

Current and former PA leaders issue call to save OSCE human dimension

Former PA Presidents and leaders of the Third Committee called on Wednesday for urgent action to ensure that the OSCE can continue to function in light of an institutional crisis in the organization. Echoing a call by former Directors of ODIHR (<https://bit.ly/3eRFDiM>), the PA leaders regretted that the mandates of several high-level OSCE officials expired on 18 July due to a failure to reach agreement among governmental representatives in Vienna and stressed, in particular, the need to stop inhibiting the OSCE's work in the human dimension.

"We call your attention to today's call by former Directors of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to heed the message on human rights rather than shooting the messenger – a message that we fully endorse," the Parliamentary Assembly leaders said in a joint statement. "By letting the leadership of the OSCE's executive structures lapse, the governments of OSCE participating States have weakened the organization and thereby weakened our people's security."

The PA leaders stressed that the work by ODIHR and other OSCE institutions to improve the rule of law, democratic governance and overall security have helped countless people across the OSCE region for many years. "This happens through quiet actions such as support to parliaments as well as through the



occasional critical word," they said. "It is a sad state of affairs that their willingness to at times criticize the actions of some governments is now being used by governments to block continued work by the organization."

The PA leaders noted that every day that the OSCE institutions go without leadership is a day of further weakening of the human security of people across the OSCE. "As current and former leaders of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, we pledge to support any decisive efforts to move beyond this crisis facing the organization," they said.

For the list of signatories, click here: <https://bit.ly/200IKXU>

OSCE PA's COVID report issued in Russian

The OSCE PA's report, "OSCE PA vs. COVID-19: Reflections, policy contributions and recommendations presented by OSCE PA President George Tsereteli," is now available in Russian. The report, a product of eight Parliamentary Web Dialogues since March dealing with subjects relating to the pandemic's effects on various aspects of security and human rights, was first published on 13 July. It is available to download in English and Russian here: <https://bit.ly/3huLLPJ>

Special Representative Smith addresses ODIHR/UN event on human trafficking

OSCE PA Special Representative on Human Trafficking Issues Chris Smith (United States) was the keynote speaker Tuesday at an OSCE/ODIHR and UN Women side event at the 20th OSCE Alliance Against Trafficking in Persons Conference. Introduced by US Ambassador to the OSCE James Gilmore, Smith focused his remarks on COVID-19's impact on fighting human trafficking. Trafficking victims must receive necessary support and perpetrators must be fully prosecuted, he emphasized. The pandemic has increased the vulnerability of children, he said, including through online grooming.

Smith also highlighted the resolution adopted at the Luxembourg Annual Session last year focused on educating schoolchildren to avoid human trafficking. The resolution offers recommendations to ensure that young people are better informed to avoid trafficking traps, Smith emphasized.

Bringing together representatives of OSCE participating States, the UN's Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination



Chris Smith addresses human trafficking event, 21 July 2020

against Women, the Council of Europe, ODIHR, and UN Women, the event focused on how the findings of a recently published global survey of survivors of trafficking and frontline stakeholders can help develop effective policies in this domain.

Video of Special Representative Smith's intervention is available on YouTube: <https://bit.ly/3hsu10G>

PA's Nothelle participates in OSCE retreat

On 13-14 July, OSCE PA Special Representative Ambassador Andreas Nothelle participated in the first retreat of Permanent Representatives to the OSCE since the beginning of the pandemic. The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss the Albanian Chairmanship's roadmap for the OSCE Ministerial Council in December. Nearly all OSCE ambassadors participated in the retreat, which also offered an opportunity to informally discuss other urgent matters, such as the failure to reach agreement over the most senior positions in the OSCE, in order to "put the OSCE back on a path to recovery." The retreat took place in Styria, Austria.

Featured tweets @oscepa

PA Member and former President Alcee Hastings (United States) tweeted this week in favor of the US remaining a party to the Open Skies Treaty: <https://bit.ly/3eNLPsd>



Alcee L. Hastings
@RepHastingsFL

As Chairman of @HelsinkiComm, I strongly disagree with the President's decision to withdraw from the #OpenSkiesTreaty, an important arms control agreement that significantly reduces the risk of armed conflict.