



**REPORT OF SECRETARY GENERAL
ROBERTO MONTELLA**

**TO THE OSCE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY
STANDING COMMITTEE**

WINTER MEETING 2022

24 February 2022

The 2022 Winter Meeting marks exactly two years from the last regular – fully in-person – OSCE PA statutory meeting. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic and the necessary measures to contain it still prevent our Assembly from meeting physically as a plenum – 323 members, representing the whole political spectrum of the 57 OSCE participating States, in one same room. While I am grateful that our video-conferencing capacity enables meetings in blended format, I am very aware that this is not the optimum. My hopes are for a back-to-normal Annual Session in July in Birmingham, and the International Secretariat is working closely with our British hosts to this end. In the same way, we are working with Bulgaria for the planned Autumn Meeting in Sofia. Despite the continued impracticability of big gatherings, I am glad that smaller scale activities, such as visits or conferences, are instead slowly managing to go back to normality.

This report covers nearly four months of activities (November 2021 – February 2022) and follows up to the one I presented during the Autumn Meeting¹.

I – Activities

The last four months have seen comparatively fewer activities than the previous four. In this regard, I thank our leadership for having well received the call I made in my last report, which was to **grant mid- and long-term sustainability to our efforts, by prioritizing, balancing and ensuring a prevalence of quality over quantity**. In fact, while still implementing a considerable number of initiatives, a less packed schedule has enabled us to focus on the preparation and careful planning of the months we have ahead, which will see very important events and activities. This of course adds to the **routine work of the Secretariat in liaising and cooperating with our partners**, first and foremost the OSCE governmental structures.

As usual, I will not go through each activity one by one – you can find a **full list in the annex** as well as specific details in the relevant reports from our members, but I wish to underline some highlights:

- ✓ **Support to the leadership.** We organized a high-level visit to Turkey in November and are now preparing crucial visits to the Russian Federation, the United States, Ukraine and Kazakhstan. We wish to put the PA's toolbox at disposal of all stakeholders to facilitate and promote dialogue based on OSCE principles and commitments. To this end, we held two Bureau meetings, in December and January, discussing priorities and the current international security agenda. This was also the spirit of our participation and several bilateral meetings at the OSCE Ministerial Council in December.
- ✓ **Thematic and regional dossiers.** We supported General Committees, ad hoc Committees and Special Representatives in a vast array of targeted initiatives, international conferences, and field visits, maintaining our traditional thematic and regional focuses aimed at enhancing

¹ <https://www.oscepa.org/en/documents/international-secretariat/secretary-general-s-report/4282-report-of-secretary-general-roberto-montella-to-the-standing-committee-autumn-meeting-3-november-2021-eng/file>

parliamentary diplomacy efforts. Noteworthy, and in line with the emerging priority of environmental protection, we promoted our 2nd Committee-driven OSCE PA Plea for a Resolute Climate Action on the occasion of COP26. We have also continued to monitor, as announced, the challenges stemming from developments in Afghanistan, for instance through the last meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism. We also continue to prioritize the role of parliamentarians as watchdogs for human rights, and I wish to underline the 3rd Committee leadership's January visit to Warsaw for meetings with ODIHR and the OSCE Chairmanship to fine tune efforts in this regard.

- ✓ **Election Observation.** During the reporting period, we deployed one EOM, to Kyrgyzstan. Our election department is now thoroughly preparing for two simultaneous missions on 3 April, to Hungary and Serbia. In December, we also held consultations at Secretariat level with our ODIHR counterparts, to fine tune cooperation mechanisms.
- ✓ **Call for Action – Helsinki +50 Process.** The cycle of meetings on the role of the OSCE continues, and three events are being planned in the coming months. Following up to discussions with Bureau members, I wish to reiterate the full parliamentary ownership of this initiative. These meetings aim at enabling parliamentarians to better understand the challenges the organization is facing, including in critical aspects of its functioning, and enable them to mobilize in their Parliaments and with their governments, to bring back political thrust to the organization.

If **web dialogues** had become the norm during the lockdown period, it is now important to slowly return to in-person activities and reduce the number of online events, not only because of a certain fatigue in virtual meetings but also because nothing can replace real human interaction. However, online meetings and webinars proved to be a useful tool - we have invested in them, and they can still be used effectively, as clearly shown, for instance, by the recent OSCE PA Web Dialogues on combating violence against women, energy security and youth empowerment.

Regardless of what the activity is, including in the light of ongoing increased tensions between some participating States, I wish to underline the efforts of the Secretariat to ensure that **three key factors are effectively mainstreamed in our operations**, and I reiterate my call to our membership to keep such three points almost as a mantra for PA engagement:

- ✓ **The OSCE, and therefore also its Parliamentary Assembly, is a *platform for dialogue* between 57 countries on an equal basis, and this is based on mutual respect.**
- ✓ **We need to work hand in hand with the governmental structures in a complementary fashion.**
- ✓ **We need to target our action leveraging on distinct parliamentary added values, such as political representation, legislative capacity and oversight. Simply duplicating efforts of other - better placed - organizations won't prove effective.**

II – Administration

After having welcomed Mr. Sherif Abdili in our Vienna Office, the staff of the International Secretariat has **reached the optimum number against the background of available resources**, and I do not foresee further structural changes for the next years. I'm glad for how the younger colleagues have well integrated in the Secretariat dynamics and on how the Vienna Office – with new premises and structure – is operating. I also wish to underline the **improved gender balance**, including at managerial level, and assure it will remain a priority in all future staffing decisions.

As usual, I wish to thank **Danish and Austrian authorities** for respectively hosting and co-hosting our premises as well as **Germany and Italy** for seconding staff, and renew my call to participating States to consider secondments – an excellent way to optimize human resources and increase output. I also wish to thank our **Treasurer** for our excellent cooperation. Last week we co-signed the Annual Audit report and the Long Form Audit, and we will now start working on the next budget proposal, which - I anticipate - will see no increase.

The Secretariat is also continuing its work to modernize equipment and procedures. Staff is receiving trainings on the new *EventsAir* registration and archiving software, and we are also enhancing both transparency and data protection in full compliance with relevant privacy and data protection regulatory policies.

Concerning COVID-19 mitigation measures, **telecommuting** will remain the general rule until the end of the emergency period, even if both offices in Copenhagen and Vienna are open and operative for voluntary in-person working.

As mentioned, the coming months will envisage a very rich calendar, with several high-level visits, election observation missions, Special Representatives' engagement, and, at the end of May, the OSCE PA anti-corruption conference in Cyprus. Moreover, of course, preparations for a hopefully back-to-normal Annual Session in Birmingham. On this last point, I reiterate **the need to work thoroughly on an improved implementation and clearer interpretation of the Assembly's Rules of Procedure**, and I wish to thank Peter Lord Bowness upon his departure from the Assembly for his long-standing work on these issues.

Thank you to the whole Assembly for the support to the International Secretariat.

Annex I – OSCE PA Activities in the reporting period (November 2021 – February 2022)

This table refers to OSCE PA events and external outreach activities conducted by the International Secretariat autonomously or in direct support to PA Members. It does not include routine coordination meetings, daily and office-based work on a number of further projects and activities, public statements, nor the OSCE meetings regularly attended on a day-to-day basis by the Vienna Office Staff.

High Level Visit to Turkey	8 - 12 Nov.
PA Web Dialogue on Violence against Women Journalists and Politicians	10 Nov.
Participation in OSCE/ODIHR Human Dimension Seminar	16-17 Nov.
Participation in Max Van Der Stoel OSCE HCNM Award	19 Nov.
Participation in OSCE Ambassadorial Retreat	22 Nov
Special Rep. on South East Europe Visit to Athens	22-24 Nov.
Participation in IPA CIS / WHO Universal Health Coverage and SDGs	25 Nov.
Participation in IPA CIS Assembly	26 Nov.
EOM to Kyrgyzstan	28 Nov.
President and Chair 1st Comm. Meeting with SMM Chief Monitor	29 Nov.
Briefing on the Call for Action Initiative with Bureau members	1 Dec.
PA Bureau Meeting	1 Dec.
President's Address to the OSCE Ministerial Council	2 Dec.
Bilateral meetings at the OSCE Ministerial Council	2-3 Dec.
Special Rep. on fighting Corruption to OSCE/OCEEA event on Open Data in Action	8 Dec.
Election Observation Brainstorming with ODIHR	8 Dec
Informal Network of Young Parliamentarians	13 Dec.
Meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration	13 Dec.
CCT Chair Participation in UN coordination meeting of parl. assemblies on CT	13 Dec.
Special Rep. on Elderly Issues address to UK Parliamentary Group for Longevity	20 Dec.
Participation in OSCE Annual Heads of Missions Meeting, CiO opening events	13-14 Jan.
Participation in keynote panel - international conference on BIH (BiH Emb. In DK)	13 Jan.
NAM to Hungary	17 - 21 Jan.
SG Meetings in Serbia	18-19 Jan.
President Address to the OSCE Permanent Council	20 Jan.
Bureau Meeting	24 Jan
3rd Committee Bureau visit to Poland and ODIHR	31 Jan -1 Feb
CCT chair to IPU/UNCCT/UNODC Launch of the Model Legislative Provisions for Victims of Terrorism	4 Feb.
Web Dialogue on Energy Transition and Energy Security (2nd Com.)	4 Feb.
2 nd Committee rapporteur intervention to OSCE EEF Prep. Meeting	14 Feb.

Special Rep. on Central Asia meetings with Kazakh Civil Society	17 Feb.
Meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism	17 Feb.
Web Dialogue on Youth	18 Feb.
Informal meeting of PA Arctic delegations chaired by Special Rep. Arctic Issues	18 Feb.
SR Elderly meeting with German Association of Senior Citizens	21 Feb.