



**Report of the OSCE PA Special Representative on Youth Engagement  
Ms. Farah Karimi**

***22nd OSCE PA Winter Meeting, Vienna, 23-24 February 2023***

Dear Madam President,

Dear Parliamentarians,

Engagement of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly with the topics concerning youth significantly increased in recent years. It was my big pleasure to be reappointed as the PA's Special Representative on Youth Engagement after our recent Annual Session in Birmingham. I am really glad that there is a big attention to young people in our Assembly and that youth is among the topics of high priority in the organization.

Recent years have been extremely challenging for everyone in the OSCE area, but young people were the most affected ones. Various crises have threatened - and continue to threaten – rights, interests and the future of young people. Young people throughout the OSCE area encounter obstacles and barriers with regards to their access to formal decision-making processes including age-based discrimination, structural and legislative barriers, prejudices, and a lack of political will or opportunities. Armed conflicts have traditionally affected young people the most, and current Russia's war against Ukraine is a very bright demonstration of this. Young Ukrainian women and men enduring grave consequences without decent possibilities for education, development and a peaceful future. On the other hand, the global crisis of climate change is worsening and constituting a major threat to the wellbeing of young and future generations. Worrisomely, environmental governance also constitutes a prominent locus of the dichotomy between the actual and formal engagement of youth and the powers in place, and the lack of recognition of the value that young people can add. Addressing these challenges requires not only a major shift in political will in recognizing the role of young people, but also a comprehensive approach to work closely with young people.

My Special Representative's Mandate touches upon crucial aspects of the work for youth and with youth. It includes advisory to the Assembly on ways to promote the role of youth in peace and security and inclusion of young people in decision-making processes, support of co-operation and promotion of parliamentary diplomacy on the Youth, Peace and Security agenda within the OSCE PA, particularly with young parliamentarians; facilitation with OSCE and non-OSCE counterparts, both national and international, on engagement of young people, participation and advocacy.

At the beginning of my work as Special Representative in August 2021, I have formulated a four-point action plan in line with mandate: to increase political attention on the topics of youth inclusion, to enhance coordination with OSCE delegations and Executive Structures, to facilitate appropriate reporting on Youth in the Assembly and establishment of a network of young parliamentarians in the OSCE PA. I believe that significant progress was achieved in regards to this action plan as reflected in my Annual Report “The distressing dichotomy between the potential of youth and their actual possibilities to meaningfully participate in decision-making and leadership”.

During the Annual Session in Birmingham, I have proposed a Resolution on ‘Effective Youth Engagement Towards Secure, Inclusive and Democratic Societies’ unanimously adopted by our Assembly. I am also very proud that this Resolution was developed in close cooperation with our young members of the Assembly who also represented the interests of young people and made a significant contribution to the content of the document. The Resolution recognizes key challenges young people are facing today, but also emphasizes the important role that youth can play in addressing global and regional crises. The Resolution also calls for OSCE states to join international efforts to uphold the role of youth in contributing to a culture of peace, dialogue, justice, trust, and reconciliation. I hope this document will serve our Assembly and our parliamentarians on a national level as a guiding instruction to promote interests of youth and increase youth participation in decision-making processes.

On the sidelines of the same Annual Session together with Senator Marilou McPhedran from Canada I hosted a side event on Youth in Conflicts and War Zones. Attended by more than 40 parliamentarians and representatives of different organizations, the seminar facilitated discussions on the impact of violent conflicts and wars on present and future of younger generations, drawing on the examples from Russia’s war against Ukraine, Taliban Takeover in Afghanistan and other OSCE areas affected by active and protracted conflicts. Participants had a chance to hear about challenges of the youth in Ukraine from Ms. Yevheniia Kravchuk, Member of the Parliament of Ukraine, discuss position young girls in Afghanistan with Ms. Arezo Kohistany, Director of Yalda Hakim Foundation and learn from the presentation of Ms. Natia Kostava from Global Network of Women Peacebuilders about the role of young people in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Participants also heard from OSCE Director of Conflict Prevention Centre, Ambassador Tuula Yrjölä about the important work of the OSCE Secretariat and Field Missions in the area of supporting young people all over the OSCE region.

I am also proud to say that during my work as Special Representative, internal co-operation and coordination with the wider OSCE family, OSCE national delegations, and Executive structures in relation to youth participation issues significantly improved. OSCE PA International Secretariat is participating in the monthly meetings of the OSCE Youth Focal Points Network. In July 2022, together with our OSCE PA Office in Vienna and OSCE Secretary-General’s Office we hosted the Annual Meeting of this network. This meeting served as an excellent platform for all OSCE Institutions and Field Operations to discuss important topics concerning youth, coordinate their activities and plan future work



with the focus on the work of the OSCE Assembly. At the same time, on a regular basis I am in touch with OSCE Advisor on Youth and Security, OSCE Informal Group of Friends on Youth and Security, RFoM, ODIHR and OSCE Academy. Last year I had several meetings with Polish CiO Special Representative on Youth and Security, Ms Maria Raczyńska to discuss joint initiatives and work and I hope to continue co-operation on youth work with North Macedonian Chairmanship that already indicated youth topics as one of their key priorities.

On the other hand, the network of OSCE PA young parliamentarians is rapidly developing and growing. Since its establishment in December 2021, the network has held six different meetings, with five of them being in-person. Each of the meetings was either aligned with OSCE PA Statutory Meeting (OSCE PA 2022 Annual Session in Birmingham and Autumn Meeting in Warsaw) – or had a thematic focus and was hosted by the respective host Parliament (Vienna, March 2022; Andorra, June 2022; Armenia, November 2022). In addition to these formal meetings, our members are also active in other different formats. They organize various meetings with young people and civil society organizations on national level, contribute to various events dedicated on youth issues as guest speakers, and interact with their respective governments regarding youth policies. This engagement helps members to channel the challenges and concerns of young people to the Assembly, bridging young people and legislators. Representing not only their respective parliaments or political groups, but also young people, members of the network are more vocal in the Assembly meetings about the youth issues, helping to keep the topic high on the agenda. At the same time, we see that our young parliamentarians also engaged with various Special Representatives and General Committees of the Assembly. I am very glad that the leadership of the 2nd Committee invited representatives of the network to join their brainstorming session regarding activities for the upcoming year. I hope that other Committees and Bodies of the Assembly will follow this example and engage our younger members into their work. I believe it is also important for our Bureau to consider inviting representatives of the network to its meetings in an observer capacity.

The success of the network is already being recognized outside of the Assembly: our young parliamentarians are invited to contribute to the various events and courses, share their experience and expert knowledge on youth engagement. In December 2022, Member of the Network from Andorra, Mr Roger Padreny, was invited to a hearing organized in the Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe to showcase the initiative of the network and share their best practices that PACE might use in their own settings. This network does not only demonstrate the success inside of the OSCE PA in working on the youth issues, but also serves as an example for other parliamentary assemblies.

In November 2022, I had an **official visit to New York** to have meetings with UN counterparts, institutions and national delegations. I had the pleasure to meet with various UN stakeholders, including UN Envoy on Youth and UNFPA Executive Director, as well as with Permanent Representatives of Finland, Netherlands, Slovak Republic, and Uzbekistan. Discussions during the visit were focused on ways to enhance the youth participation and improve co-ordination of efforts in youth empowerment between

international organizations, including the co-operation in the area of the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security. In the meeting with UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth Jayathma Wickramanayake, we discussed increasing youth participation in the UN system emphasizing the necessity for OSCE to use UN best practices in working with youth and for youth and to adopt OSCE-wide Youth Strategy in line with Youth 2030: The United Nations Youth Strategy. We have also discussed the recently published Be Seen, Be Heard Global Youth Report<sup>1</sup>, which unpacks the structural barriers young people face in accessing their right to political participation and discussed how parliamentarians can contribute to removing such barriers. With UN Envoy on Youth we agreed to intensify co-operation with her Office in the area of national implementation of the UN SCR 2250 on Youth Peace and Security, in particular through the interparliamentary diplomacy.

In New York, I also had an opportunity to meet with a number of permanent representatives to United Nations. Discussions with delegations featured topics of promotion of youth engagement on national and international level and implementation of Youth, Peace and Security agenda. Another important project discussed during the meeting was the initiation of the intergovernmental process on the Declaration on Future Generations co-facilitated by Permanent Representatives of the Netherlands and Fiji emphasizing the role of young people as the driving force and bearers of future generations.

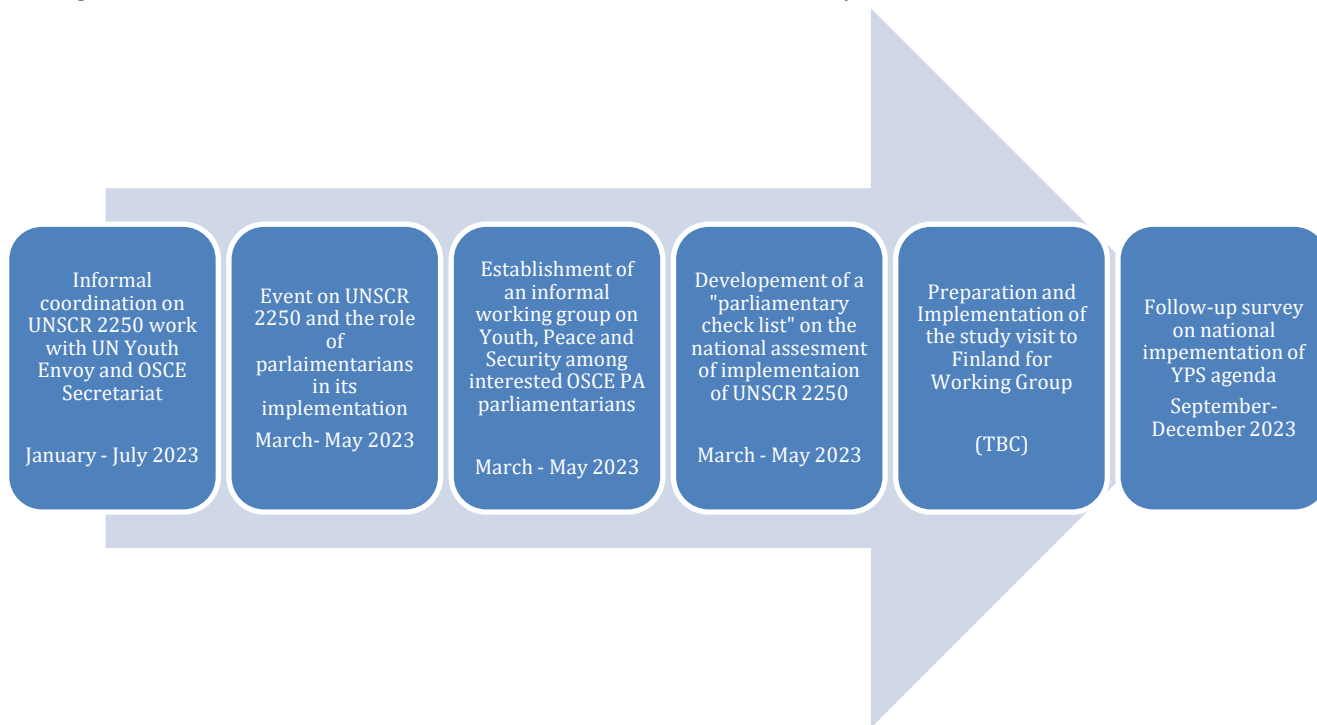
### **Future plans.**

One of the key priorities of my work in 2023 will be the topic of implementation of **UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security** and the contribution of parliamentarians (see Figure 1 – Action Plan on UN SCR2250 and Youth Peace and Security agenda). The objective will be to facilitate awareness raising, learning and exchange of best practices about the UN Security Council Resolution 2250 and to support parliamentarians in its national implementation and potential adoption of National Action Plans. In 2023 am planning to organize an event dedicated to role of parliamentarians in assessment and implementation of the UNSCR 2250. We will bring all interested members of the OSCE PA to hear from experts and practitioners from the UN about the UNSCR2250, as well as to learn about the experience of Finland, the only country in the OSCE area that adopted the National Action Plan on Youth, Peace and Security. Following the results of this event, a Working Group on Youth, Peace and Security among interested parliamentarians will be established with the aim to continue learning and exchange of best practices on Youth, Peace and Security and to promote implementation of UNSCR 2250 on national level.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://beseenbeheardcampaign.com/>

*Figure 1 - Action Plan on UN SCR2250 and Youth Peace and Security*



The second dimension of work will be aiming to support the efforts of UN in preparation for the Summit on Future Generations and adoption of the **Declaration on Future Generation**. UN Member States and stakeholders clearly expressed that a Declaration for Future Generations should state a firm commitment to securing the interests of future generations in all decision making; by identifying, managing and monitoring global existential risks, and by focusing policies and programs on long-term sustainable development. The Elements Paper for the Declaration for Future Generation prepared by Permanent Representatives of the Netherlands and Fiji outlines three important sections to follow-up in development of the Declaration: *Securing the Interests of Future Generations; Identifying, Managing and Monitoring Global Risks; Long-term Sustainable Development*<sup>2</sup>. In line with this paper and in close co-operation with the Special Representative on Sustainable Development Goals, Vice-President Askar Shakirov (Kazakhstan) and OSCE PA Network of Young Parliamentarians, I am planning to intensify the engagement of OSCE PA in discussions about future generations.

I will also continue discussions with counterparts about the adoption of the **OSCE-wide Youth Strategy**. OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the participating States to OSCE should pay special attention to youth issues and join the international efforts to uphold the role of youth in contributing to a culture of peace, dialogue, justice, trust, and reconciliation. This will require a unified, structured and more comprehensive approach in the work concerning youth. I will continue working with our respective national delegations and governmental side of the OSCE in exploring the possibilities to adopt an OSCE Youth Strategy.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.un.org/pga/76/2022/09/12/general-assembly-declaration-on-future-generations-pga-letter/>