

Revitalizing OSCE dialogue in focus at PA's Call for Action - Helsinki +50 meeting

Last week's meeting of the OSCE PA's "Call for Action – Helsinki +50 Process" initiative focused on revitalizing dialogue in the OSCE, featuring keynote addresses by experts from the OSCE's governmental side, the PA, and civil society. Several former OSCE PA presidents actively participated in the 5 May event, as well as a number of other high-level OSCE officials, past and present. Following remarks by OSCE PA President Peter Lord Bowness, who provided an overview of the Helsinki +50 initiative, the discussion was opened by OSCE PA High-Level Expert Lamberto Zannier and also included remarks by OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella.

Head of the Polish Delegation to the OSCE PA Barbara Bartus spoke about the threats to security, violations of international law and infringement of human rights that have put the OSCE to the test. Reinhard Krumm, Head of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Regional Office for Cooperation and Peace in Europe, said that to increase political attention to the organization, it is essential for parliamentarians to engage in the process. Kent Härstedt, Special Envoy of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and former Vice-President of the OSCE PA, spoke about the importance of remembering that dialogue has been valuable due to the commitments that governments have agreed to. Charlotte Bleisch,



Senior Expert at the Office of the OSCE Secretary General, noted that there is a special responsibility as the 50th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act approaches to ensure the organization is fully equipped to meet challenges.

In the discussion, participants stressed the need for parliamentarians to place a spotlight on the organization in their capitals, in order to improve the level of awareness and accountability. Although providing a platform for international dialogue is the core function of the OSCE, they said, meaningful dialogue is only possible when political will exists to engage in good faith. When existing international commitments are disregarded, it was emphasized, the result is not only damaged dialogue but also compromised security.

Hoxha speaks about sustainable development and climate change at OSCE EEC meeting

Addressing the OSCE Economic and Environmental Committee meeting today, OSCE PA Second Committee Rapporteur Elona Gjebrea Hoxha spoke about evolving threats to the environment and sustainable economic development. Dedicated to the topic of "Environment, sustainable economic development and security," the meeting's focus is on promoting economic and environmental co-operation that is mutually beneficial and contributes to good neighbourly relations, confidence-building and trust in the OSCE area.

In her address, Hoxha stressed the importance of addressing the planet's growing development needs while also protecting the environment. "Through several initiatives at the PA aimed at addressing environmental security in a more comprehensive and interdisciplinary way," she said, "it became apparent that better understanding the environment and its nexus with our daily security is the main priority for all."

She focused in particular on the challenge of climate change, which she pointed out is now widely recognized as a global crisis, with people all over the world being affected directly, as individuals and as a community. "Extreme weather, land degradation, constantly growing levels of greenhouse emissions, drastic losses in biodiversity, rise of sea levels, conflicts for access to clean water, and other increasingly scarce resources are only some of many security challenges stemming from the radical degradation of our environment," she said.

Hoxha focused on the need for coherent and stringent environmental mitigation and adaptation strategies, including by implementing relevant international accords such as the COP21 Paris Agreement, furthering co-operation with the OSCE and developing new partnerships, and promoting the exchange of best practices and raising awareness among parliamentarians on the need for a transition towards an environmentally friendly society.

PA SG co-ordinates activities with SGs of NATO PA and PACE, Director of ODIHR

OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella met online with counterparts at the NATO PA and PACE last week for discussions on practical aspects of holding virtual meetings ahead of the Assembly's Remote Annual Session this summer. The discussion with NATO PA Secretary General Ruxandra Popa and PACE Secretary General Despina Chatzivassiliou-Tsovilis focused in particular on procedures for online voting,

as both NATO PA and PACE have had experience with this in recent months. The OSCE PA will be holding its first-ever online Annual Session the first week of July, with the Standing Committee meeting on 5 July and the Assembly meeting in plenary session on 6 July. SG Montella on Monday met with OSCE/ODIHR Director Matteo Mecacci for a co-ordination meeting focused primarily on election observation.

Senior Advisor Bonabello shares PA's work on air pollution at NGO event

OSCE PA Senior Advisor Marco Bonabello spoke today at a workshop entitled "Air Pollution and Health: The need for a medical reading of environmental data," organized by the Italian Society of Environmental Medicine (SIMA). Noting that air pollution is the largest environmental cause of multiple diseases and premature deaths, and that it also affects the climate, Bonabello underlined that the OSCE PA's Second Committee has taken this issue on as a priority, with a particular focus recently on air pollution's impact on COVID-19 transmission and fatality rates.

He praised SIMA's pioneering work on the issue, and noted that its scientific findings have helped inform OSCE PA discussions. Within the PA, Bonabello said, there is a strong belief in the need for well-informed, coherent, and stringent environmental mitigation and adaptation strategies, which is why the contribution of science to informed policymaking in the field of the environmental security is essential.

In this regard, the PA aims to provide a forum for interdisciplinary knowledge-sharing, Bonabello said.