

Bureau discusses OSCE PA business and international affairs

Chaired by President Margareta Cederfelt (Sweden), the OSCE PA's Bureau met on Monday to discuss upcoming election observation missions and the 2022 Winter Meeting. Also on the agenda was a discussion of current international political issues, including the crisis in and around Ukraine and recent unrest in Kazakhstan.

The PA's Special Representative in Vienna, Amb. Miodrag Pančeski, provided an update on recent developments at OSCE headquarters, Deputy Secretary General Gustavo Pallares described plans for the Winter Meeting, Head of Elections Andreas Baker explained plans for upcoming election observation missions to Hungary and Serbia, and President Cederfelt briefed the Bureau on her presentation at the Permanent Council last week as well as her bilateral meetings with ambassadors and OSCE institutions in Vienna.

As Pallares explained to the Bureau, based on the current situation in Austria, the Assembly's Winter Meeting in February will be held in a hybrid format. The in-person presence in Vienna will be restricted to Standing Committee members, Special Representatives and Chairs of Ad Hoc Committees. All other Assembly Members, as well as partner and observer delegations, may participate online.

Bureau members heard from OSCE PA Vice-President Askar Shakirov (Kazakhstan) who briefed colleagues on the events that unfolded in his country earlier this month. While a full investigation is still being carried out, Shakirov described what is known now about the situation, which



Margareta Cederfelt and Gustavo Pallares in Copenhagen, 24 January 2022

he said started with peaceful protests against high gas prices and quickly escalated into violence. Shakirov invited the President and interested PA Members to visit Kazakhstan in person, and proposed that a more comprehensive briefing is held for the OSCE PA in the near future.

Vice-Chair of the OSCE PA's Second Committee Artur Gerasymov (Ukraine) spoke to fellow Bureau members about the threat facing his country from Russian troops amassed near the border. Stressing how serious the situation is, Gerasymov underlined that the future of European security is at stake and called on all OSCE parliamentarians to stand up for the principles of Helsinki Final Act.

Bureau members expressed support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and urged strength and resolve in dealing with the crisis. It was stressed that the Parliamentary Assembly has never had a more important role to play than right now, with Members arguing that dialogue is the only way forward. On Kazakhstan, it was stressed that OSCE parliamentarians stand ready to assist and would welcome the opportunity to visit.

Cederfelt addresses Permanent Council, holds meetings in Vienna

PA President Margareta Cederfelt (Sweden) addressed the Permanent Council in Vienna on 20 January with a call for revitalizing the organization. Underlining that complex issues such as the tensions on the Ukrainian-Russian border require diplomacy and political will, Cederfelt urged that consultations on European security be inclusive and rooted in principles of the Helsinki Final Act.

She welcomed the ascension of Poland to the OSCE Chairmanship and expressed agreement with assessments offered by Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau at his inaugural

address as CiO. During the Q&A session the President addressed questions related to the PA's "Call for Action – Helsinki +50" events, noting that they are valuable opportunities for diplomatic representatives, representatives of OSCE institutions, and parliamentarians to come together to revive the work of the OSCE.

While in Vienna, Cederfelt held bilateral meetings with nearly 20 Permanent Representatives of participating States and discussed areas where the PA can assist in developing multilateral solutions to security challenges.

Upcoming Parliamentary Web Dialogue on the Clean Energy Revolution

The PA will hold a webinar on "The Clean Energy Revolution and its Implications for the OSCE Region" on 4 February, from 14:30 to 17:00 CET. This online policy debate is intended to assess current energy trends and explore potential socio-economic and environmental implications of the energy transition with leading experts from the region. PA Members will join on the Zoom platform and others can follow the live stream at www.oscepa.org.

Former President Peter Lord Bowness steps down from the Assembly

Peter Lord Bowness, former President of the OSCE PA and Chair of the Sub-Committee on the Rules of Procedure, has stepped down from the Assembly. In a letter to President Margareta Cederfelt, Secretary General Roberto Montella, members of the Bureau and the International Secretariat on Tuesday, Lord Bowness announced that he had been replaced on the UK's Delegation and therefore after 15 years he will no longer

be a Member of the Assembly.

Lord Bowness had served seven years in the Bureau, and as the most senior Vice-President took over as President of the Assembly when George Tsereteli stepped down in December 2020. In his farewell letter this week, Lord Bowness said that working in the PA has been one of the great pleasures of his career and thanked Members and staff for their friendship and co-operation.