

News from Copenhagen

Cyber threats and digital security in focus at OSCE PA Lisbon Conference

At a conference in Lisbon Tuesday, participants said that governments, parliaments and international organizations should address the challenges associated with information and communications technology (ICT) by enhancing co-operation and implementing policies to bridge gaps in current legal frameworks. Ensuring that freedom of information and individual privacy are not infringed upon while countering cyber threats is equally important, they said.

The all-day event, organized by the Portuguese Parliament and co-hosted by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, was entitled “Digital Resilience of a Democratic State.” Featuring the participation of an array of experts, policy-makers and journalists from Portugal, the OSCE and other international organizations, the conference covered topics such as vulnerabilities to electoral systems, technological challenges of cyberspace, sovereignty and digital security, and the threat of cyber-terrorism.

OSCE PA President George Tsereteli (Georgia) spoke at the opening session, noting that in our increasingly digital world, “we see new challenges emerging and old challenges evolving.” OSCE PA Vice-President Isabel Santos (Portugal) stressed the importance and timeliness of the discussions held in Lisbon. “Cybersecurity is, along with climate change, one of the most challenging issues in the debate on our collective future,” she said.

Several other OSCE PA officers participated in the conference, including human rights committee Chair Ignacio Sanchez Amor (Spain), economic and environmental committee Chair Nilza de Sena (Portugal), and political affairs and security committee Rapporteur Kristian Vigenin (Bulgaria). Panelists discussed the implications of cyber threats and “fake news” on freedom of information, noting the difficulties of addressing questions of sovereignty in a digital world, and stressed that greater political will is needed to meet the challenges of cybersecurity.

Chair of the OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism Makis Voridis (Greece) spoke at the session on



OSCE PA members and staff at the Lisbon Conference on 8 May.

cyber-terrorism, stressing that to address the issue effectively, greater involvement is needed from counterparts in the ICT sector.

Participants from North America, Europe and Central Asia agreed that addressing evolving cybersecurity risks requires a multifaceted approach incorporating the views of various stakeholders. Attention should be paid, they said, to revising existing legal frameworks and harmonizing relevant legislation, in line with international law, to make co-operation more effective and efficient. The OSCE PA’s upcoming Annual Session in Berlin was also highlighted as an opportunity to continue these discussions and adopt strong recommendations in the field of cybersecurity.

Former PA President Joao Soares and Deputy Head of Portugal’s PA Delegation Miguel Santos spoke at the closing session. Other speakers at the conference included Jorge Lacao, Vice-President of the Assembly of the Republic; Marcos Perestrollo, Secretary of State for National Defense of Portugal; Rasa Ostrauskaite, Co-ordinator of Activities to Address Transnational Threats of the OSCE; Bill Sweeney, President and CEO of the International Foundation for Electoral Systems; and Pedro Verdelho, Head of the Cybercrime Office of the Portuguese Attorney General’s Office.

Some two dozen OSCE PA members from 18 countries attended the conference. From the International Secretariat, Roberto Montella, Gustavo Pallares, Andreas Nothelle, Marco Bonabello, Stephen Paul were in attendance.

Preparations for 27th Annual Session proceed in Copenhagen and Berlin



The OSCE PA’s 27th Annual Session will be held in Berlin on 7-11 July 2018 under the theme “Implementing OSCE Commitments: The Role of Parliaments.” Committee reports, draft resolutions and other documents are being posted at www.oscepa.org as

they become available. The Secretariat reminds delegations

of the following deadlines:

- Supplementary Items: **2 June**
- Amendments to the three General Committee Draft Resolutions: **23 June**
- Amendments to Supplementary Items: **30 June**

This is the second time for Germany hosting an Annual Session, having done so in 2002 as well, making it one of only two countries to host the event twice. The meeting is expected to include the participation of some 300 parliamentarians from North America, Europe and Asia. All meetings will be held at the Reichstag Building (seat of the German Bundestag).