

Women's perspectives on security in focus at OSCE PA conference in Vienna

Improving the level of engagement of women in discussions on security was the focus of a day-long conference hosted by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly on 23 March at the Austrian Parliament in Vienna. The conference, "OSCE Security Policy – Female Perspectives," featured the participation of senior OSCE PA leaders, representatives of OSCE field operations, academicians and civil society representatives. Panel discussions explored issues such as the prospects for gender mainstreaming in OSCE field work.

The President of the Austrian National Council, Doris Bures, and OSCE PA President Christine Muttonen (MP, Austria) opened the event, with Speaker Bures noting that conflicts disproportionately impact women, who therefore have a crucial role to play in conflict resolution. Muttonen highlighted improvements in increasing the level of women's overall involvement in public life but pointed out that the discourse about security is still largely dominated by men.

"Despite the progress we have made, including in security policy, we are still a long way from a truly equal and equitable participation of men and women," she said, noting that she has made this a strong focus of her presidency of the PA.



Family photo with participants of OSCE PA conference "OSCE Security Policy – Female Perspectives," Vienna, 23 March 2017.

Austrian Minister of Defence Peter Doskozil delivered a keynote speech in which he argued that real security requires that men and women have equal economic opportunities. Valentina Matvienko, Chairperson of the Federation Council of Russia, also spoke at the event, stressing the need for more goodwill, equality, and respect for all countries and peoples of Europe. Ulrike Lunacek, Vice President of the European Parliament, discussed the role of women in developing a new pan-European security architecture.

Female leaders from OSCE field operations also participated in the conference. In a panel discussion, they debated the prospects for greater gender balance and other strengths and weaknesses of field operations in the OSCE region.

OSCE PA holds anti-terrorism conference with IPA CIS in St. Petersburg

OSCE PA President Christine Muttonen and several other members of the Assembly participated in the Parliamentary Conference on Combating International Terrorism on Tuesday in St. Petersburg, co-organized by the OSCE PA and the Interparliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States. In her opening remarks, President Muttonen emphasized the need for a proactive response to terrorism that recognizes the underlying issues fueling radicalization. Muttonen highlighted in particular poverty, political exclusion, human rights violations, discrimination and climate change as contributing factors.

Also participating in the conference was the OSCE PA's Special Representative on Anti-Terrorism, Nikolay Kovalev (MP, Russian Federation), who chaired session two on the

humanitarian aspects of counter-terrorism. Other PA members addressing the conference included Vice-President Victor Paul Dobre (MP, Romania), Vice-President Azay Guliyev (MP, Azerbaijan), human rights committee Vice-Chair Ivana Dobesova (MP, Czech Republic), Pekka Haavisto (MP, Finland), Marie-Francoise Bechtel (MP, France), Gelil Gocer (MP, Turkey), Aase Michaelsen (MP, Norway), and Maximilian Reimann (MP, Switzerland).

In a meeting on the margins of the conference with Valentina Matvienko, Chairperson of the IPA CIS Council, President Muttonen welcomed enhanced co-operation between the two assemblies in the fight against terrorism. On Monday, Muttonen also held bilateral meetings with speakers of parliament from a number of CIS countries.

OSCE PA's Sanchez Amor and Bekkevold lead election observers in Armenia

OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Sebastian Kurz has appointed Ignacio Sanchez Amor (MP, Spain) as Special Co-ordinator to lead an expected 250 short-term OSCE observers for the 2 April parliamentary elections in Armenia. Geir Jorgen Bekkevold (MP, Norway) will serve as Head of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly delegation, which will include some 55 members of parliament from 23 countries. Bekkevold is Head of the Norwegian Delegation to the OSCE PA.

Sanchez Amor is Chair of the OSCE PA's OSCE PA's human rights committee, and is Head of the Spanish Delegation to

the OSCE PA. He began a series of high-level discussions in Yerevan this week with meetings Wednesday at Armenia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and one scheduled Thursday at the Ministry of Justice. On Friday, he is meeting with Armenian President Serzh Sargsya.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has observed eight elections in Armenia since 1995, and for the 2 April elections, will be working closely with ODIHR, PACE, and the European Parliament. The findings of the observers will be delivered at a press conference in Yerevan on 3 April.