



OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Winter Meeting

Address by the Chair-in-Office, Minister Ian Borg, 22 February 2024

President Kauma,

President Sobotka,

Secretary General Montella and Secretary General Schmid,

Honorable Members of Parliament,

At the outset, let me express my gratitude for the invitation to address the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Winter Meeting. It is an honor for me to be in Vienna today and have the opportunity to exchange with you on the most pressing issues on our region's security agenda.

As OSCE Chair-in-Office, Malta strongly values an enhanced synergy between the governmental and parliamentary structures of this Organization.

This meeting comes, yet again, at challenging times for an organization that has **security** and **cooperation** as key components of its DNA.

While conflict, tensions, and uncertainty are sadly dominating our environment, it is precisely for this reason that we need an organization such as the OSCE.

An organization that unwaveringly promotes and upholds its values and founding principles.

An organization that provides a platform for dialogue among 57 non-likeminded participating States.

An organization that can assist with a remarkable conflict cycle toolbox, based on its unique comprehensive approach to security.

We need the OSCE, which is why safeguarding its proper functionality is one of my overarching priorities as CiO.

It is crucial that we all make use of the platforms and instruments for facilitating dialogue provided by this Organization. In this context, I regret that the Russian Delegation decided not to be in the room today.



Colleagues,

As a fellow politician, I share your conviction that politics also means service, leadership, and strategic foresight. This is why I attach great importance to this meeting – over 300 parliamentarians representing both majority and opposition political forces, and ultimately more than one billion people.

The potential of this plenary is remarkable. Your views are of critical importance. You are here to bring the needs of your constituencies to this important international forum and discuss them together. Not only. You are also here to bring the OSCE back home. In fact, you can “*make the OSCE happen*”, by promoting relevant legislation in your Parliaments and lending the OSCE expertise to your institutions and people.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In just two days, on 24 February, we will mark two years since the start of Russia’s illegal war of aggression against Ukraine. Two years of senseless human suffering inflicted on innocent civilians, with a toll that unacceptably continues to rise.

My recent visit to Ukraine reinforced my conviction of the imperative need to bring this war to an end. We will not tire in calling on the Russian Federation to immediately and unconditionally withdraw its troops from the sovereign territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, abide by international humanitarian law, and respect OSCE core principles and commitments.

An essential element of these principles and commitments is the safeguarding of fundamental freedoms. The death in detention of Russian anti-corruption politician Alexei Navalny last week marks a dark day for all those who believe in the full respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms as envisaged in the Helsinki Accords. Those fighting for these values should not be repressed.

Fellow Members of Parliament,

Addressing the different implications of the war against Ukraine is a central priority for Malta this year, as it is for the Parliamentary Assembly.



We will also maintain high on our agenda other conflicts and sources of tensions in the OSCE region, including the Transdniestrian Settlement Process and the evolving dynamics in the South Caucasus.

Despite assuming this role at the eleventh hour, we also intend to bring forward several priority themes across all three OSCE dimensions.

In the first dimension, we will focus on cyber security, conventional arms control, the women peace and security agenda, and transnational threats.

In the second dimension, we will pay specific attention to digitalization, combating corruption, food security and strengthening resilience to the climate crisis.

In the third dimension, we will put emphasis on media literacy and safety of journalists, preventing violence against women, and countering human trafficking.

Moreover, we will look to incorporate an inclusive approach to security by effectively mainstreaming gender and increasing the meaningful engagement of youth in the discussions that take place.

Madam President, dear members of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly,

We strongly value your high engagement, the vibrant debates – which are the salt of democracy - during statutory meetings, the work of ad hoc Committees and Special Representatives and the many initiatives you lead or take part in. We also laud the active engagement of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in election observation missions and reports emanating from such missions, which offer valuable guidance to participating States towards strengthening democracy and rule of law.

I commend in particular the recent creation of the Parliamentary Support Team to Ukraine, as well as the activities of other bodies such as the Network of Young Parliamentarians, which offers a distinct contribution in policy areas where the PA has an added value. These are just two examples of your capacity to tailor approaches and activities according to the needs of our people. In this regard, your most recent Vancouver Declaration is an important and comprehensive document which provides food-for-thought and useful policy recommendations to the whole Organization.



In conclusion, I thank you, President Kauma and Secretary General Montella - dear Pia and dear Roberto - for your leadership and hard work, and for the distinct contribution that parliamentary diplomacy brings to the overall work of the OSCE. I look forward to a productive cooperation with you during 2024.

My door in Valletta, and the door of my team in Vienna, will always be open to boost cooperation and productive dialogue, in a true “OSCE family” spirit. When each institution is able to add value, we can ultimately deliver more and better in strengthening the resilience of this Organization and our people, in pursuit of a secure and peaceful future - our Chairpersonship’s vision.

I wish you all a productive Meeting and look forward to your deliberations.

I thank you.