

OSCE parliamentarians consider ways to ensure health care as a human right

Policy makers and experts discussed challenges related to ensuring universal health care at a webinar held under the auspices of the Bureau of the Third Committee on 4 June. Opening the meeting, Third Committee Chair Kyriakos Hadjiyianni (Cyprus) urged parliamentarians to utilize available tools to expand access to quality care.

Kyle Knight of Human Rights Watch pointed out that the COVID-19 pandemic has been a reminder of how critical upholding the right to health care is. For people living in poverty and those who experience discrimination, Knight said, the suffering seen during the pandemic is not new, it is just exacerbated.

Gabriela Cuevas Barron, Co-Chair of the UHC2030 international health partnership, presented her organization's work in building national and international commitments to strengthen health systems through multi-stakeholder approaches. Francesca Colombo, Head of OECD's Health Division, said that an acceleration of the work to achieve universal health coverage is needed in all countries. There must be greater investment to build capacity to ensure health services for all, including in times of crisis, she said. OSCE PA Vice-President and Third Committee Rapporteur Kari Henriksen (Norway) stressed the need to ensure



PA staff facilitates the webinar at the Copenhagen office on 4 June.

that parliamentarians take necessary action on this issue, noting the importance of protection and prevention. OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella highlighted the central role of parliamentarians in meeting these challenges and expressed his view that international co-operation is essential to find solutions to common challenges.

In the discussion, points were raised about trust in institutions being important to ensure access to health care, particularly for vulnerable groups like migrants and refugees. This is particularly true, it was stressed, because people on the move are in more need than others to have good access to health care. Gender aspects of health care access were also emphasized as important.

OSCE PA Migration Committee meeting focuses on challenges facing Greece

Members of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Ad Hoc Committee on Migration met online Monday with Sofia Voultepsi, Deputy Minister of Migration and Asylum in Charge of Integration, to hear about Greece's COVID-19 mitigation measures and the roll-out of vaccination programmes for the asylum-seeking population of the Aegean Islands.

Chaired by OSCE PA Vice-President Margareta Cederfelt

(Sweden), the meeting also included participation by Dimitrios Markopoulos (Greece), Member of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration, who shared additional information about vaccination efforts, including the extensive education programme to convince refugees to take part in the programme. Cederfelt emphasized that it is not an easy task for Greece and urged shared responsibility among the European Union member states.

Second Committee Rapporteur speaks about regional development in Greece

OSCE PA Second Committee Rapporteur Elona Gjëbrea Hoxha spoke about the OSCE's work in the economic and environmental dimension at the Regional Growth Conference in Patras, Greece, which took place 3-5 June. Speaking at the session on "Regional Governance and Regional Growth," Hoxha focused her remarks on the inequalities that affect the wealth and well-being of society, highlighting the Assembly's work on these issues and stressing that multilateral co-operation is essential to create a broad approach to regional development.



Elona Gjëbrea Hoxha (second from left) participates in Regional Growth Conference in Patras, Greece, on 3 June.

Vice-President and Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs Allizard visits Vienna



Miodrag Pančeski, Andreas Nothelle, Pascal Allizard, Lamberto Zannier

On 3 June, OSCE PA Vice-President and Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs, Pascal Allizard (France) held meetings in Vienna with representatives of the OSCE executive structures and the OSCE PA Vienna Office, including OSCE Secretary General Helga Schmid, the French Perma-

nent Representative, Amb. Christine Fages, and Amb. Marcin Czapliński of Poland, which is currently chairing the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership of Co-operation Group. The delegation, which included Fabrice Hugot from the French Parliament and Fabien Patry from the French mission in Vienna, was accompanied by OSCE PA Special Representative Andreas Nothelle.

Allizard also received a thorough briefing by Ambassadors Zannier and Pančeski on the state of affairs in the Organization, on the Assembly's Helsinki +50 initiative including on upcoming activities as well as on recent and upcoming election observation missions. The VP stressed the importance of regular communication and information sharing with national parliaments on challenges affecting the international security agenda.

In memoriam: Inese Ikstena

The OSCE PA International Secretariat was deeply saddened to hear of the recent passing of Head of the Latvian Delegation to the OSCE PA, Inese Ikstena. In a letter to the Speaker of the Saeima this week, the Secretariat expressed condolences to Members of the Saeima, her family and close ones.