

OSCE PA Bureau meets in Copenhagen, hears reports on war in Ukraine

Meeting Monday in Copenhagen, the OSCE PA Bureau heard remarks from Ukrainian Ambassador to Denmark Mykhailo Vydoinyk and Vice-Chair of the OSCE PA Second Committee Artur Gerasymov (Ukraine) who reported on the situation in their country. Joined by Special Representatives and Heads of Delegations from the United Kingdom and Bulgaria, Bureau members discussed the ongoing Russian invasion and other international issues, heard reports from rapporteurs preparing resolutions for the Annual Session this summer in the UK, and debated the role of the OSCE in promoting peace and security in Europe.

Ambassador Vydoinyk, invited by OSCE PA President Margareta Cederfelt (Sweden), and Vice-Chair Gerasymov described the toll on civilians that the war has taken and urged OSCE parliamentarians to take necessary measures to bring an end to the war and ensure accountability for those responsible. President Cederfelt discussed the initiatives that the OSCE PA has pursued to contribute to the resolution of the conflict. Members stressed that the OSCE must be strengthened to deal with crises such as these.

OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella said that when it comes to Ukraine, the Assembly has been very clear in its messages of condemnation and active in the field, stressing that the



Bureau members observe a moment of silence for victims of war in Ukraine, Copenhagen, 4 April 2022

role that the role of the OSCE plays is to facilitate dialogue based on the commitments and values of the Helsinki Final Act.

In reports presented by committee rapporteurs regarding their work for the upcoming OSCE PA Annual Session, much of the focus remained on Ukraine, but also touched on other challenges facing the OSCE area. Topics addressed by rapporteurs include combating corruption, the energy transition, combating human trafficking, sustainable development, climate change, and protecting the independence and integrity of civil society.

Treasurer Peter Juel-Jensen presented a report on the OSCE PA finances, thanking all parliaments for their financial contributions. The Bureau also heard reports on election observation missions, ad hoc committees and Special Representatives, as well as upcoming meetings of the Assembly.

Hungary's elections well run but incumbents had undue advantage, observers say



Kari Henriksen and Mark Pritchard, Budapest, 4 April 2022

Offering distinct alternatives, Hungary's parliamentary elections were well run and competitive, but lines between state and party were blurred by the overlapping of government and ruling coalition's messaging, OSCE observers said in a statement delivered Monday in Budapest. They also noted that while the legal framework forms an adequate basis for democratic elections, media bias and opaque campaign funding tarnished the process and the secrecy of the vote was often compromised, particularly in overcrowded polling stations.

"For voters to be able to make an informed choice, it is fundamental that contestants have equal access to the media and run informative campaigns rather than focus on polarizing messaging and personal attacks, as has unfortunately been observed here," said Kari Henriksen (Norway), Special Co-ordinator and leader of the short-term OSCE observer mission. Mark Pritchard (United Kingdom), who led the OSCE PA mission, encouraged the incoming government to be more ambitious in improving its election legislation to improve the trust in the election process.

The OSCE PA's mission consisted of 91 parliamentarians and staff and worked closely with the mission of OSCE/ODIHR, led by Jillian Stirk. Altogether the international election observation mission to the Hungarian elections totaled 312 observers from 45 countries. From the International Secretariat, the PA delegation was supported by Tim Knoblauch, Nina Henke, Stéphanie Koltchanov, Anna Di Domenico, Emomali Mirzoev, Victoria Chumenko and Manuchekhr Salokhudinov.

Observers: Diverse options but uneven playing field in Serbia's elections

Fundamental freedoms were largely respected in Serbia's 3 April elections and voters were presented diverse political options, but observers noted a number of shortcomings resulting in an uneven playing field. In a statement issued Monday in Belgrade, observers from the OSCE PA, OSCE/ODIHR, PACE and the European Parliament highlighted the combined impact of unbalanced access to the media, undue pressure on public sector employees to support the incumbents, significant campaign finance disparities and misuse of state resources as creating unequal conditions for contestants.

"This was a competitive campaign and, importantly, included opposition candidates this time, but the pervasive influence of the ruling parties gave them undue advantage," said OSCE Special Co-ordinator Kyriakos Hadjiyianni (Cyprus). The elections took place against a backdrop of intense polarization between the ruling coalition and opposition parties, the observers noted, which had been reflected in an opposition boycott of the 2020 parliamentary elections.



Kyriakos Hadjiyianni and Bryndis Haraldsdottir, Belgrade, 1 April 2022

OSCE PA Head of Mission Bryndis Haraldsdottir (Iceland) said that the extensive inter-party dialogue that led to a set of reforms should be seen as only the starting point for a more transparent dialogue towards broader and much needed reforms. This approach, she said, has to be the way forward to restore trust in the system.

The 65-member delegation from the OSCE PA was supported by Guido Almerigogna, Andreas Baker, Hana Dogovic, David Ilioski, Anja Stanisavljevic, and Dimitrije Todoric from the International Secretariat.