

News from Copenhagen

16th Winter Meeting features special debate on human rights in times of crisis



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Nilza Sena chairs the Second Committee meeting on 23 Feb. 2017.



Ignacio Sanchez Amor chairs the Third Committee meeting on 23 Feb. 2017.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's 16th Winter Meeting – consisting of meetings of the three general committees, two joint sessions, a Standing Committee meeting, and a number of side events – took place at the Hofburg Congress Centre in Vienna on 23-24 February 2017, and included the participation of some 250 OSCE parliamentarians. Opening the meeting, President of the National Council of Austria Doris Bures and OSCE PA President Christine Muttonen spoke about the work being conducted in Austria to advance OSCE commitments and values in addressing common challenges.

“Relationships need to be cultivated,” President Muttonen said. “Aggressive rhetoric and nationalistic politics will only narrow the view and make more difficult necessary and global solutions. We should try to build bridges whenever possible and always seek to cultivate co-operation.”

Also addressing the opening session was OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues Hedy Fry (Canada) who focused on the gender aspects of the refugee and migrant crisis, and specifically integration into host communities. “If we want to build secure societies we need to be sure that newcomers are integrated and feel secure,” she said, emphasizing in particular the special needs of women and children, as well as health care and language training.

The three general committees met over two days to hear from senior OSCE officials and debate issues related to political and security affairs, economics and the environment, and human rights and humanitarian questions. Each committee also heard presentations by committee rapporteurs regarding their ideas and intentions for the reports and draft resolutions to be prepared for the 26th Annual Session in Minsk in July.

Chaired by Roger Wicker (United States), the First Committee heard a presentation by Rapporteur Margareta Cederfelt (Sweden) who focused on issues including protracted conflicts, terrorism, cybersecurity and women in peacebuilding. The Second Committee was chaired by Nilza Sena (Portugal) and included a presentation by Rapporteur Marietta Tidei (Italy), touching on issues such as climate change, green growth and clean energy. Ignacio Sanchez Amor (Spain) chaired the Third Committee, which heard a report from Rapporteur Kyriakos Kyriakou-Hadjjiyianni (Cyprus), who focused on the need to protect human rights

during periods of heightened security concerns, including by strengthening the OSCE's human rights enforcement mechanisms.

The PA's Standing Committee of heads of national delegations met on 23 February to hear reports by President Muttonen, OSCE PA Treasurer Doris Barnett (Germany), and Secretary General Roberto Montella, as well as from OSCE PA Special Representatives, leaders of recent election observation missions and the chairs of ad hoc committees. The Standing Committee approved a set of amendments to the Assembly's Rules of Procedure, as proposed by the Sub-Committee on Rules of Procedure and Working Practices chaired by Lord Peter Bowness (United Kingdom). The agreed changes will come into force on 25 March.

The closing joint session on 24 February featured a special debate on protecting human rights in times of crisis. Following introductory remarks by Muttonen, Sanchez Amor and ODIHR Director Michael Georg Link, dozens of interventions by members of parliament from more than 20 OSCE participating States addressed issues related to counter-terrorism, radicalization, protracted conflicts in the OSCE region, and challenges to state authority, emphasizing the importance of upholding fundamental rights.

Parliamentarians also heard addresses by OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Austria Sebastian Kurz and OSCE Secretary General Amb. Lamberto Zannier.

“By engaging in parliamentary diplomacy and in their national capacity, members of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly strongly contribute to the Organization's objectives,” Zannier said. “As a central forum for dialogue between our 57 participating States, the OSCE PA provides a vital link towards a more secure future.”



Christine Muttonen and Sebastian Kurz