

OSCE PA

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's 25th Winter Meeting



2026
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Summary

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly held its 25th Winter Meeting in Vienna, Austria, on 19-20 February 2026, bringing together hundreds of parliamentarians from across the OSCE region to address pressing security, human rights, democracy, and economic-environmental challenges.

The meeting opened with a focus on Ukraine, with high-level speakers – including Austrian National Council President Walter Rosenkranz, Chairman of Ukraine’s Verkhovna Rada Ruslan Stefanchuk, OSCE PA President Pere Joan Pons (Spain), and OSCE Secretary General Feridun Sinirlioglu – condemning the war and underlining its devastating impact on Ukrainian civilians and foundational principles of international law. Calls were also renewed for the release of three unlawfully detained OSCE staff members: Vadym Golda, Maxym Petrov, and Dmytro Shabanov.

The afternoon sessions of the general committees featured committee debates on topics including the fight for Helsinki principles in Ukraine and beyond, geoeconomics and security, and election integrity amid hybrid threats and foreign influence. Committee rapporteurs also presented their preliminary ideas for the reports and draft resolutions being prepared for this summer’s Annual Session in The Hague.

On 20 February, the meeting concluded with a joint general debate on the theme “Human Rights as a Basis for Security,” chaired by President Pons and introduced by Speaker of the Parliament of Denmark Søren Gade and President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Petra Bayr. Fifty-eight parliamentarians intervened, linking human rights, democracy,

and the rule of law directly to lasting security. Speaker Gade stressed that true security stems from dialogue and equal respect for large and small states, as enshrined in the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, while condemning Russia’s invasion as a “blatant violation” of those principles. President Bayr underscored human rights and democracy as antidotes to totalitarian ideologies and as essential for addressing global challenges, calling for strengthened co-operation between PACE and the OSCE PA to uphold accountability and the rules-based order.

The debate covered the war in Ukraine, human trafficking, political prisoners, international law, and demographic issues. Participants advocated for a just and lasting peace in Ukraine, renewed efforts toward Middle East peace, consistent human rights standards without double standards, and self-determination for Greenland’s people.

Additional meetings included the Parliamentary Support Team for Ukraine, which discussed security, humanitarian needs, and crimes against journalists; the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism, which focused on online radicalization and institutional synergies; and the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration, which reviewed local integration practices and the EU Migration Pact.

The Standing Committee discussed ongoing activities, election observation reports, and President Pons’s recent engagements. OSCE PA Treasurer Johan Büser (Sweden) and Secretary General Roberto Montella also reported to the Standing Committee, highlighting the Assembly’s continued high level of engagement despite budget constraints.



RUSLAN STEFANCI
CHAIRMAN



HOFBURG
VIENNA



HOFBURG
VIENNA



Opening Joint Session of the General Committees

At the opening joint session, parliamentarians heard addresses by President of the Austrian National Council Walter Rosenkranz, Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine Ruslan Stefanchuk, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President Pere Joan Pons, and OSCE Secretary General Feridun Sinirlioglu. Against the backdrop of Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine and growing instability in the broader European security architecture, speakers reflected on the urgent need to restore trust, reinforce democratic values, and strengthen the OSCE's capacity to respond effectively to contemporary security challenges. The war in Ukraine, mounting geopolitical tensions, and institutional strains within the OSCE were central themes throughout the session, alongside calls for unity, accountability, and renewed commitment to the Helsinki principles.

Joint Session of the General Committees

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

In his welcoming remarks, President Rosenkranz highlighted the gravity of the current security situation, marked by Russia's war against Ukraine in violation of UN and OSCE principles. He referred to intensified attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure during winter and the broader uncertainty affecting the international order.

The foundations of the European security architecture built since the end of the Cold War have been severely damaged, President Rosenkranz said, and no effort should be spared in rebuilding it. "To begin this process, this terrible war must finally end," he said. "We therefore welcome all serious initiatives that bring us closer to this goal."

He stressed that any future peace agreement should include credible monitoring mechanisms, with the OSCE well placed to assume such a role given its field presence and expertise. While acknowledging the OSCE's internal challenges, he underlined its continued importance within the European security architecture and recalled its contributions to conflict resolution in several regions like the Caucasus and Balkans.

He pointed to election observation and field missions as concrete expressions of OSCE commitments and underscored the importance of parliamentary dialogue, youth engagement, and safeguarding adequate resources to rebuild trust within the OSCE. He concluded by stressing the importance of reflecting all aspects of the political spectrum when engaging in dialogue.

Address by the Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, Ruslan Stefanchuk

Chairman Stefanchuk described the devastating humanitarian impact of Russia's war, including systematic attacks on energy infrastructure and civilian areas. He accused the Russian Federation of grave violations of international law and crimes against humanity, citing widespread destruction and the deportation of Ukrainian children, and stressing the need for justice.

"Russia must be held accountable," Stefanchuk said. "Accountable for everything. For violating international law and order. For the crime of aggression against Ukraine. For all the crimes it has committed and, above all, crimes against humanity."

He warned of broader destabilizing actions from Russia's shadow fleet, hybrid threats, and disinformation campaigns, and called for strengthened political and economic isolation of Moscow. He stressed that accountability is essential and that the financial burden of the war must not fall on European or American taxpayers.

Recalling the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, Chairman Stefanchuk emphasized that security guarantees must be upheld and that the OSCE must not allow agreements to be ignored. He concluded by urging continued and strengthened support for Ukraine and a more active OSCE role in achieving a just and lasting peace.



Address by the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Pere Joan Pons

President Pons said that unity remains the Assembly's greatest strength and reaffirmed that Ukraine's defence is inseparable from the defence of democratic values, reiterating that borders cannot be changed by force and that sovereignty and territorial integrity are non-negotiable.

He called for a peace grounded in OSCE principles and credible security guarantees, urging Russia to end its aggression, respect Ukraine's sovereignty, and release OSCE prisoners. Framing the current moment as a test between authoritarianism and democracy, he warned against double standards in responding to geopolitical challenges, mentioning in particular Greenland

and Gaza. He noted that "breaking institutions does not empower citizens, it empowers instability."

President Pons also highlighted the strategic importance of election observation, particularly in the context of hybrid threats and emerging technologies, and called for greater parliamentary and governmental support to strengthen this work. He called for increased support from national parliaments and governments to achieve an expansive field work operation.

He stressed the importance of dialogue between nations, suggesting that when "dialogue breaks down, disorder fills the space." He highlighted the threat of climate change, gender equality, and human migration as crucial issues that must be addressed through substantive dialogue.

Joint Session of the General Committees

Address by the Secretary General of the OSCE, Feridun Sinirlioglu

Secretary General Sinirlioglu underlined the importance of parliamentary engagement in addressing a deteriorating and fragmented security environment. He observed that current instability has, in some respects, surpassed tensions seen during the Cold War and cautioned against reliance solely on military deterrence, emphasizing the continued relevance of comprehensive security. He regretted that we now face a world without functioning arms control agreements.

Addressing financial constraints, he noted the continued streamlining of structures, reduction in costs, and growing agility of the OSCE, stressing though that adopting a unified budget is essential for the OSCE to fulfil its mandate effectively.

Open Debate

During the question-and-answer session, parliamentarians raised issues including gender representation, the war in Gaza and broader Middle East instability, East-West relations and the role of the OSCE in facilitating dialogue, transparency and funding of field projects, and the impact of emerging technologies on modern warfare.



This war should end with a just and lasting peace.

- OSCE Secretary General Feridun Sinirlioglu

He reaffirmed that the OSCE remains uniquely positioned to facilitate dialogue and support efforts across all avenues. Regarding a just and lasting peace, including post-conflict stabilization and monitoring arrangements in Ukraine, Secretary General Sinirlioglu praised the OSCE's obligation to this task. He also stressed the OSCE's post-conflict role in stabilizing and monitoring the implementation of peace terms.

"This war should end with a just and lasting peace," Sinirlioglu said. "The OSCE stands ready to play a useful role in the post-conflict stabilization and rehabilitation, including the monitoring of the implementation of the terms of a negotiated settlement that may emerge between the sides to end the war."

Speakers reaffirmed that gender equality remains a core OSCE commitment and emphasized that inclusive dialogue is fundamental to the Organization's modus operandi. Concerns were voiced regarding the need for institutional reform, sustainable financing, and greater parliamentary visibility of field activities. Secretary General Sinirlioglu reiterated the importance of consensus, accountability, and inclusive engagement, stressing that dialogue provides a mechanism to confront violations while preserving channels for diplomacy.

The opening joint session concluded with a renewed call for unity, strengthened democratic resilience, and a recommitment to the principles of comprehensive and co-operative security that underpin the OSCE.



General Committee on Political Affairs and Security

The meeting of the General Committee on Political Affairs and Security opened on 19 February with the adoption of the draft agenda. The session was chaired by Marc Veasey (United States), who set the tone for the discussions with remarks on current security challenges in the OSCE region. The committee heard presentations from Ambassador Fatène Benhabylès-Foeth, Chairperson of the Forum for Security Co-operation and Permanent Representative of France to the OSCE; Ambassador Christophe Kamp, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities; Rapporteur Tobias Winkler (Germany); and Kate Fearon, Director of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre and Deputy Head of the OSCE Secretariat.



JEVRO

VICE-CHA

General Committee on Political Affairs and Security

Marc Veasey, Chair of the OSCE PA's First Committee

In his opening address, Chair Marc Veasey unequivocally condemned the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. He described the war as an attack on democracy and international law, citing alleged war crimes, including the abduction of Ukrainian children, the detention of innocent civilians, and deliberate attacks on critical energy infrastructure.

He stressed that such actions undermine sustainable international security and peace. The Chair urged participating States to intensify efforts toward achieving a just and lasting peace settlement and emphasized that the abduction of children constitutes a grave crime warranting further sanctions.

He highlighted the role of the OSCE, particularly the Parliamentary Assembly, in promoting sovereignty and peace in Ukraine, and stressed that the OSCE should take a leading role in these efforts. The U.S.'s continued support for NATO and the transatlantic partnership was reaffirmed, underlining the importance of collective defence and co-operation.

The Chair also addressed concerns beyond Ukraine, condemning political oppression and military occupation in Georgia. He reiterated the bipartisan commitment of the U.S. to the OSCE PA and expressed hope that the outcomes of this Winter Meeting would contribute meaningfully to the Annual Session in July. He concluded with the aspiration of working toward a safer and freer world.

Fatène Benhabylès-Foeth, Chair of the Forum for Security Co-operation

Ambassador Benhabylès-Foeth outlined three guiding principles for her Chairpersonship. First, the FSC must fully exercise its mandate to ensure security and safety in the OSCE region. Second, dialogue must be conducted in good faith, particularly in areas such as escalation management and risk prevention. Third, respect for international law and confidence- and security-building measures is essential, especially in today's challenging security environment.

She also condemned the Russian war against Ukraine and reiterated France's commitment to achieving a sustainable and just peace. A total of four security dialogues are planned under the French Chairpersonship with a particular focus on the role of women in armed forces.

She called on participating States to improve conditions within their military institutions to ensure that more women not only join but remain in the armed forces, thereby strengthening inclusivity and institutional resilience.

Tobias Winkler, Rapporteur of the First Committee

Tobias Winkler presented his ideas and intentions regarding the First Committee report for the 33rd Annual Session in The Hague taking place 4-8 July 2026. He called for full respect for Ukraine's territorial integrity and international law, insisting that the issue must remain high on the committee's agenda. The protection of critical energy infrastructure was highlighted as a priority, and he firmly rejected the normalization



of “grey zone” activities that undermine security. He further observed that the OSCE region is undergoing significant geopolitical shifts, with the High North increasingly becoming a center of great power competition.

Special Debate: The Fight for Helsinki Principles in Ukraine and Beyond: Grounding Regional Peace in Comprehensive Security

During the special debate, delegations raised issues including the importance of border protection and the preservation of values in times of heightened insecurity. Developments concerning Greenland were addressed with the need to respect international law underscored as essential, particularly for small nations, which may be more vulnerable but are entitled to full protection of their rights.

The Russian Federation’s war against Ukraine was strongly condemned, with Moscow criticized for failing to uphold international commitments. Particular attention was drawn to Russia’s so-called shadow fleet, with calls for measures to shut it down in order to limit Russia’s capacity

to finance and sustain the war. Ukraine’s urgent need for continued military support was also highlighted.

It was also emphasized, however, that conflicts are best resolved through dialogue and co-operation rather than force or pressure, and that comprehensive security must go beyond rhetoric, requiring concrete actions by all participating States.

The demographic consequences of the war in Ukraine were stressed, drawing attention to long-term societal impacts, and the need for psychological and social assistance for children affected by the war was underlined as essential. The establishment and support of dedicated centres for children were presented as an important contribution to recovery and long-term stability.

A number of delegations called for a just and lasting peace not only in Ukraine but also in Gaza. Europe was also urged to develop greater strategic autonomy in its military and security policies.

General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment

Chaired by Azay Guliyev (Azerbaijan), the session focused on strengthening a common OSCE response to economic and environmental security challenges and in a special debate addressed the links between geoeconomics, technology, and security in a rapidly changing landscape. Participants listened to presentations by Rapporteur Paula Cardoso (Portugal); Alja Brinovec Jureša (on behalf of Amb. Melita Župevc, Chair of the Economic and Environmental Committee); Dr. Steven Everts, Director of the EU Institute for Security Studies; Ryan Fedasiuk, Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute; Michael Zinkanell, Director of the Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy; and Amb. Bakyt Dzhusupov, Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities.



General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment

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

Azay Guliyev stressed that the already highly volatile regional security environment in the OSCE continues to be heavily impacted by the Russian Federation's ongoing war against Ukraine. He highlighted the strategic importance of strengthening resilient and diversified trade and transit routes and emphasized that the climate crisis remains the most significant long-term challenge.

He underlined the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies as transformative forces for economies and security. Additionally, he warned of threats from the weakening multilateralism, rising geopolitical tensions, economic coercion, and restrictive trade measures undermining established trade rules and increasing uncertainty.

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

Presenting her preliminary ideas for the report and draft resolution that will be presented at the Annual Session in the Hague, Cardoso warned that democratic backsliding, trade fragmentation, climate change, and disinformation require a stronger and more united response. She identified Ukraine's reconstruction as a strategic priority and highlighted the urgency of climate action, calling for accelerated transition to renewable energy and stronger adaptation efforts. In closing, she stressed the need for effective governance of artificial intelligence and action against disinformation.

Alja Brinovec Jureša, Advisor (on behalf of Amb. Melita Župevc, Chairperson of the Economic and Environmental Committee)

Brinovec Jureša presented the 2026 work plan of the Economic and Environmental Committee, focusing on future-proof and inclusive economic systems, emerging technologies, sustainable and resilient natural resource management, and strengthening dialogue and trust across sectors and borders. She emphasized the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach and highlighted the interconnected challenges of economic pressures, environmental stress, technological transformation, and the Russian Federation's war against Ukraine.

Dr. Steven Everts, Director of the EU Institute for Security Studies (online)

Dr. Everts, providing the European Union's perspective, deplored the rise of might-makes-right power politics, the growing disregard for international law, and disrespect for principles of multilateralism. In particular, he warned of threats from the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine, as well as increasing levels of uncertainty due to American unpredictability and China's monopolization and weaponization of economic assets. To establish greater independence and long-term stability, Dr. Everts emphasized the need to increase financial investment in European innovation, including critical technologies and digital sovereignty, as well as reducing dependencies.

Ryan Fedasiuk, Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute (online)

Ryan Fedasiuk focused on the AI revolution and contended that Europe's competitive advantage lies not in building the entire AI stack, but in energy infrastructure and connectivity – where European firms play a pivotal global role. In this regard he urged Europe to pursue “selective sovereignty” by deepening strength in power generation, grids, storage, and submarine cables, rather than seeking full digital self-sufficiency. He stressed that strong transatlantic co-operation, rather than alignment with China, will safeguard the EU's democratic integrity in the AI era.

Michael Zinkanell, Director of the Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy

Zinkanell argued that the OSCE area is entering a period of intensified geopolitical and geo-economic rivalry, where rules-based expectations are increasingly replaced by force-driven realities and growing uncertainty. He highlighted AI as a strategic game changer reshaping politics, economies, and warfare, and emphasized the rise of hybrid threats, which undermine economic stability, public trust, and the integrity of states. In closing, he urged the OSCE to serve as a standing platform for dialogue on AI and emerging technologies, and to strengthen preparedness and enhance collective resilience across the region.

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

Amb. Dzhusupov presented the OCEEA's 2025 priorities and projects, including forward-looking

climate projections for energy infrastructure resilience and regional connectivity projects from Romania and Türkiye through the South Caucasus and Central Asia to Mongolia.

He highlighted risks linked to digitalization, critical infrastructure, corruption and cross-border illicit financial flows and called on parliamentarians to champion cross-border regulatory co-operation, strengthen anti-corruption and asset recovery frameworks, invest in resilient and sustainable connectivity, and ensure responsible governance of emerging technologies.

Special Debate: Goeconomics, Technology, and Security: Navigating a Changing Landscape

Some two dozen parliamentarians took the floor during the debate, stressing the close interconnections between goeconomics, technological innovation, and security. Many expressed their concerns over the Russian Federation's aggression destabilizing regional security with heavy economic and environmental impacts and threats from the malign use of new technologies. Additionally, lawmakers warned of risks stemming from great power competition, strategic rivalry, weaponization of dependencies, manipulation and disinformation.

Parliamentarians emphasized the need for environmental protection, climate action, green and disaster-resistant connectivity, and strengthening supply chains. Moreover, a strong emphasis was placed on the crucial role of open markets and rules-based multilateral co-operation, economic and technological resilience and diversification, AI competitiveness, and more balanced dependencies.





General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions

The General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights, and Humanitarian Questions convened on 19 February under the chairpersonship of Sargis Khandanyan (Armenia). The meeting featured presentations by Rapporteur Carina Ödebrink (Sweden), ODIHR Director Maria Telalian, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Jan Braathu, and Chairperson of the Human Dimension Committee of the OSCE Permanent Council Eglantina Gjermeni. The committee held a special debate on “Safeguarding Election Integrity Amid Hybrid Threats and Foreign Malign Influence,” introduced by Michael McGrath, European Commissioner for Democracy, Justice, the Rule of Law and Consumer Protection.



SARGIS KHANDANYAN

CHAIR OF THE THIRD COMMITTEE

General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions

Sargis Khandanyan, Chair of the OSCE PA's Third Committee

Sargis Khandanyan reaffirmed the importance of the Helsinki Final Act and the need to recommit to the founding principles of the OSCE, highlighting the severe damage inflicted on these principles by Russia's war against Ukraine. The Chair proceeded by stressing shrinking civic space and weakening confidence in multilateral co-operation across the OSCE region, underscoring how democratic decline weakens the pillars of democratic societies.

Expressing his gratitude for the close co-operation with OSCE/ODIHR and the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, the Chair provided a comprehensive overview of last year's joint activities, including the PA's participation in the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference, and the leadership provided to a number of election observation missions.

Khandanyan concluded his remarks by reiterating that advancing the human rights of the people represented in the OSCE region is a non-negotiable condition of the OSCE PA's work.

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

Presenting her ideas for the report to be prepared for the 33rd Annual Session in The Hague, Rapporteur Ödebrink stressed that current challenges related to the state of democracy and human rights are global. Rapporteur Ödebrink referred to various issues currently affecting the OSCE region, describing the forced deportation of Ukrainian children by the Russian Federation as one of the gravest threats to regional security, calling for their immediate return.

Additionally, Ödebrink raised the importance of inter-institutional co-operation, emphasizing the



need for the OSCE PA to bolster support to the work of ODIHR. Concerning the developments in Georgia, she voiced her concerns over the increasing number of political prisoners in the country and expressed her support for the invocation of the Moscow Mechanism to deploy a fact-finding mission to investigate human rights abuses in the country.

Maria Telalian, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)

Director Telalian highlighted the co-operation between the OSCE PA and ODIHR on election observation and other human dimension activities.

She also addressed the challenges posed by foreign interference in elections, which are increasingly emerging as a persistent feature of the electoral landscape. In particular, she explained how disinformation, hate speech, and the misuse of artificial intelligence are increasingly being employed to manipulate public debate and distort election processes. Countering these threats, she said, requires effective responses that fully respect fundamental rights, which will also prevent malicious efforts to undermine trust in election management bodies.

In light of the complex global landscape concerning fundamental rights, Director Telalian concluded her statement by underscoring the need to continue the close co-operation between ODIHR and OSCE PA.

Jan Braathu, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

Ambassador Braathu stressed the need to address the normalization of hostile and hateful rhetoric against the media and journalists by politicians. Recalling Ministerial Council Decision No. 3/18 on the safety of journalists, he made particular reference to the Decision's calls to ensure accountability when violations occur, and expressed concern over instances where acts of journalism are framed as "acts of sabotage" or when certain journalists are labeled as "enemies of the state." Elaborating on this, Ambassador Braathu explained how such political rhetoric undermines the public's right to information by weakening public access to reliable information.

Highlighting the increasing prominence of online journalism, he further informed the members how gender-based abuse and harassment have become a tool of intimidation against women journalists. As he stressed the need for clear political commitment to also prevent the misuse and abuse of laws against the media, Ambassador Braathu cited the role played by big tech platforms in fueling sensationalism, spreading misinformation and deepening polarization.

With this in mind, he informed the Assembly of the Representative on Freedom of the Media's growing partnership with the OSCE PA Special Representative on Artificial Intelligence, Federica Onori (Italy), to develop policy solutions to address these issues.

General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions

Eglantina Gjermeni, Chair of the Human Dimension Committee of the OSCE Permanent Council

Focusing her remarks on the deteriorating human rights situation across the OSCE region, Ambassador Gjermeni stressed that disengagement from human rights issues is not an option. Noting how Albania, as Chair of the Human Dimension Committee, takes stock of these developments, she outlined the orientation of the Chairpersonship's priorities for 2026, in co-operation and alignment with the objectives of the Swiss OSCE Chairpersonship.

Notably, these build and focus on gender equality with a particular focus on political representation, the rule of law, elections in the digital age, tolerance and non-discrimination, the freedom of expression, rights of minorities, and combating violence against women. Concurring with Chair Ödebrink, Ambassador Gjermeni concluded her remarks by sharing her concerns over the absence of a Special Representative on Gender Equality of the Swiss OSCE Chairpersonship.

Special Debate: Safeguarding Election Integrity Amid Hybrid Threats and Foreign Malign Influence

Michael McGrath, European Commissioner for Democracy, Justice, the Rule of Law and Consumer Protection, opened the debate with a keynote address, placing his initial emphasis on democracy being a process, and that it cannot be rushed. He proceeded to tie this suggestion

to the defense of democracy in Ukraine, while noting the importance of safeguarding electoral processes from foreign and online interference. With the rising prominence of AI and emerging technologies in election processes, Commissioner McGrath particularly stressed the capabilities of generative AI in distorting realities.

He further emphasized the role of new technologies, considering increasing patterns of co-ordinated campaigns against elections, stating how the presidential elections in Moldova and Romania were subject to both covert and overt threats. In acknowledgement of these threats, he said, the European Union has adopted the European Democracy Shield Package, expected to be rolled out during 2026 and 2027.

In the debate that followed, members reaffirmed the importance of safeguarding election integrity, and expressed concern over hybrid threats and the deterioration of human rights in certain participating States. Members widely deplored disinformation campaigns orchestrated by foreign influence, with some providing insights on national legislation acting as countermeasures.

Additionally, members emphasized the role of the election observation missions deployed by the Parliamentary Assembly as a critical tool of upholding electoral integrity.

The debate further addressed the situation of the rule of law across the OSCE region, threats and opportunities posed by AI, while also calling for the return of forcibly deported Ukrainian children by the Russian Federation.



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CHIEF OF THE THIRD COMMITTEE
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SWEDEN

MARIA TELALIAN
DIRECTOR
OSCE ODHR



KOÇI

SOR

SECRETARIAT

CARINA ÖDEBRINK

RAPPORTEUR OF THE THIRD COMMITTEE

SWEDEN



Closing Joint Session of the General Committees

At the closing joint session, parliamentarians heard addresses by Speaker of the Parliament of Denmark Søren Gade and President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Petra Bayr. Chaired by OSCE PA President Pere Joan Pons, a general debate was held under the topic "Human Rights as a Basis for Security," featuring interventions by 58 parliamentarians. Belarusian opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya addressed the Assembly and urged parliamentarians to keep the pressure up to secure a free and democratic Belarus. Members called for a just and lasting peace in Ukraine and expressed support for renewed commitment to achieving peace in the Middle East, urging a consistent approach to human rights that avoids double standards.

Joint Session of the General Committees

Pere Joan Pons, OSCE PA President

President Pere Joan Pons opened the joint session by welcoming the Speaker of the Danish Parliament, Søren Gade, and the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Petra Bayr. Introducing the theme of the debate, "Human Rights as a Basis for Security," President Pons underlined that the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security places human rights at its core.

Referring to the approaching fourth anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, he emphasized the continued unity of the Assembly in support of Ukraine and reiterated that respect for the Helsinki Final Act remains the foundation

Søren Gade, Speaker of the Danish Parliament

Speaker Søren Gade recalled that Denmark was among the founding states of the Helsinki process fifty years ago. He noted that the Helsinki Final Act was not conceived as a temporary political compromise, but as a "compass of principles" based on sovereignty, territorial integrity, equal security for large and small states, and respect for fundamental freedoms. He warned that these principles are today under severe pressure. Condemning Russia's war against Ukraine as a "brutal and unjust war," he described it as a direct violation of the very foundations upon which the OSCE was built. He stressed that security cannot be achieved through coercion or power politics, but



Our unity has been essential over these four years.

- President Pere Joan Pons

of European security. President Pons stressed that in times of war, democratic backsliding, and geopolitical fragmentation, parliamentarians must defend the OSCE's principles with clarity and resolve.

Highlighting the Assembly's steadfast solidarity with Ukraine and its people since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion, he stressed the need for continued resolve. "Our unity has been essential over these four years," he said.

through dialogue, co-operation, and adherence to shared commitments.

Speaker Gade also underscored the principle of territorial integrity as non-negotiable, thanking Members for their support for the Kingdom of Denmark, including Greenland. While acknowledging shifting geopolitical realities, he affirmed that the obligation of parliamentarians remains unchanged: to guide the international order through dialogue, respect, and co-operation.



Petra Bayr, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

PACE President Petra Bayr emphasized that human rights and democracy are not separate from security, they are its foundation. Drawing parallels between the OSCE's human dimension and the Council of Europe's three pillars of democratic security – human rights, democracy, and rule of law – she warned that Europe faces unprecedented security challenges.

She described Russia's aggression against Ukraine as a direct attack on democratic secu-

urity and pointed to hybrid warfare, disinformation, cyber-attacks, and electoral interference as growing threats to democratic institutions. Stressing that "security without human rights is temporary; human rights without security is impossible," she argued that lasting peace is secured not by spheres of influence or weapons alone, but by courts, conventions, and accountability.

President Bayr called for strengthened co-operation between the OSCE PA and PACE, particularly in election observation, democratic resilience, and countering democratic backsliding. "about Europe without Europe."

Joint Session of the General Committees



Debate on “Human Rights as a Basis for Security”

General Debate: “Human Rights as a Basis for Security”

During the debate, Members expressed support for Ukraine and emphasized the need for sustained assistance, underscoring that peace must be achieved in full respect of sovereignty and territorial integrity. Several parliamentarians stressed that strengthening Europe’s defence capabilities and strategic resilience is essential in an increasingly unstable geopolitical environment.

Members also warned against the selective application of international law, arguing that the credibility of European security depends on consistent adherence to international humanitarian law in all contexts.

The importance of closer co-operation between the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe was highlighted, with human trafficking identified as a key area for joint action.

Remarks were also offered on the implications of artificial intelligence for democratic security. It was stressed that AI is a present reality shaping political processes, information ecosystems, and public debate, noting that without robust regulation grounded in human rights standards, AI technologies risk being misused for mass surveillance, disinformation, and the manipulation of democratic institutions.

Stronger parliamentary oversight of AI was called for, with international co-ordination and the development of common ethical frameworks to ensure that technological innovation

strengthens democratic resilience and fundamental freedoms across the OSCE region highlighted as essential.

Several interventions stressed that human rights violations within participating States – including attacks on media freedom, discrimination against minorities, and erosion of judicial independence – directly weaken societal resilience and democratic security. The importance of gender equality as an inseparable element of security was also highlighted.

Developments in the Middle East were also raised during the debate, with several Members highlighting the security implications of regional instability and the close link between security and human rights. Calls were made for strict adherence to international law in Gaza.

Members stressed that the OSCE PA must remain focused on defending the Helsinki principles, strengthening democratic institutions, countering authoritarian influence, and ensuring accountability for violations of international law.

Another issue that was raised was the emerging phenomenon of “forced scamming,” in which trafficked persons are coerced into conducting online fraud schemes, creating new and complex patterns of exploitation within the OSCE region.

Parliamentarians were also called upon to intensify pressure on Minsk and to prepare for a democratic transition in Belarus. It was stressed that the outcome of the war in Ukraine will shape the future of Belarus and the wider region.

Standing Committee Meeting

The Standing Committee, consisting of the heads of national delegations and members of the Bureau, met on 20 February 2026 to hear reports and discuss ongoing Assembly work and its finances.

Report of OSCE PA President Pere Joan Pons

Presenting his report, President Pons emphasized that both the European security architecture and the credibility of democracy are currently being challenged. He expressed his view that the PA's platform is essential for discussing important issues and praised the engagement between delegations at the Winter Meeting, underscoring that principled dialogue is a strength. He underlined that "true security cannot be built through isolation alone, but demands engagement, persistence and political courage," reiterating the importance of defending democracy, sovereignty, human rights and the rules-based order, as well as the need for dialogue.

Reports on recent Election Observation Missions

Claude Haagen (Luxembourg) presented the report of the OSCE PA's election observation mission to the 30 November 2025 early parliamentary elections in Kyrgyzstan. While noting that the elections were administered efficiently, he highlighted concerns regarding a restrictive campaign environment, limitations on fundamental freedoms, reduced political party participation, media self-censorship, and transparency, particularly related to new voting technologies, campaign finance, and dispute resolution. He concluded by reaffirming the readiness of the OSCE PA to support the Kyrgyz authorities in implementing recommendations from ODIHR.

Report of OSCE PA Treasurer Johan Büser

Treasurer Johan Büser (Sweden) presented the financial report for the preceding year, highlighting the challenging financial situation facing the OSCE PA, largely due to the non-payment of contributions by the Russian Federation over the past four years. He noted that as a result the Assembly's expenditures have exceeded its income and called for a reduction of expenditures. To this end, he requested efforts to align expenses with projected annual income, while safeguarding the Assembly's core activities, including election observation missions and statutory meetings.

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

Pascal Allizard (France), on behalf of the Sub-Committee on the Rules of Procedure, proposed two amendments to the rules to the Standing Committee. The first proposal, to adjust the timing of signature-collection deadlines in advance of the Annual Session, was approved by the Standing Committee. The second proposal, to remove the restriction on the Standing Committee to place a maximum of 15 supplementary items on the agenda of the Annual Session, was not approved.

Reports by Ad Hoc Committees

Kamil Aydın (Türkiye), Chair of the Ad Hoc Com-

mittee on Countering Terrorism, presented his report highlighting evolving challenges, including youth radicalization, online extremism, and the misuse of emerging technologies. He noted that these issues informed the adoption of the 2025 resolution on preventing youth radicalization and the launch of a “School Dialogue” initiative.

Farah Karimi (Netherlands), Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration, outlined three priorities for 2026: implementation of the European Pact on Migration and Asylum, strengthening local-level migration management to support integration, and linking migration with development, drawing on OSCE states’ experience in labour mobility, particularly in Central Asia.

Sharon Hodgson (United Kingdom), Chair of the Parliamentary Support Team for Ukraine, reported on the PSTU’s continued role as the Assembly’s main co-ordination mechanism on Ukraine, including co-operation with the Verkhovna Rada, engagement on humanitarian protection, accountability, and reconstruction, and sustained high-level engagement throughout 2025 and into 2026.

Report of OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella

Secretary General Roberto Montella discussed the future of multilateralism, noting that the Winter Meeting left him optimistic through the high level of engagement by Assembly members. He further highlighted the active posture of the United States at the Winter Meeting as reflecting its commitment to multilateral engagement. He praised the President’s efforts to increase inclusivity within the Assembly, in

regard to both gender and nationality. While acknowledging its financial difficulties, Montella expressed full confidence in the Assembly to weather the circumstances. He also voiced his gratitude towards the International Secretariat in facilitating the core functions of the Assembly, echoing the positive feedback he received from the parliamentarians.

Any other business and reports on preparations for future meetings

Federica Onori (Italy), presented her report as Special Representative on Artificial Intelligence, where she has been laying the foundations for structured parliamentary engagement on AI, including by increasing internal co-ordination within the Assembly, engagement with the executive structures of the OSCE, and exchanges with the Swiss chairpersonship. She is also engaging with other parliamentary structures as well as experts and academia.

Carina Ödebrink (Sweden), Special Envoy on Russian Abductions and Deportations of Ukrainian Children, emphasized the importance of maintaining the issue of abducted Ukrainian children high on the agenda, and urged colleagues to do everything possible to return the children to Ukraine.

The President informed the Standing Committee that a meeting of the Bureau would take place in Copenhagen on 26-27 April, followed by the next one on 3 December in Lugano. The 33rd Annual Session would be held 4-8 July in The Hague, and the Autumn Meeting would take place 7-9 October in Andorra.



Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism

The 23rd Meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism (CCT) of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly opened in Vienna, with Chair Kamil Aydin (Türkiye) welcoming participants and highlighting the Committee's continued engagement across the OSCE region. He noted participation in key events, including the 8th Meeting of the Co-ordination Mechanism, the OSCE Counterterrorism Focal Point Meeting, and the UN Parliamentary Training Session on AI and Counterterrorism.

Chair Aydin emphasized the ongoing implementation of the 2025 resolution on Preventing Youth Radicalization to Violent Extremism through Education and Media and Information Literacy, highlighting the first School Dialogue held in Pordenone, Italy, where students explored connections between cyber-bullying, online manipulation, and pathways to radicalization. Vice-Chair Emanuele Loperfido (Italy) reflected on the dialogue's success, noting students' awareness of online threats and their proactive engagement with schools and communities, underscoring the importance of digital literacy and responsible technology use in prevention efforts.

Guest speakers Nikolaus Grauszer, Head of International Strategic Prevention at Austria's Directorate for State Security and Intelligence, and Gerrit Zach, Programme Officer for the OSCE Action against Terrorism Unit, presented on trends in youth radicalization and violent extremism. Grauszer described the social and economic pressures influencing young people, the online-first nature of radicalization, and the varied ideological drivers. He highlighted Austria's holistic preventative framework, co-ordinated through

the Federal Network for Extremism Prevention and Deradicalization, and provided examples of thwarted attacks as evidence of its effectiveness.

Zach emphasized the OSCE's role in supporting multi-stakeholder prevention, the emerging use of AI, and the need for legal frameworks, human oversight, and engagement with governments, the private sector, civil society, and youth. She also highlighted gaps in AI deployment and risks posed by private-sector tools generating extremist content.

During the debate, members raised questions on online radicalization, encryption, the manipulation of patriotic narratives, legislative challenges, and the role of gaming and digital media in extremist recruitment. Grauszer and Zach responded, noting challenges in encryption, the importance of parental and community engagement, legislative obstacles, and the responsibility of developers to mitigate risks while acknowledging historical accuracy in content. Members emphasized the need for awareness campaigns, empathy-building, and rights-based education as part of a comprehensive prevention strategy.

Chair Aydin announced upcoming CCT activities, including a visit to Montenegro from 22-25 March, featuring a School Dialogue in Cetinje with students aged 14-18. Members were encouraged to replicate similar initiatives, supported by the International Secretariat, and introduced a proposal to expand the programme through a transferable curriculum and youth-driven policy recommendations. He suggested adding an item on online youth radicalization for presentation at the Annual Session in The Hague.

Ad Hoc Committee on Migration Meeting

The Ad Hoc Committee on Migration, chaired by Farah Karimi (Netherlands), convened on 20 February in Vienna. The session focused on the practical experiences of local authorities in managing migration and integration – one of the committee’s three current priority areas – using the City of Vienna as a detailed case study. Noting that the committee currently comprises 17 members from 15 countries, Chair Karimi welcomed two new members and stressed the need for greater geographical diversity, noting a forthcoming member from Uzbekistan.

Three speakers presented Austria’s and Vienna’s integrated approach, underscoring the value of local-level insights for effective migration governance and the importance of co-ordinated national-local-EU efforts.

Barbara Stewart, representing the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF), outlined Austria’s migration history, noting waves from the 1960s labour recruitment, 1990s Balkan conflicts, EU enlargement, and post-2015 refugee inflows. Foreign nationals now make up about 20 per cent (1.89 million) of Austria’s population and 37 per cent (754,000) of Vienna’s. ÖIF, the federal implementation body, delivers compulsory German language courses (up to B1 for refugees), values-and-orientation courses (expanded to five days in 2026), and integration declarations. In 2025, ÖIF funded 56,000 course places and conducted 89,000 exams, with Vienna accounting for over half of many activities.

Martina Plohovits of the Vienna Social Fund (FSW) described the national basic-care system supporting approximately 50,000 people nation-

wide, including 22,000 in Vienna, half of whom are displaced Ukrainians. She explained that FSW co-ordinates housing, health insurance, counselling (13 centres), and specialized programmes. Key initiatives include the FINI transitional housing project with 110 family flats, 77 per cent of residents in training/employment and “College 25+”

Birgit Wachter-Wallner, representing the Municipal Department for Integration and Diversity, highlighted Vienna’s diversity (181 nationalities, population growth of 230,000 in a decade). The Department runs the StartWien orientation programme with more than 20+ languages, Conversation Clubs, and the Integration and Diversity Monitor. Vienna participates in 80 international networks, including EURO CITIES and ECCAR.

Members discussed language acquisition challenges, urban-rural distribution – with speakers noting that Vienna attracts most migrants due to jobs, benefits, and communities – and national-local co-operation. Presenters noted mixed-language classes, faster progress by Ukrainian learners, and upcoming adjustments to benefit levels. Concerns were raised about the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum’s practical impact on cities.

The Chair reported on the January 2026 Brussels visit on the EU Migration Pact. OSCE Special Representative Kari Johnstone addressed trafficking risks and digital tools while Dr. Hedy Fry (Canada) highlighted U.S. developments. An upcoming field visit to Uzbekistan and planned dialogue with the U.S. delegation were also highlighted as important.

Parliamentary Support Team for Ukraine



The meeting of the Parliamentary Support Team for Ukraine (PSTU), held on 20 February, focused on the ongoing security and human rights situation in Ukraine, as well as crimes committed against Ukrainian journalists and media organizations during the war.

The session opened with remarks by the former PSTU Chair, Sharon Hodgson (United Kingdom), followed by an update on current developments on the ground by Co-Chair Mykyta Poturaiev (Ukraine). Petra Bayr, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, emphasized the importance of the PSTU's work in holding Russia accountable for its committed crimes and highlighted once again the continued close co-operation between the two organizations in support and solidarity with the Ukrainian people.

A range of international and Ukrainian officials, human rights advocates, civil society actors, and media representatives contributed to the discussion, offering insights into their daily work and highlighting the significant challenges and risks they face, as well as violations committed in the context of the conflict.

Further updates were provided by Carina Ödebrink (Sweden), Special Envoy on Russian Abductions and Deportations of Ukrainian Children; Boris Dittrich (Netherlands), Special Rapporteur on the release of the three OSCE officials; and Mati Raidma (Estonia), Special Rapporteur.

They outlined their recent activities and ongoing efforts to fulfil their respective mandates. Ödebrink highlighted recent achievements, including the OSCE PA's accession to the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children in November last year and the high-level side event on the return of Ukrainian children during the 32nd Ministerial Council (4-5 December 2025) in Vienna. Dittrich presented his letter initiative in support of the three OSCE officials detained in Russia, while Raidma concluded with a brief outlook on the Special Rapporteurs' visit to Ukraine in the spring of 2026.

Overall, the meeting underscored the importance of accountability, the protection of media freedom, and sustained international engagement in addressing the severe consequences of the war in Ukraine.







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