

President Muttonen urges a strong OSCE in Ministerial Council speech

OSCE PA President Christine Muttonen (MP, Austria) addressed the foreign ministers of OSCE participating States in Hamburg on 8 December, arguing that a strong OSCE is needed to help to improve the security situation across North America, Europe and Central Asia. She emphasized that the Parliamentary Assembly stands ready to do its part working for a more effective organization.

In her first speech to a Ministerial Council meeting, the President pointed out that common challenges related to migration, violent extremism, arms control, climate change, and human rights are coming at a time of “growing mistrust, rising populism and increasing political divides.” However, being paralyzed by politics is simply not an option in today’s environment, she said.

“It may at times seem that we are out of options. But we do have a choice: we can either ‘see no evil and hear no evil,’ or we can put our efforts and hopes in the power of multilateral co-operation and joint solutions. This choice means building bridges,” she said.

On behalf of the PA, she offered continued co-operation with the OSCE’s governmental side to improve the security situation in the OSCE area. “The Parliamentary Assembly stands ready to do its part in working for a more effective OSCE,” she said. “Our parliamentarians are a powerful tool of people-to-people diplomacy. All our work is guided by the key principle of enhancing dialogue.”

The President also highlighted the work of the OSCE field operations, noting that it is a matter of concern that some of these offices are facing pressure from their host countries, including the threat of closure.

Following her speech, President Muttonen held bilateral



Christine Muttonen addresses OSCE Ministerial Council in Hamburg, 8 Dec. 2016.

meetings with the foreign ministers of the Russian Federation, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus, and Ukraine.

From Hamburg, Muttonen travelled to Abu Dhabi, where she participated in the Inter-Parliamentary Union’s Global Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament this week. Speaking on Monday, the President discussed the role of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peace-building and peace-keeping.

“Women bring a gender perspective to the table and can educate others about the needs of women and girls to ensure that these needs are met,” she said. “Women, as well as men, are catalysts for progress and change – and their involvement, at any level, but particularly at the local level, often leads to the most sustainable solutions.”

Muttonen stressed the importance of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and noted that the OSCE promotes female participation throughout all stages of the conflict cycle. She also said that parliamentarians have an important role to play in improving legal frameworks to counter terrorism, as well as to promote education and poverty reduction, which are vital for long-term peace and security.

Elections an essential step to end political crisis, observers say in Skopje



Roberto Battelli and Azay Guliyev speak to the press, 11 Dec.

The competitive 11 December parliamentary elections in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia were an essential step in resolving the country’s political crisis, observers said in a statement presented by Special Co-ordinator and leader of the short-term OSCE observer mission Roberto Battelli (MP, Slovenia) in Skopje on Monday. Tangible efforts aimed at overhauling and improving the electoral machinery, under considerable time pressure, were observed, and election day was generally calm and orderly. The environment was,

however, characterized by public mistrust.

While fundamental freedoms were respected and the main political forces agreed to legal and institutional changes to provide for a level playing field, underlying issues such as those related to the media and voter registration have yet to be addressed, the statement says.

“The high turnout testifies that the voters understood the crucial role good elections play in the future of their country,” said Battelli, who serves as the PA’s Special Representative on South East Europe. Azay Guliyev, Head of the OSCE PA’s delegation, said that “all political forces need to work to ensure there is no backsliding into political crisis.”

Guliyev led a 24-member delegation from the OSCE PA, which worked closely with the OSCE/ODIHR, PACE, and the European Parliament. The OSCE PA mission was supported by Amb. Andreas Nothelle, Francesco Pagani, Iryna Sabashuk, and Maria Chepurina from the International Secretariat.