



REPORT OF OSCE PA SECRETARY GENERAL
ROBERTO MONTELLA
WINTER MEETING



20 February
2026

From my regular interaction with OSCE PA Members from across the OSCE region, I clearly sense a feeling of unease and even concern among Members regarding the international setting we currently face. This is understandable. One does not need to look far to see **long-held principles and norms disregarded, or multilateral approaches questioned**. And we should not hide that some have even questioned the continued utility of the OSCE itself.

All of this uncertainty, however, gives me even greater faith in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. At its core, the OSCE and the OSCE PA were never intended to be bodies that bring together close friends to agree on a single policy. **As a forum that embraces pluralism not only in its membership but also within its national delegations, the OSCE PA will continue to serve as a natural home for debate in which minority opinions are fully respected. Members must continue to debate the security challenges facing OSCE populations, even if they don't agree.** I continue to be impressed by the commitment of parliamentarians from all political stripes to engage in this celebration of pluralism and diversity of opinions.

Our most recent meeting, so warmly hosted in Istanbul by the Turkish Parliament, served as an excellent example of parliamentary dialogue in challenging times. I extend the Assembly's appreciation to the parliaments of the Netherlands and Andorra that will be hosting our meetings this year to continue our debates. The OSCE PA must continue to meet this need in a **true spirit of parliamentarism that seeks mutual understanding and respect even amid differences of opinion.**

PA Contributions to the OSCE and regional security

Since his election in July 2025, and particularly since our last meeting, **President Pere Joan Pons has maintained a high pace of work on behalf of the Assembly.** Particularly in his remarks to OSCE foreign ministers in December and again to Ambassadors in Vienna last month, he has maintained **distinct political messages** on key topics facing the OSCE. It is vital for the leader of this Assembly to maintain dialogue at this high political level, and to take such opportunities to sharpen political debate. President Pons will be continuing these discussions in a series of

exchanges during the **Munich Security Conference** in the week prior to the Winter Meeting. This is the first time that the OSCE PA is invited to this major security forum, which I believe is a recognition of the high level of political discourse that our Assembly has come to embody.

President Pons has been consistent in his messaging, particularly highlighting **Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the devastating impact on the population there**. The President, together with Sharon Hodgson as Chair of our Parliamentary Support Team for Ukraine, and Carina Odebrink among others participated actively in the Crimea Platform summit meeting in Stockholm. Their leading role in associating our Assembly with the **International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children** has been widely recognized and appreciated. I applaud the President's strong engagement which has also resulted in him being **honoured with the Order of Merit by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy** earlier this year, a commendation that the entire Assembly can be proud of. I want to also personally thank Boris Dittrich for leading our advocacy to secure the release of the three detained OSCE officials illegal held by Russia: Vadym Golda, Maksym Petrov and Dmytro Shabanov. Having worked in OSCE field missions for many years myself, I particularly appreciate these efforts on behalf of OSCE colleagues.

OSCE parliamentarians from across the region have remained engaged to ensure that the Assembly continues to be an active participant in security policy discussions. Migration Committee Chair Farah Karimi led a seven-Member team to Brussels to discuss **European migration policy reform**, focusing on implementation of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum. Kamil Aydin, Chair of the OSCE PA's Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism (CCT), continued to lead exchanges with other **Parliamentary Assemblies as part of the Countering Terrorism Coordination Mechanism**. The CCT has also launched a **novel initiative on School Dialogues on Preventing Youth Radicalization** through which parliamentarians will organize interactive dialogues in secondary schools to discuss building resilience against extremist narratives.

Bureau Members and Special Representatives have similarly been very active in various fields, ensuring that the Assembly continues to contribute

to policy developments in different fields and regions. Shortly following our last meeting in Istanbul, Luis Graca travelled to Armenia to discuss **political developments and the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace process**. Special Representative on South East Europe Kyriakos Hadjiyianni visited Athens to discuss regional challenges. Special Representative on Combating Organized Crime Eugenio Zoffili has similarly participated in several events on strengthening **co-operation in countering organized crime** including in Vienna and Washington, among others. Special Representative on Gender Issues Hedy Fry has actively participated in several events relating to **gender equality and gender diversity** in the OSCE region. Speaking at a side event to OSCE's Ministerial Council in Vienna, Special Representative on Fighting Corruption Irene Charalambides reminded of the **unique responsibility that politicians and parliamentarians carry in the fight against corruption**. Special Representative Federica Onori has similarly been proactive, engaging with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and other organizations active in the field of artificial intelligence and holding a series of meetings at the OSCE in Vienna to examine the **implications of artificial intelligence for security, human rights, and democratic governance**. Lucija Tacer, as Special Representative on Youth Engagement, has also continued to serve as a leader on youth issues including by launching a series of dialogue events focused on **youth, peace and security**.

OSCE parliamentarians once again deployed in large numbers to observe the electoral process of Kyrgyzstan's parliamentary elections in December. Claude Haagen served as OSCE Special Co-ordinator for the observers, and Monika Zajkova provided leadership as Head of the 72-person team of the OSCE PA. **This was the 12th time since 2000 that the OSCE PA sent an observer mission to Kyrgyzstan**, and served as another demonstration of the Assembly's long-term commitment to supporting electoral processes. Secretariat experts are already in the process of preparing observer missions for **upcoming elections, including in Hungary in April and Armenia in June**, and we look forward to supporting parliamentarians participating in both of these missions.

Behind the scenes of these many activities noted above, comes, of

course, a great deal of consistent and dedicated diplomatic and political engagement. **On the political level, the constant contact among parliamentarians who have developed friendships – across party and national lines – through the OSCE PA helps to secure deeper understanding of challenges facing all of our countries.** Assembly Members do not necessarily all agree, but their shared commitment to working as colleagues and deepening mutual understanding is itself a major contribution to security. On the Secretariat level, **I have worked to maintain close ties with OSCE leaders from Secretary General Sinirlioglu and ODIHR Director Telalian to experts working throughout OSCE field offices, as well as other parliamentary assemblies such as the Council of Europe and NATO.** The OSCE PA Secretariat team in Vienna and Copenhagen is dedicated to supporting all of this work, and ensuring that OSCE parliamentarians are well-placed to impact policy discussions impacting the OSCE.

Budgetary and Secretariat administrative matters

Whereas the positive political engagement bodes well for the future of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, budgetary and administrative matters remain a challenge requiring political commitment.

I was pleased to host President Pons and Treasurer Johan Buser in Copenhagen last month, for our **meeting with the OSCE PA's auditors from Deloitte.** This practice of our political leadership meeting directly with our external independent auditors is a tradition I'm pleased to have instituted, in the interests of maximum transparency for the Secretariat. As has always been the case **the Secretariat's management of the Assembly's financial resources was commended.** The performance audit conducted by Deloitte also resulted in a positive assessment, and identified useful refinements that could be instituted if resources exist. Nonetheless, **the auditors did raise concerns about the continued, and anticipated, budget shortfall from the Russian Federation's lack of payment of contributions.** With this background, I reiterate that the Secretariat will not be able to continue to support ever-increasing activities demanded by Members unless the Assembly addresses the issues of a frozen budget, and projected budget shortfall due to Russia's

lacking contribution, all amid rising costs.

The Secretariat team, led by Deputy Secretary General Gustavo Pallares, has continued to be **exceptionally careful with spending of the Assembly's resources**. We have also been actively seeking new revenue sources by speaking with many delegations about extrabudgetary contributions that could support OSCE PA work. My heartfelt thanks go to those delegations that have answered this call: **your contributions are helping to keep this Assembly active and functional. But more will be needed**. In the Secretariat we have been working closely with the Treasurer on contingency planning options to maintain operations amid anticipated shortfalls, but it is my hope that the political leadership will address this challenge in a more comprehensive manner in the near future.

While the Parliamentary Assembly is facing **financial challenges, they are not nearly as severe as those impacting the OSCE's executive structures**. The OSCE continues to function based on the 2021 Unified Budget, the last one adopted, on a month-to-month basis, and with significant reductions. These reductions and changes will not only be to the detriment of the OSCE's functioning and effectiveness: they will impact the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. **We have been informed that the OSCE will be forced to reduce its presence in the Hofburg Conference Centre in such a way that the OSCE PA's Winter Meeting will not be possible as it has been for the past 24 years**. The Secretariat team is examining all feasible options for the Parliamentary Assembly to continue its working within the Rules of Procedure and available financing, but Members should expect that this will be the last Winter Meeting as we have previously known it. This is an unfortunate consequence of the political and economic realities facing the OSCE.

I and the Secretariat team have similarly continued to search for hosts for upcoming Annual Sessions and Autumn Meetings. Hosting such an event, particularly the Annual Session, is the largest contribution to the Assembly and to parliamentary diplomacy that a country can offer. **While we are in talks with several delegations, at the moment the Assembly has still not received a clear offer to host our Annual Session for 2027, and the situation is becoming critical**. I urge all parliaments

to examine their possibilities to host your fellow parliamentarians in an OSCE PA event, and to thereby contribute to our collective work and security.

Conclusions

It is not my intention to claim that either the OSCE or the OSCE PA are in a great state of affairs. The international situation is concerning. But I remain **absolutely convinced that the OSCE PA in particular is well-placed to contribute positively to the solutions** that can address these challenges. The **complexity of the modern world requires organizations that similarly embrace complexity: there is not a single solution to most of our challenges**, so a body that exploits its pluralism and makes full use of the breadth of opinions and expertise among the Members of Parliament is most likely to have a constructive impact and produce sustainable solutions.

The OSCE PA Secretariat team has decades of experience in advising and supporting parliamentarians from across the geographical and political spectrum, and we look forward to continuing this work. I hope that all Assembly Members will similarly continue to make use of this expertise and support our work through the necessary financing.

Secretary General of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Roberto Montella

Vienna, 20 February 2026

