

Helsinki Declaration adopted at historic Finlandia Hall



The opening plenary of the 24th Annual Session included a special Commemorative Event for the 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly concluded its 24th Annual Session last week with the adoption of the Helsinki Declaration, containing wide-ranging policy recommendations for the OSCE and its 57 participating States in the fields of political affairs and security, economics and environment, and human rights. Among the topics included in the Declaration are the crisis in and around Ukraine, the plight of migrants in the Mediterranean region, arms control, climate change, water management, terrorism, and threats to civil society.

The Session took place 5-9 July at historic Finlandia Hall on the eve of the 40th anniversary of the OSCE's founding document, the Helsinki Final Act. To mark this occasion, one of the resolutions offers concrete lines of action for reforming the OSCE and was agreed to unanimously at a special Helsinki +40 Commemorative Event on 6 July. During this event, Secretary General Spencer Oliver, President Ilkka Kanerva (Finland) and several think-tank experts presented the Final Report of the PA's Helsinki +40 Project.

On 8 July, nearly 50 parliamentarians took the floor to debate a supplementary item condemning the Russian Federation's actions in Ukraine. Members stressed the need to support Ukraine economically and politically, and called for halting the deployment of heavy weapons and fully implementing the Minsk agreements. A number of Members objected to the absence of the Russian Delegation from the debate and consequently abstained from the vote. The resolution was adopted by a vote of 96-7, with 32 abstentions.

The 8 July plenary session included OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues Hedy Fry (Canada)'s presentation of her report, "Gender and the Future Development of the OSCE," which explores gender balance in the OSCE on the eve of its 40th anniversary. Fry noted that participating States have only partially achieved the goals of gender equality and that more political will is needed.

On 9 July, election results were announced for several posts. President Kanerva was re-elected, Doris Barnett (Germany) was newly elected Treasurer, George Tsereteli (Georgia) and Robert Aderholt (United States) were re-elected Vice-

Presidents, and Peter Bowness (United Kingdom) and Roberto Battelli (Slovenia) were newly elected Vice-Presidents.

The leadership of the First, Second and Third Committees will be as follows for the coming year:

General Committee on Political Affairs and Security

- Chair Roger Wicker (United States)
- Vice-Chair Azay Guliyev (Azerbaijan)
- Rapporteur Margareta Cederfelt (Sweden)

General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment

- Chair Roza Aknazarova (Kyrgyzstan)
- Vice-Chair Nilza Sena (Portugal)
- Rapporteur Marietta Tidei (Italy)

General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions

- Chair Isabel Santos (Portugal)
- Vice-Chair Ivana Dobesova (Czech Republic)
- Rapporteur Gordana Comic (Serbia)

At the Assembly's Standing Committee meeting on 5 July, Roberto Montella of Italy was confirmed by a vote of 46-3 as the next Secretary General of the OSCE PA with a five-year term starting on 1 January 2016.

In his final address to an Annual Session as Secretary General of the OSCE PA, Spencer Oliver thanked the parliamentarians for their support for more than two decades. Oliver stressed that there is no group of people more dedicated to meeting the challenges of the OSCE area than parliamentarians directly elected by the citizens of their countries.

Other prominent speakers addressing the five-day meeting included Finnish President Sauli Niinisto, Finnish Foreign Minister Timo Soini, OSCE Chair-in-Office and Serbian Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic, OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier, and several speakers of parliaments.

Following the Session, Oliver and Kanerva participated in the OSCE's Informal High-Level Meeting on 10 July, at which Kanerva presented the PA's Helsinki +40 Final Report.