

OSCE PA

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's 24th Winter Meeting



2025
20-21 February

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Summary

Nearly 230 parliamentarians from across the OSCE area gathered in Vienna for the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's 24th Winter Meeting. The Russian Federation's war against Ukraine, nuclear security, climate change, new technologies' impacts on elections, and artificial intelligence topped the agenda, with debates held in meetings of each of the OSCE PA's general committees and two joint sessions of the general committees. The Standing Committee also met to discuss the Assembly's ongoing work, hearing reports from President Pia Kauma (Finland), Treasurer Johan Büser (Sweden), and PA Secretary General Roberto Montella.

President Kauma, President of the Austrian National Council Walter Rosenkranz, OSCE Secretary General Feridun Sinirlioglu and Finnish Permanent Representative to the OSCE Vesa Häkkinen opened the Winter Meeting with calls for action as the 50th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act approaches.

The PA's three general committees met to discuss priority issues. Chaired by Costel Neculai Dunava (Romania), the First Committee heard from Rapporteur Tobias Winkler (Germany), who shared his ideas and intentions regarding the report being prepared for the 32nd Annual Session in Porto, as well as representatives from of the OSCE executive structures. Chairing the Second Committee, Azay Guliyev (Azerbaijan) opened with remarks about the many challenges the OSCE area faces in the economic and environmental dimension. Rapporteur Paula Cardoso (Portugal) presented her ideas for the Annual Session report and draft resolution, and representatives of the OSCE's executive structures briefed the committee on their programmatic

activities. The Third Committee heard remarks from Chair Lucie Potuckova (Czechia), Rapporteur Carina Ödebrink (Sweden), and representatives of OSCE institutions.

Several thematic events also took place at the Winter Meeting, focusing attention on returning Ukrainians from Russian captivity, political prisoners, media freedom, and demographic change, as well as region-specific issues.

On 21 February, a joint session of the General Committees featured an address by special guest Vladimir Kara-Murza and a general debate on "Priority Challenges to European Security." Some 70 parliamentarians took part in the debate, highlighting several ongoing challenges to security and calling for a renewed commitment to OSCE commitments and values.

In his remarks, Kara-Murza shared his experiences as a political prisoner in Russia and thanked the OSCE PA and the broader international community for continually pressing for his release. He noted the upcoming 50th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act and recalled that for decades the OSCE has been defined by its promise to create "a space for peace, security, and democracy from Vancouver to Vladivostok."

The OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Migration, chaired by Daniela De Ridder (Germany), met on 20 February and focused on the impact of the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime on Syrian refugees in the OSCE region. On 21 February, the OSCE PA's Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism, chaired by Kamil Aydın (Türkiye), met to discuss its priorities, including ideas for upcoming CCT activities.



PIA KAUMA
PRESIDENT OF

©OSCE PA President Pia Kauma



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Joint Session of the General Committees

At the opening joint session of the three General Committees, OSCE parliamentarians heard from OSCE PA President Pia Kauma, President of the Austrian National Council Walter Rosenkranz, newly appointed OSCE Secretary General Feridun H. Sinirlioglu, and the Permanent Representative of Finland Amb. Vesa Häkkinen on behalf of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office (CiO). Speakers stressed the need to recommit to the principles and commitments of the Helsinki Final Act (HFA) in the year marking its 50th anniversary. The importance of responding to today's mounting challenges and preparing the OSCE to play a crucial role in the future of European Security was underscored. In light of the most recent geopolitical developments, it was highlighted that there cannot be negotiations on Ukraine without Ukraine, or on Europe without Europe.

Joint Session of the General Committees

Address by the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Pia Kauma

President Kauma pointed out that in the current geopolitical landscape, the upcoming 50th anniversary of the HFA should not be conceived as just a commemoration, but a recommitment to the founding principles of the European security architecture. Condemning the continued aggression against Ukraine by the Russian Federation, President Kauma underscored the crucial role of the OSCE PA in remaining vigilant against any efforts to weaken the collective resolve to ensure justice. “The OSCE PA must not merely witness history,” she said. “It must shape it. [Its] duty is clear: Defend the Helsinki principles. Hold governments accountable.”

She also expressed concern over trust in democratic governance being increasingly weakened by hybrid threats, including cyberattacks, the misuse of artificial intelligence, disinformation and the weaponization of migration. She called for the OSCE PA to serve as a safeguard against such destabilizing forces, by strengthening parliamentary oversight, promoting best practices, and ensuring co-ordinated responses.

Looking ahead, she stressed that the OSCE should be ready to contribute meaningfully to security through fact-finding missions, monitoring activities, and confidence-building measures. Among the concrete steps to be undertaken she mentioned: ensuring the return of forcibly displaced Ukrainian children, securing the release of prisoners of war, and freeing the OSCE staff unjustly detained by the Russian Federation.

Address by the President of the Austrian National Council, Walter Rosenkranz

Austrian National Council President Rosenkranz emphasized the continued relevance of the HFA 50 years after its adoption, stressing that co-operation, dialogue, and adherence to human rights and international law are fundamental to achieving lasting security and stability in Europe. In this connection, he reaffirmed that the OSCE PA remains the only established platform where policymakers from across the whole region can engage in open discussions, making its role more critical than ever.

President Rosenkranz called for an end to Russian aggression against Ukraine, asserting that all wars ultimately conclude at the negotiation table. He emphasized that Ukraine must be included in any decision-making process regarding a lasting and comprehensive peace and highlighted the OSCE’s potential role in ensuring security in and around Ukraine, advocating for open dialogue to enhance peace efforts.


Lastly, Rosenkranz expressed concerns over growing threats to ombudspersons, including public attacks and political interference. He called on the OSCE PA to strengthen discussions on addressing these issues, emphasizing the importance of an independent judiciary and the crucial role of ombudspersons in upholding democracy and accountability.

Address by the Secretary General of the OSCE, Feridun Sinirlioglu

After recalling that the HFA with its Decalogue remains the cornerstone of security architecture in Europe, the OSCE Secretary General recalled the Finnish Chairpersonship's motto. He underscored the need to "respect OSCE principles, respond to today's mounting challenges and prepare for the future where the OSCE can have a crucial role to play."

In this context, he praised the OSCE PA's crucial

As Secretary General, he pledged to maintain a high level of engagement with all participating States to ensure a certain level of preparedness to quickly support them. He added that the OSCE remains a unique platform for dialogue, multilateralism and co-operative security in Europe and as such, it continues to be as relevant as it was 50 years ago. However, he stressed the need for adequate financial resources, urging the approval of a Unified Budget.



The OSCE PA must not merely witness history.
It must shape it.

- OSCE PA President Pia Kauma

work in promoting shared principles and ensuring that they are translating into meaningful action while holding governments accountable. He commended the PA for bridging the OSCE with the people it represents, ensuring its continued relevance in addressing the most pressing security challenges. He expressed support for the continued collaboration between the OSCE and OSCE PA on several dossiers across all three dimensions of comprehensive security.

He then went on stressing the urgent need to end the war in Ukraine adding that "it is time to put diplomacy first again" and that OSCE can play a key role "subject to consensus," thanks to its unique tools, experience and expertise.

Address by the Permanent Representative of Finland to the OSCE, Amb. Vesa Häkkinen, on behalf of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office

The Permanent Representative of Finland emphasized that supporting Ukraine's territorial integrity in line with the core principles of the HFA remains a top priority for the Finnish OSCE Chairpersonship. He highlighted that Ukraine is fighting not only for its national sovereignty, but also to defend the European security architecture based on respect for international law. He pointed out that there cannot be negotiations on Ukraine without Ukraine and equally on Europe without Europe. Moreover, he reaffirmed Finland's commitment to defending human rights,

Joint Session of the General Committees

democracy, and the rule of law, stating that these principles form the foundation of stable societies. In this context, he commended the OSCE PA for its role in election observation missions, enhancing democratic processes.

He cautioned that “the mere existence of an organization cannot be its *raison d’être*” and called for strengthening the role of the OSCE in the future, noting that 2025 will be a “decisive year for European security.” He added that while the OSCE continues to be well-equipped to uphold the European security architecture in the short term, in the long term it will be necessary to adapt to a rapidly changing security landscape.

Open Debate

Questions raised by parliamentarians included inquiries about external interference in democratic processes, particularly in the upcom-

ing elections in Germany; the effectiveness of multilateralism in the current geopolitical landscape; the role of the OSCE in ensuring a lasting peace for Ukraine in the current global scenario following the advent of Trump’s administration; and ways to ensure accountability for the crimes committed by the Russian Federation. Overall, serious concerns were expressed over growing authoritarianism globally.

The Permanent Representative of Finland replied on behalf of the OSCE CiO that strengthening societal resilience, including through media and information literacy initiatives, is key in countering foreign interference and hybrid threats. He acknowledged that multilateral organizations face significant challenges today, pointing out the importance of adapting to remain relevant. He underscored OSCE’s role in holding the aggressor accountable, including through Moscow Mechanism and ODIHR’s reports.





General Committee on Political Affairs and Security

The General Committee on Political Affairs and Security convened on 20 February with Committee Vice-Chair Costel Neculai Dunava (Romania) chairing the meeting. Dunava's opening remarks were followed by the presentation of the Rapporteur of the Committee Tobias Winkler; Chairperson of the Security Committee of the OSCE Permanent Council Ambassador Neil Holland; Chairperson of the Forum for Security Co-operation Ambassador Cristóbal Ramón Valdés; OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Ambassador Christophe Kamp; Director of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Center Catherine Fearon; and Ambassador Tibor Tóth, Executive Secretary Emeritus of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization debate.



General Committee on Political Affairs and Security

Costel Neculai Dunava, Vice-Chair of the OSCE PA's First Committee

Costel Neculai Dunava (Romania) highlighted the OSCE PA Winter Meeting as key for dialogue and co-operation between parliamentarians and the OSCE's governmental side. He acknowledged institutional challenges like budget and leadership issues while condemning attempts to obstruct security discussions.

Dunava identified Russia's war on Ukraine as the biggest security threat, stressing Ukraine's right to shape its future and the need for post-war recovery. He also addressed security concerns in the South Caucasus, Moldova, and Belarus, along with cyber threats and disinformation. Warning of shifting global security risks and nuclear escalation, he emphasized parliamentary diplomacy in peacebuilding and urged commitment to the Helsinki Final Act as the OSCE turns 50.

Tobias Winkler, Rapporteur of the OSCE PA's First Committee

Tobias Winkler (Germany) highlighted the importance of parliamentary engagement in tackling security challenges, noting that the 50th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act recalls principles of sovereignty, peaceful dispute resolution, and human rights. He condemned Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine, emphasizing the violation of OSCE principles and the need for accountability.

The Rapporteur also addressed nuclear safety, Moldova's sovereignty, and Belarus's support for Russia. He urged continued efforts for peace in the South Caucasus, expressed his security concerns in Georgia, and noted the United States' role in global security and the growing geopolitical competition in the Arctic. He urged continued efforts in Cyprus, the South Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Middle East.



Neil Holland, Chairperson of the Security Committee of the OSCE Permanent Council and Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the OSCE

Ambassador Holland emphasized the crucial role of parliamentary partnerships in upholding OSCE principles amid today's complex security threats, including Russia's invasion of Ukraine. He noted a rise in hybrid threats, organized crime, and environmental impacts, as well as challenges posed by new technologies like AI and cyber threats. The increase in youth-driven grievances and transnational issues was also highlighted. Holland said that the OSCE's work is hindered by budget constraints, urging states to fulfill their financial commitments to support continued action and partnerships.

Cristóbal Ramón Valdés, Chairperson of the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) and Permanent Representative of Spain to the OSCE

Ambassador Cristóbal Ramón Valdés noted that 2025 is a historic year, marking 50 years since the Helsinki Final Act. He condemned Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, emphasizing that supporting Ukraine remains a top priority for Spain. Noting the rapid military adoption of new and emerging technologies, he stressed the need for regulation and compliance with international law, with the FSC addressing this in its first security dialogue under their Chairmanship. Spain's commitment to feminist foreign policy was also highlighted, with a second dialogue on the Women, Peace, and Security agenda. He urged renewed commitment to multilateralism

and international law, calling for a revival of the Helsinki spirit.

Christophe Kamp, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM)

Ambassador Kamp emphasized the vital role of elected representatives in protecting national minorities and fostering inter-ethnic relations. He urged parliamentarians to safeguard, not instrumentalize, minority communities. Key issues of his office include the intersection of gender and national minority status, environmental challenges, and statelessness. He further stressed civil society's role in democracy and reaffirmed the HCNM's commitment to quiet diplomacy and targeted programmes. Warning against the effects of legislation that restricts civil society, Amb. Kamp advocated instead for the promotion of inclusive societies.

Catherine Fearon, Director of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre

Catherine Fearon opened by emphasizing the CPC's mission to deliver comprehensive security, recognizing the challenges of implementing the OSCE's mandate in such turbulent times. She highlighted the tireless efforts of 2,500 field officials advancing OSCE principles through a wide range of initiatives, including media support, dialogue facilitation, human trafficking prevention, anti-violence programs, demining, capacity-building, and women's economic empowerment. Finally, she called for the release of three OSCE officials detained by Russia.

General Committee on Political Affairs and Security



Tibor Tóth, Executive Secretary Emeritus of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization

Ambassador Tibor Tóth urged a broader perspective on global challenges, referencing the 1907 Hague Convention and questioning whether the right situational awareness exists for the coming “tsunami” of transitions. He emphasized seeing history as a continuum rather than isolated events; highlighting the convergence of the new industrial revolution, climate change, AI, and the underlying nuclear risks, he warned that great power status will depend on AI deployment in the future, not land or population. He described states failing to embrace these changes as committing a “crime against themselves.” To navigate this transformation responsibly, he proposed an international inter-parliamentary panel to address emerging technologies and global transitions.

Special Debate

The discussions focused on the war in Ukraine and its global implications. Many delegations warned against the dangers of nuclear escalation, with concerns raised about the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant and the broader risks of nuclear proliferation. Some called for concrete steps to reduce nuclear stockpiles and prevent further escalation. Hybrid threats, cyber attacks, and the targeting of critical infrastructure were also key themes, with some highlighting the evolving nature of warfare due to new and emerging technologies.

Regional conflicts and peace efforts were another focus, with discussions on Armenia-Azerbaijan negotiation and the Middle East. Some delegations stressed the need for European strategic autonomy, and there were also debates on international law, multilateralism, and the integrity of the OSCE, with some calling for renewed diplomatic engagement.



General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment

Chaired by Azay Guliyev (Azerbaijan), the Second Committee session on 20 February was devoted to addressing the interconnections between climate change, migration, and security. Participants heard presentations by Rapporteur Paula Cardoso (Portugal); Bakyt Dzhusupov, Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities; Nataša Zajec Herceg, Minister Plenipotentiary, Deputy Head of Delegation (on behalf of Melita Župevc, Chairperson of the Economic and Environmental Committee); Patrick Sakdapolrak, Professor of Population Geography & Demography, University of Vienna; Pere Joan Pons, OSCE PA Vice-President and Special Representative on Climate Change; and Daniela De Ridder, OSCE PA Vice-President and Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration.



General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment

Azay Guliyev, Chair of the OSCE PA's Second Committee

Chairing the Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment, Azay Guliyev (Azerbaijan) highlighted the many challenges the OSCE area faces in the economic and environmental dimension, focusing in particular on climate change, migration, resource scarcity, and artificial intelligence.

"As we navigate global challenges, it is also crucial to consider the transformative potential of emerging technologies, and particularly artificial intelligence, whose evolution seems unstoppable and which will greatly impact many aspects of our daily lives," Guliyev said. "AI holds the potential to revolutionize many sectors, offering innovative solutions to pressing issues."

Paula Cardoso, Rapporteur of the OSCE PA's Second Committee

Rapporteur Paula Cardoso presented her ideas for the report and draft resolution of the Second Committee for the 32nd Annual Session in Porto.

Emphasizing the relevance of the Helsinki Final Act's principles on its 50th anniversary, she outlined key focus topics of the report, including climate change and migration, energy security, economic development, and Ukraine's reconstruction. She also stressed the need for governments to balance economic freedom with social responsibility to ensure financial stability and economic growth.

Bakyt Dzhusupov, Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities

Amb. Dzhusupov presented the OCEEA's 2025 priorities, focusing on anti-corruption, cross-border connectivity, and environmental co-operation. Key initiatives include an OSCE-wide anti-corruption system, a cross-border facilitation guide, and green port projects in the Caspian Sea. He emphasized the OSCE's need for flexibility in addressing security threats, the importance of strong partnerships, and efforts to assess climate security risks and enhance regional co-operation on climate adaptation.

Nataša Zajec Herceg, Minister Plenipotentiary, Deputy Head of Delegation

On behalf of Amb. Melita Župevc, Chairperson of the Economic and Environmental Committee, Zajec Herceg presented the committee's 2025 work plan, aligning with Finland's CiO priorities and focusing on sustainable growth, good governance, water management, and smart cities. She emphasized addressing the economic and environmental impacts of the war in Ukraine, fostering multi-stakeholder engagement, and promoting gender equality.

Highlighting the OSCE's role in bridging security, economic, and environmental concerns, Zajec Herceg further stressed the importance of strengthened and sustained collaboration with OSCE field operations and the OSCE PA in order to achieve progress.

Patrick Sakdapolrak, Professor of Population Geography and Demography, University of Vienna

Prof. Sakdapolrak highlighted the growing impact of climate change on migration, emphasizing that while extreme weather events drive movement, migration is influenced by a complex mix of social, economic, and political factors. He noted that terms like “climate migration” and “environmental refugees” can be misleading, as they oversimplify the issue. Urging a broader perspective, he framed migration not just as a crisis but also as an adaptive strategy and a sign of resilience. He cautioned against speculative projections that can fuel fear and xenophobia. He emphasized that effective responses should focus on strengthening adaptation capacity, protecting migrant rights, and integrating migration into national climate policies for sustainable solutions.

Pere Joan Pons, OSCE PA Vice-President and Special Representative on Climate Change

Pere Joan Pons (Spain) emphasized the complex interplay between climate change, migration, and security, urging a shift from reactive crisis management toward proactive investment in resilience, adaptation, and sustainable migration governance. He called for stronger international co-operation, highlighting the need to recognize migrants as valuable contributors rather than burdens, and stressed integrating migration into long-term strategies for stability.

He advocated for proactive policies, resilience-building measures, and collaborative international action to ensure lasting security and sustainable development.

Daniela De Ridder, OSCE PA Vice-President and Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration

Vice-President De Ridder highlighted climate-induced migration as one of the most pressing humanitarian and security challenges, stressing the need for urgent political and policy action. Despite growing recognition within international frameworks, she noted significant legal gaps, including the lack of a universally accepted definition of “climate refugee.”

While some legal precedents have granted protection to individuals affected by climate change, the absence of a binding framework continues to hinder comprehensive protections. She emphasized the need for a multifaceted approach, including systematic environmental assessments, expanded legal protections, and stronger international co-operation.

Discussion

Two debates took place during the session. In the first, held under the theme “Advancing a Common OSCE Approach in Promoting Economic and Environmental Security,” lawmakers highlighted pressing economic and environmental challenges, including climate change, migration, energy security, and food stability. They stressed the need for strong international co-operation, legal protections, and sustainable policies to address climate-induced migration and brain drain. Discussions underscored the importance of food security, renewable energy investments, and reducing dependency on external energy sources. Concerns were raised about geopolitical tensions, sanctions, and the economic consequences of war, with calls for enhanced cross-border co-operation, trade resilience, and diplomatic efforts

General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment



to foster regional stability. Climate justice, early warning systems, and green investments were emphasized as crucial for long-term security and sustainability.


The second debate took place under the theme, “Climate Migration in the OSCE Region.” Participants stressed the urgent need to address the links between climate change, migration, and security, as these challenges are already impacting various regions. Co-ordinated international action and sustainable development were highlighted as

crucial to mitigating risks and ensuring long-term stability. The importance of strengthening parliamentary co-operation, particularly in Central Asia, was emphasized as a means to enhance diplomatic efforts and policy implementation. Concerns were raised about the increasing pressure on natural resources, the role of climate change in driving migration, and the need for protective legislation. Discussions also underscored the significance of water management, innovation, and cross-border collaboration in tackling environmental and agricultural challenges.



General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions

The General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights, and Humanitarian Questions convened on 20 February under the chairpersonship of Lucie Potuckova (Czechia). The Committee heard presentations from Rapporteur Carina Ödebrink (Sweden); Maria Telalian, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR); Jan Braathu, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media; and Ambassador Anna Olsson Vrang (Sweden), Chairperson of the Human Dimension Committee of the OSCE Permanent Council and Permanent Representative of Sweden to the OSCE. The meeting also featured a special debate on “New Technologies and Social Media – Effects on Elections,” with introductory remarks by Victor Lapusneanu, Head of the Multilateral Co-operation Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova.



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General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions

Lucie Potuckova, Chair of the OSCE PA's Third Committee

Lucie Potuckova highlighted the increasing threats to democracy, the rule of law, and human rights across the OSCE region. She warned against trends such as the erosion of civil society, the suppression of dissent, and growing restrictions on media freedom, emphasizing the effects on both individual rights and regional stability. Marking the 50th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, Potuckova stressed the urgency of defending its principles amid democratic backsliding and ongoing conflicts. She condemned Russia's war against Ukraine as a grave violation of international law, calling for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Russian forces.

She also underscored the devastating humanitarian impact, particularly the targeting of civilians and the forced deportation of Ukrainian

children. Beyond conflict zones, she drew attention to the broader crackdown on fundamental freedoms, including restrictions on civil society organizations and increased political repression. She urged OSCE States to protect democratic resilience by supporting independent media, defending human rights defenders, and countering intolerance and discrimination. Potuckova also addressed the humanitarian crises at the region's borders, calling for the protection of migrants in line with international law. She reaffirmed the committee's commitment to these pressing issues and stressed the need for concrete actions to uphold OSCE values.

Carina Ödebrink, Rapporteur of the OSCE PA's Third Committee

Rapporteur Carina Ödebrink outlined key priorities for her report at the 32nd Annual Session in Porto, emphasizing the enduring relevance



of the Helsinki Final Act in addressing today's challenges. She identified Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine as the most urgent crisis, now in its fourth year, with women and children facing heightened risks of exploitation, sexual violence, and forced displacement, calling for stronger legal mechanisms to ensure accountability for war crimes. Ödebrink also addressed the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza and rising tensions in the South Caucasus, emphasizing the urgent need for international attention. She condemned the increasing persecution of political opponents and civil society actors, particularly through restrictive legislation such as foreign agents' laws, which stifle dissent. Press freedom remains under siege, with escalating crackdowns on independent media, while minorities and migrants face growing discrimination and legal restrictions.

In closing, she urged OSCE participating States to remain vigilant in defending fundamental freedoms and to take decisive action against human rights violations.

Maria Telalian, Director of ODIHR

Maria Telalian, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, reaffirmed ODIHR's role in supporting democratic governance, human rights, and election observation. She discussed the evolving challenges that democratic institutions face, particularly regarding electoral processes. She emphasized the increasing influence of digital technologies on elections and the importance of safeguarding electoral integrity in the face of disinformation and cybersecurity threats.

Telalian highlighted ODIHR's efforts in providing technical assistance to governments, including best practices for election monitoring, legal reforms, and ensuring inclusivity in electoral participation. She called for greater co-operation among States to counter disinformation, enhance electoral transparency, and reinforce democratic norms.

Jan Braathu, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

Jan Braathu discussed the evolving challenges to media freedom in the OSCE region, particularly during electoral processes. He highlighted the role of digital platforms in shaping political discourse and raised concerns over disinformation campaigns, the misuse of artificial intelligence, and threats to journalists' safety. Braathu underscored the increasing threats to independent journalism, citing cases of harassment, censorship, and violence against reporters covering sensitive political matters. He noted that a free and independent press is essential for democratic accountability and called on OSCE participating States to ensure greater protection for journalists. He also advocated for stronger policies regulating the role of digital media in elections, particularly concerning misinformation and the ethical use of AI-generated content.

Anna Olsson Vrang, Chair of the Human Dimension Committee of the OSCE Permanent Council

Anna Olsson Vrang, Chairperson of the Human Dimension Committee, stressed that

General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions

democracy and human rights are vital for resilience amid growing restrictions. She reaffirmed support for Ukraine, highlighting Russia's documented violations by ODIHR and the Moscow Mechanism.

Thanking Finland for appointing Sweden as Chair, she noted that Finland's priorities – resilience, respect, response, and preparedness – guide the committee's work. She emphasized the OSCE's role in addressing democratic backsliding, civil society restrictions, and digital challenges in elections. Olsson Vrang underscored the need for a co-ordinated response to human rights violations, including combating torture, ensuring journalist safety, and promoting tolerance. She urged OSCE states to uphold their commitments to transparency, accountability, and fundamental freedoms, stressing that these principles remain as critical as ever.

Special Debate: New Technologies and Social Media – Effects on Elections

The Chair opened the debate by emphasizing the crucial importance of the topic on the agenda, highlighting the growing impact of new technologies and social media on electoral processes.

Victor Lăpusneanu, Head of the Multilateral Co-operation Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova, provided insights into Moldova's experience with foreign interference and cyber threats during recent elections. He noted that Moldova had become a testing ground for disinformation campaigns aimed at undermining democratic processes and discouraging voter participation. The 2024 elections saw an escalation in anti-EU and anti-government messaging, facilitated through social media and illicit financial





networks. In response, Moldova implemented cybersecurity measures, public awareness initiatives on disinformation, and stricter financial monitoring to counter foreign-backed electoral interference.

The broader discussion reflected concerns about the role of digital platforms in electoral processes across the OSCE region. Delegates acknowledged both the benefits and risks associated with new technologies in elections. While digital platforms have increased voter engagement, concerns were raised about the spread of misinformation, the targeting of voters through algorithm-driven content, and the lack of transparency in online political campaigning.

Several delegations stressed the need for robust regulatory frameworks to address the challenges posed by AI-generated misinformation, deepfake technology, and data manipulation in elections. Participants highlighted the importance of co-operation between national authorities, election monitoring bodies, and technology

companies to improve transparency and ensure fair electoral processes. Many also emphasized the necessity of digital literacy programmes to help citizens critically assess online content and identify disinformation.

Another key issue discussed was the safety of journalists covering elections. Delegates expressed concerns about the increasing harassment of media professionals, particularly those reporting on politically sensitive topics. The importance of protecting press freedom as a cornerstone of democratic elections was underscored, with calls for stronger mechanisms to safeguard journalists from threats, cyberattacks, and censorship.

The debate highlighted the evolving landscape of elections in the digital age, stressing the need for continued vigilance and adaptation to new technological realities. Delegates reaffirmed their commitment to upholding democratic principles, promoting electoral integrity, and countering disinformation in electoral processes.

Joint Session of the General Committees

Reports by Ad Hoc Committees

Daniela De Ridder (Germany), OSCE PA Vice-President and Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration, provided an update on the work of the committee, outlining upcoming activities such as an online meeting on “Gender-Based Violence in the Context of Migration” and a field visit to Spain. De Ridder emphasized the rise in irregular maritime migration to Spain, particularly in the Canary Islands, underscoring the associated risks. She called for enhanced measures to combat human trafficking and the implementation of special procedures for unaccompanied minors. Lastly, she highlighted the need to focus on the root causes of migration, including the urgency to tackle climate-induced migration.

Vice-Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism (CCT) Kamil Aydin (Türkiye) reported on the CCT’s 2024 activities, highlighting its engagement through three official meetings, two co-ordination sessions, two policy dialogues, a joint side event at the Internet Governance Forum, and an official visit to Türkiye. Key initiatives included discussions on AI’s misuse for terrorism, countering online radicalization, and enhancing digital literacy, particularly among youth. He also shared the committee’s aims to continue its efforts, including a planned visit to an OSCE state in May.

President Kauma, Chair of the Parliamentary Support Team for Ukraine (PSTU), reported on the recent visit to Kyiv and reaffirmed the need to keep Ukraine at the forefront of the OSCE PA’s agenda. She highlighted the role of the

three Special Rapporteurs in advancing the Assembly’s efforts to strengthen Ukraine’s resilience. Additionally, she introduced a new initiative – a structured set of questions for Bureau Members to raise with their respective governments on key issues related to Ukraine, including the ongoing detention of three OSCE officials.

Mykyta Poturaiev, Vice-President of the Assembly and a member of the Ukrainian Delegation, expressed gratitude for the work of the PSTU and reflected on the recent meeting in Kyiv, as well as the side event at the Winter Meeting on Russia’s crimes against children and women during the war. He emphasized that any peace based on concessions to Russia would only invite a larger conflict, extending beyond Ukraine’s borders.

Remarks by Special Guest, former Russian political prisoner Vladimir Kara-Murza

Russian opposition figure Vladimir Kara-Murza spoke about his imprisonment in Siberia before his release in a prisoner exchange in August 2024, emphasizing the crucial role of public attention and international support in securing his freedom. Kara-Murza stressed that even the OSCE, originally established to promote peace, co-operation and democracy, has become a victim of Putin’s rule. He condemned Putin’s brutal and unlawful war against Ukraine, as well as the repression of fundamental freedoms within Russia, including free speech and fair elections. Marking the one-year anniversary of Alexei Navalny’s murder and the ten-year anniversary of Boris Nemtsov’s murder, he underscored the alarming increase in the number of political prisoners, now surpassing So-



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Debate on “Priority Challenges to European Security”

viet-era levels. Kara-Murza urged that any future ceasefire must include the release of Ukrainian children deported to Russia and Russian political prisoners who dared to oppose the regime, stressing that not all Russians support Putin’s actions.

Debate on “Priority Challenges to European Security”

In response to allegations of flawed elections in Georgia, Georgian parliamentarians reassured the public that the only notable change in the electoral framework was the introduction of electronic technologies. One parliamentarian criticized the ODIHR report as biased, calling for respect for the Georgian voters and their choice. They urged for the need to honor the outcome of the elections and accept the decision made by the electorate.

Criticizing the recent stance of the Trump administration on the war in Ukraine, several European delegations reiterated two key principles: “Nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine” and “Nothing about Europe without Europe.” They

stressed the necessity of involving both Ukraine and Europe in peace negotiations. Some European states also highlighted the need for a more active, independent and robust role in European defence.

Additionally, concerns were raised about Russian propaganda and interference in elections. Several participants emphasized the need to protect democratic values and combat the rise of far-right movements which is seen as a significant threat. Climate change and the growing use of artificial intelligence were also cited by some parliamentarians as potential threats to peace if left unaddressed.

Some attendees highlighted the importance of paying greater attention to the Middle East, recognizing that peace in neighbouring regions is crucial to maintaining stability within the OSCE area. The war in Gaza was discussed, with a number of parliamentarians calling for strict adherence to international humanitarian law, ensuring respect for the ceasefire agreement, and expressing their sympathy for civilian suffering.



Standing Committee Meeting



The OSCE PA Standing Committee, consisting of the heads of national delegations and members of the Bureau, met on 21 February to hear reports and discuss ongoing Assembly work and its budget.

Pia Kauma, President of the OSCE PA

Chaired by President Kauma, the Standing Committee opened with the presentation of her report, which emphasized significant security challenges stemming from the Russian Federation's war against Ukraine. She detailed recent initiatives, including appointing three rapporteurs to support Ukraine, and reflected on her recent visit to Kyiv, highlighting the OSCE PA's strong solidarity with the Ukrainian people. President Kauma reiterated the importance of European involvement in peace negotiations, stressing the necessity for parliamentary dialogue and diplomacy. She also noted preparations for upcoming field visits and other activities, underscoring the Assembly's active role in regional conflict resolution and democratic stability.

Report of OSCE PA Treasurer Johan Büser

Treasurer Johan Büser presented the financial report for the preceding year, noting an income surplus despite ongoing challenges stemming from the Russian Federation's withheld budget contributions. Büser outlined recommendations from the recent financial audit, including enhanced management controls and employment practices.

He emphasized the Assembly's priority to secure adequate funding for statutory meetings and election observation missions, highlighting the complex financial landscape and the necessity for prudent budget management to maintain Assembly operations.



Report of OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella

Secretary General Roberto Montella highlighted key activities undertaken by the Secretariat to effectively support the OSCE PA's mandates. He stressed the importance of robust election observation activities, suggesting improvements through enhanced pre-election engagements to better prepare observation missions. Montella advocated strengthening ODIHR's capacities and underscored the importance of impartial leadership selection processes for election observation missions.

Additionally, he emphasized the Secretariat's role in supporting diplomatic initiatives and co-ordinating field visits and regional parliamentary dialogue. Montella also clarified that the OSCE's anticipated role in Ukraine would exclude direct involvement in managing post-conflict elections.



Report of Sub-Committee on the Rules of Procedure Chair Pascal Allizard

Pascal Allizard reported briefly on upcoming procedural reviews set for discussion prior to the next Annual Session. He noted that procedural recommendations would aim to enhance transparency and effectiveness, though no significant rule amendments had been finalized.

Reports on preparations for future meetings and any other business

President Kauma informed committee members of upcoming meetings, including a Bureau meeting in April, the 32nd Annual Session in June-July, an Autumn Meeting in November, and another Bureau meeting in December, coinciding with the OSCE Ministerial Council.

Delegates also announced a planned conference in June focused on organized crime and corruption, along with proposals for additional forums.

Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism Meeting

The 20th meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism (CCT) was opened on 21 February by Chair Kamil Aydın (Türkiye), who expressed condolences for victims of recent attacks in Monaco and Villach and reaffirmed his commitment to countering violent extremism in all its forms. OSCE PA President Pia Kauma and Secretary General Roberto Montella commended the CCT's capacity to address pressing challenges in today's fast-evolving security landscape and assured their continued support in enhancing the committee's efforts.

After briefing on the main achievements of the CCT in 2024, the Chair introduced the topic of discussion: "The Role of Education and Digital Literacy in Preventing Terrorism, Violent Extremism, and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism (VERLT)." He emphasized the urgency of this issue against the backdrop of younger generations lacking the skills to evaluate online content and his feeling that critical thinking, media, and democracy are insufficiently taught in schools. He then gave the floor to two keynote speakers: Dr. Daniela Pisoiu, Senior Researcher at the Austrian Institute for International Affairs (OIIP), and Camilla Bognø, Senior Advisor on Anti-Terrorism Issues, OSCE Action against Terrorism Unit.

Pisoiu outlined three major challenges posed by online radicalization: the rapid evolution of ICTs exploited by extremists; the "rabbit hole" effect of algorithm-driven isolation leading to radicalization; and the declining trust in media due to misinformation. She recommended stronger regulation, media literacy education, and the use of engaging formats of digital content to counter extremist narratives among students.

Bognø highlighted extremist groups' use of disinformation to manipulate emotions, particularly targeting vulnerable individuals from a psychological perspective. She reported findings from OSCE projects, identifying generative AI as an emerging recruitment tool and highlighting the role of digital spaces in amplifying racial and gender stereotypes. She recommended a comprehensive school approach incorporating multiple perspectives into student curricula, including fostering critical thinking and human rights education.

Several members contributed to the discussion. Key points included: serious concerns over AI's role in radicalization and over cases of state-affiliated media spreading extremist content; the need to create an intergenerational cycle where youth's technical competencies combine with adults' political understanding; and the challenge of balancing counter-extremism measures with respect for fundamental freedoms, particularly freedom of thought and expression.

The meeting was highly interactive, demonstrating the urgency of addressing the topic while building on the OSCE PA Resolution on AI and the Fight Against Terrorism adopted at the 2023 Annual Session in Bucharest, Romania.

Looking ahead, the Chair announced an official CCT visit to the US for May 2025, aimed at exchanging insights with counter-terrorism authorities in Washington and UN partners in New York. The visit represents an opportunity to deepen discussions on the role of artificial intelligence in amplifying online radicalization among youth and to shape relevant future policy documents.

Ad Hoc Committee on Migration Meeting



The Ad Hoc Committee on Migration met on 20 February. During the session, Members discussed the situation of Syrian refugees, with a focus on the implications following the fall of the Assad regime, and discussed upcoming activities of the committee.

Chair Daniela De Ridder (Germany) opened the meeting by welcoming new members to the committee, including Baroness Rosie Winterton (United Kingdom), Liliana Reis (Portugal), and Angelos Syrigos (Greece). She also acknowledged the long-standing dedication of Lord Alf Dubs (United Kingdom), a founding member of the committee. Building upon the fact that the Ad Hoc Committee was established in 2016 to address challenges stemming from the Syrian refugee crisis, the Chair opened the topic on “Recent Developments in Syria and Impact on the Situation of Syrian Refugees in the OSCE Region.”

Muriel Asseburg, Senior Fellow at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, described the challenges facing Syria’s transition and the impact on refugees. She highlighted the difficulties related to political transition and the return of refugees, particularly given the volatile security situation in Syria. Dr. Asseburg emphasized that refugee returns should be voluntary, safe, and dignified, and that international partners should support the reconstruction of Syria and the reintegration of returnees.

Stefanie Gross from the UNHCR provided an update on the situation of Syrian refugees. She highlighted that while some refugees have expressed a desire to return, many remain hesitant due to concerns over safety, the lack of basic services, and ongoing destruction in Syria. Gross called for continued humanitarian support, both inside Syria and in neighboring countries, to ensure the well-being of refugees and to facilitate voluntary returns.

Vice-Chair Kemal Çelik (Türkiye) addressed his country’s support of Syrians refugees for years, and defended Türkiye’s military actions as efforts to protect Syria’s territorial integrity. In the discussion, several Members raised concerns about the effectiveness of “Go and See” visits, difficulties faced by ethnic and religious minorities in Syria, and the impact of funding cuts on the UNHCR.

Artemi Vicent Rallo (Spain) touched upon the programme for the upcoming field visit to Spain. He noted that the Spanish Delegation was planning an intensive programme to comprehensively address the response to the significant humanitarian challenges posed by migration, particularly in the Canary Islands. Chair De Ridder wrapped up the session by outlining upcoming activities, including an online meeting on “Gender-Based Violence in the Context of Migration,” and highlighted potential destinations for future field visits of the committee.



Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism



Ad Hoc Committee on Migration



Demographic Change Side Event



Media Freedom Side Event









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