a spirit of open dialogue, she described her ongoing exchanges with a number of delegations on human rights concerns and her intention to further engage with them. To conclude, she reminded members that it is up to all parliamentarians to protect human rights both at home and abroad.



## General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions

### **Kyriakos Hadjiyianni** *Rapporteur of the Third Committee*

Presenting his ideas for the 28th Annual Session in Luxembourg, Rapporteur Hadjiyianni (MP, Cyprus) noted the worrying regression of human rights protection across the OSCE region. Many violations of human rights are unfortunately still prevalent today, including instances of torture, extrajudicial killings and detention without a trial. Moreover, he drew attention to the dangers of increasing populism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism and many more human rights challenges, including a growing mistrust in democratic institutions, hate speech, the demonization of minorities and violence against women.

Hadjiyianni also noted that governments need to take measures in order to improve the situation of vulnerable groups, especially children. 71 years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and 44 years after the Helsinki Final Act, Hadjiyianni called on all delegations to reaffirm their commitment to the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Helsinki Final Act, stressing that upholding human dignity must lie at the heart of all their activities.

### **Ambassador Ivo Šrámek** *Chairperson of the Human Dimension Committee of the OSCE Permanent Council*

Ambassador Šrámek expressed his appreciation for the active engagement of the OSCE PA in the strengthening and consolidation of democratic institutions, commending in particular the activities in the field of election monitoring. Taking the Slovak Chairmanships' priority of generating real change in people's lives as a guidance for the Human Dimension Committee, he presented the work plan for 2019. The Committee will begin its work by addressing the issue of participation in public and political life, as this requires an environment where human rights are respected and enjoyed by all individuals.

In addition, the Committee sessions will focus on the topical issues of tolerance and non-discrimination, freedom of expression, freedom of the media and information, prevention of torture, as well as economic, social and cultural rights. He further expressed his ambition to engage in productive and interactive discussions in the Human Dimension Committee. He concluded by highlighting that lasting security cannot be achieved without respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.



## General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions

**Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir** *Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)*

Gísladóttir emphasized the excellent co-operation between the OSCE/ODIHR and the OSCE PA. In particular, she referred to the activities in the field of election observation which she understands as an international instrument serving the purpose of protecting democracy and a flagship for the co-operation between the OSCE PA and ODIHR. However, as a great number of challenges to democracy remain and new challenges continue to emerge, she drew attention to the important role of the parliamentarians as national legislators in the OSCE PA. Gísladóttir stressed that ODIHR counts on parliamentarians

from the OSCE participating States to ensure that human rights and fundamental freedoms are protected in the national legislation. In this context she encouraged the use of legal analysis, tools and publications prepared by the ODIHR, which touch upon many diverse issues in the field of human rights.

Moreover, Gísladóttir drew attention to pressing security issues on the agenda of ODIHR, including the participation of women in political life, combating intolerance and non-discrimination and Roma and Sinti integration.

**“Great political efforts are needed so that participating States can fully implement their human rights commitments.”**



**Harlem Désir** *Representative of Freedom of the Media*

Harlem Désir introduced the debate concerning the scope of legitimate restrictions on human rights in times of emergency. He explained that numerous security threats and crises across the OSCE region lead to governments taking exceptional security measures in order to ensure the protection of their citizens. Such measures must be related to an emergency threatening the life of the nation, temporary, cannot affect non-derogable rights and must pass the legal threshold of proportionality, legality and necessity. However, even when justified by the seriousness of a situation, security

measures must remain compatible with human rights, in particular freedom of expression and freedom of the media.

Désir stressed that during the state of emergency, the work of journalists and the media become even more significant, as the free flow of information as well as the ability of journalists to engage in investigative work ensure transparency and an informed public. To conclude, Désir referred to the key role that parliamentarians play in working towards a safe, open and democratic OSCE region

## General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions

### Debate

In addressing the topic of the debate introduced by the Representative of Freedom of the Media, Harlem Désir, parliamentarians discussed pressing issues such as fake news, hate speech, the safety of journalists and the temporary nature of states of emergency. Members of the OSCE PA delegations further stressed that human rights restrictions in times of emergency should never be used as a pretext to restrict freedom of the media and freedom of expression.

During the general debate, OSCE parliamentarians raised various points related to the protection of human rights including human rights violations in occupied territories, the importance of genocide prevention, tolerance and non-discrimination, and migrants' rights, in particular the rights of unaccompanied children and their risk of becoming victims of human trafficking.



## Standing Committee Meeting

President Tsereteli opened the Standing Committee meeting on 21 February with a report on his activities since the Autumn Meeting in Bishkek in October. He welcomed the urgency that the Slovak Chairmanship has placed on the resolution of OSCE budgetary issues and expressed readiness to support Slovak Chairmanship priorities and discussed issues facing the OSCE such as the misuse of the single country veto and the lack of political will hampering dialogue.

In a discussion of current international political issues, OSCE PA Third Committee Chair Margret Kiener Nellen (Switzerland) informed the Standing Committee on the December fact-finding mission to Ukraine. OSCE PA Vice-President and Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs Pascal Allizard (France) discussed the issue of foreign terrorist fighters and Brexit.

Other issues that came up during the Standing Committee included the collapse of the INF Treaty, upcoming election observation missions to Moldova and Ukraine, the Cyprus settlement process, the fight against corruption, and the crisis in and around Ukraine.

Treasurer Doris Barnett (Germany) reported that the International Secretariat continues to operate in an efficient way and noted that the PA is increasing its profile with parliamentarians playing an important role in this regard. She acknowledged the support from the Italian and German parliaments by seconding personnel and stressed that all national delegations can greatly assist the PA by hosting meetings. OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella presented his report, informing the

Standing Committee of PA activities and initiatives of the International Secretariat, including internal reforms and ongoing efforts to increase the visibility the PA, and enhance the quality of debates in Assembly meetings. He also noted that the relationship between the PA and the governmental side is stronger than it's ever been before. There have also never been so many members participating in election observation as in 2018, he said. Montella discussed the priorities of the Slovak Chairmanship, highlighting its focus on people, and stressing the importance of the PA in the overall OSCE toolbox.

The Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on the Rules of Procedure and Working Practices, Peter Bowness, presented a report and amendments to the Rules of Procedure. An amendment to Rule 24 of regarding the validation of signatures was adopted. He also presented a number of ideas for improving working procedures of the Assembly.

President Tsereteli explained the status of proposed changes to the election observation process. Following a discussion, it was agreed by the Standing Committee

that observers would sign a statement on potential conflicts of interest along with the Code of Conduct to improve transparency and credibility in OSCE PA election observation missions.

Dates were also announced for upcoming OSCE PA meetings in 2019, including two Bureau meetings (8 April in Copenhagen and 4 December in Bratislava), the 28th Annual Session (4-8 July in Luxembourg), Autumn Meeting (3-6 October in Marrakech). It was also announced that Canada would host the 2020 Annual Session in Vancouver.



## Ad Hoc Committee on Migration

In the meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration, Chair Nahima Lanjri opened the session by updating the members on the recent committee visit to Denmark and Sweden. Assessing current developments in the field of migration and asylum legislation and policy, the visit focused in particular on measures to promote migrant integration and procedures for unaccompanied minors.

In line with the topic of migrant integration, Pablo Rojas-Coppari, Migration and Freedom of Movement Advisor of the OSCE/ODIHR, presented two recent ODIHR publications: the training manual on “Good Practices in Migrant Integration” and the “Local Authorities’ Migrant Integration Guide”. The publications showcase good practices from the OSCE region and address issues such as racism and hate speech in the context of migrant integration. Rojas-Coppari further noted the significant crossover that exists between the work of the OSCE PA and ODIHR.

Argentina Szabados, IOM Regional Director for South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia and Christoph Bierwirth, Head of the UNHCR Liaison Office in Vienna discussed the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact of Refugees. The need to identify steps towards the implementation of the compacts was emphasized. Szabados stressed that while the

UN organizations stand ready to support, it is up to the countries that embraced the compacts to process how best to achieve the objectives. Bierwirth highlighted the importance of cooperation on both a national and global level in this regard and referred to the calls for a Global Refugee Forum which would take place every four years.

During the debate, parliamentarians and panelists discussed pressing issues in the field of migration such as the need to bring actors in the field of migration together in order to assess good practices, the importance of mental healthcare for traumatized migrants and the need for a special focus on women and girls in integration efforts.

Members also proposed activities regarding combatting human trafficking.

Thanking members of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration for their commitment, OSCE PA President George Tsereteli underlined the important contribution of the Ad Hoc Committee to the work of the OSCE PA.



## Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism

Chaired by Makis Voridis (Greece), the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism met on 20 February and featured a panel discussion on co-operation between the OSCE and its Parliamentary Assembly on countering terrorism. Voridis welcomed all the participants and especially new CCT members Paolo Grimoldi from Italy and Guy Teissier from France. He thanked OSCE PA's President George Tsereteli for his strong support for the work of the CCT.

President Tsereteli commended the accomplishments of the CCT and highlighted visits to France and the US, as well as CCT members' contributions at various conferences and expert events. The President emphasized the important role of parliamentarians in countering terrorism and violent extremism, as they can convey strong political messages to their governments, shape their countries' legislation and budgets.

OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella recalled that the recent activities conducted by the committee enabled its members to study issues related to terrorism more in depth, identify relevant policy gaps, share lessons learned and meet with a wide range of important national and international stakeholders.

The panel discussion featured remarks by Ambassador Radomir Bohac, representing the Slovak OSCE Chairmanship; Ambassador Maria Victoria Gonzalez Roman, Chairperson of the OSCE Security Committee; Ambassador Argo Avakov, Head of the Action against Terrorism Unit in the OSCE Transnational Threats Department; Floriane Bacconnier, INTERPOL's Liaison Officer; and Reinhard Uhrig, Director of Administration and Outreach, International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law (IJ).

Amb. Bohac commended the CCT as a platform for parliamentarians to exchange good practices and lessons learned on how to respond to terrorism-related challenges and emphasized that the OSCE offers strong tools to foster co-operation among its participating States in this field.

Amb. Gonzalez Roman stressed that OSCE PA members can raise awareness on terrorism-related issues in their respective parliaments, exercise oversight over their governments and push for the implementation of critical counter-terrorism commitments, for instance in the context of border security and information sharing. Amb. Avakov noted that the question of the return and transfer of foreign terrorist fighters is a top priority, and that co-operation on this issue among all OSCE structures and other international organizations is crucial.

The meeting also included a review of implemented activities and an update on the PA initiative to promote the implementation of relevant international commitments on strengthening border security and information sharing. Voridis announced that over 15 parliaments had positively responded to the survey prepared by the CCT, and urged those who hadn't done so yet, to respond soon. He pointed out that the parliamentary responses would be analyzed in consultation with the OSCE Secretariat.



# Closing Joint Session of the General Committees

President Tsereteli opened the session and briefly commented on the change of structure of the agenda, which was composed of the reports by Presidents of the Ad Hoc Committees, leaders of Election Observation Missions, and Special Representatives.

## Report by the Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration, Nahima Lanjri

Nahima Lanjri (Belgium) emphasized the continuation of the Committee's mandate and as a focal point for the PA on migration, with particular attention to the issue of unaccompanied minors, on which a resolution was adopted at the PA's 2018 Annual Session in Berlin. Lanjri briefed on the official Committee visit to Sweden and Denmark in October 2018 to assess migration developments and evaluate the impact on migration and border policies in both countries. Integration was also highlighted as a key topic in the Com-

mittee's agenda, focusing on the access of asylum seekers and refugees into the labor market. Lanjri further touched upon the Central Mediterranean situation in terms of legal and logistical restraints, with a shift in 2018 from Italy to Spain as main destination of arrival for refugees. In this regard, she reminded of the right to apply for asylum, regardless of the means by which the person arrived in a country, making a reference to the EU Return Directive (revised in February 2018).

## Report by the Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism, Makis Voridis

Makis Voridis (Greece) started his speech by recalling the mandate of the Committee (to give a parliamentary response to counter terrorism without duplicating other expert bodies' duties), whose work throughout the year was based on the resolution adopted in Berlin in 2018. Voridis stressed the need for parliamentarians to add to these documents and push for the implementation of specific obligations by governments in order to hold them accountable, especially in concrete commitments within the UN framework. He particularly underscored the emerging challenges related to FTFs or lone wolves, due to which the security and management of borders is nowadays essential.

In this regard, Voridis informed of the PA initiative to conduct a questionnaire addressed to national governments, and exhorted delegations to send their answers. He further stressed the importance of cooperation between the Committee and other institutions, commenting on the memorandum of understanding to be signed between the PA and the UN on counter-terrorism efforts, and on the upcoming counter terrorism conference in Saint Petersburg, co-organized by the OSCE PA with the participation of other parliamentary assemblies.

Voridis finally briefed on some specific achievements by the Committee, such as the conference at the Spanish Senate in Madrid concerning victims of terrorism, the official visit to France on returning minors from war areas, and his visit to the US, where he met with different stakeholders and with the UN.

# Closing Joint Session of the General Committees

## Reports on OSCE PA Activities:

### 4.1 Special Representatives

#### Report by Special Representative on Gender Issues, Hedy Fry

Hedy Fry (Canada) informed of the 2020 Annual Session of the PA to be hosted in Vancouver (following the 1995 Annual Session and the 2008 Autumn Meeting). On gender issues, Fry celebrated the 2018 Ministerial Council Decision on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women, which engaged men and boys. However, she regretted that intimate partner violence/domestic violence could not be agreed on, nor the issue regarding threats to female politicians in the OSCE region. She briefed on gender mainstreaming in different OSCE sections,

as well as on field missions, in accordance with UNSCR 1325, underscoring the particular importance of gender balance in conflict regions.

Fry also commented on LGBTQ rights, youth empowerment at different levels, and the effects of climate change on them. In terms of the 2019 Annual Session, noted how the focus would be on gender and youth, highlighting the need not to favor only one group, but to give equal opportunities to boys and girls.

#### Report by Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs, Pascal Allizard

Pascal Allizard (France), pointed out the emergence of China in the Mediterranean region, with projects such as the Belt and Road Initiative, which will mobilize millions of dollars of investment (in ports, harbor management infrastructure and logistics), appeal to different international agreements and build a significant network of collaboration. Allizard expressed concern on the potential threat posed by this trade relations should they not be based in balance and have the political

acceptance of the countries involved. He raised awareness about issues such as financing and foreign investment, debt, international standards regarding the market, management of waters, security and control of borders, considering the fast growth development of Asia. Allizard further mentioned a meeting of the PA with the Assembly of Asian Parliaments in October 2018, welcoming the cooperation with this assembly.

#### Report by Special Representative on Combatting Human Trafficking, Christopher H. Smith

In the absence of Christopher H. Smith (United States), Senator Mike Lee informed of a law passed in January 2019 in the US authorizing a package of measures on prevention of human trafficking at home and abroad for four years. He noted how the bill also implements a series of Supplementary Items adopted by the OSCE PA (such as the one on Implementing Trafficking-Free Communities, agreed in 2018 in Berlin, which follows

up to the Tbilisi Resolution on Child Sexual exploitation), as well as the 2013 Addendum to the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings. Lee stressed the need to promote information sharing in order to prevent the sexual exploitation of children and urged delegations to take best practices and draft legislation from the OSCE Ministerial Decision 7/17 and recent OSCE PA resolutions on the matter.



## Closing Joint Session of the General Committees

### Report by Special Representative on Anti-Semitism, Racism and Intolerance, Benjamin Cardin

On behalf of Benjamin Cardin (United States), Congresswoman Gwen Moore stressed the need to address and give an immediate response to recent acts of violence in the OSCE region emanating from hate. Moore recalled last February's OSCE Conference on Combatting anti-Semitism in the OSCE region, where Cardin expressed his concern on the lack

of political will in the OSCE in responding to situations of hate speech and racism, which are critical for security in the region. Cardin's report also requests the OSCE to implement the 2016 Tbilisi Resolution on a Call to the OSCE Action to Address Violence and Discrimination, and urges both individual and collective efforts on the matter to be reinforced and continued.

### Election Observation Activities

Makis Voridis (Greece) reported on the general elections in BiH in 28 October 2018, characterized by continued segmentation among ethnic groups and general mistrust in the administration at all levels, which constituted the main challenge. Kristian Vigenin (Bulgaria) reported on the presidential elections in Georgia, in October and November 2018.

George Tsereteli (Georgia) reported on the US midterm elections, where citizens enjoyed a wide range of media outlets, organizations and elections were overall free and well administered. However, Tsereteli mentioned some negative aspects such as financial issues. He also noted that the election observation mission to the United States demonstrates that all countries are treated equally. Peter Osusky (Slovakia) reported on the elections in Armenia.



## Closing Joint Session of the General Committees

### Report of Special Representative for the Slovak Chairmanship on Combating Corruption, Paola Severino

Paola Severino (Italy), appointed to her current post by the 2018 Italian Chairmanship and reelected to continue her mandate in 2019 by the Slovak Chairmanship, highlighted one of the latest accomplishments by the PA: The Resolution on Acting Against Corruption in the OSCE Region, adopted in 2016, as a valuable contribution to the international fight against corruption. She reiterated the importance of international cooperation (also between the PA and OSCE structures), mobilization and an integrated approach in order to effectively tackle this challenge. In this regard, Severino called on the PA to address common and future challenges through the increase of digital tools and technological innovations, which can be used to increase citizens' political participation and foster democratic processes that result in more transparent, accountable and corruption-free systems.

However, she also warned about the low level of regulation concerning new technologies (which should include preventive measures), and stressed the need to support local stakeholders. Regarding the private sector, Severino underscored its role in the transnational dissemination of best practices. She finally welcomed the holding of the 2018 Conference on "Developing anti-corruption strategies for the digital age" and the adoption of two

documents in the framework of the Economic and Environmental Dimension at the 2019 OSCE Ministerial Council. At both occasions, the role of parliamentarians in the fight against corruption was emphasized. After a general discussion, Peter Bowness (United Kingdom) closed

the session on behalf of President George Tsereteli, who had to leave early in order to join the monitoring mission of the Moldovan elections. Bowness thanked all delegations for their participation in the work of the assembly, as well as the staff of the International Secretariat.

