

## OSCE PA Bureau meeting in Helsinki focuses on co-operation with Finnish Chairpersonship

Meeting in Helsinki on 24 January, OSCE PA Bureau members and Special Representatives heard remarks from the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Foreign Minister of Finland, Elina Valtonen, and held in-depth discussions on enhancing the role and instruments of the OSCE PA.

Minister Valtonen highlighted the programme that she had outlined the previous day in Vienna at the opening of the Finnish Chairpersonship. Upholding OSCE values, she said, is the guiding principle of the Chairpersonship, stressing that this is essential to ensure that the 1975 Helsinki Final Act continues to promote European security for future generations. Bureau members posed a number of questions to the Chair-in-Office, sparking a discussion about the OSCE's potential roles in the context of peace negotiations in Ukraine and the importance of updating the OSCE's toolbox to reflect current geopolitical realities.

The Helsinki Bureau meeting was convened and chaired by OSCE PA President Pia Kauma (Finland), who emphasized the value of parliamentarians interacting with the OSCE's governmental side. Kauma noted that there is much overlap between the OSCE PA's work and the priorities of the Chairpersonship, and highlighted, in particular, possible areas of collaboration in regard to supporting Ukraine and promoting an overall agenda of peace for Europe.



Pia Kauma chairs the Bureau meeting in Helsinki, 24 Jan. 2025

The Head of Delegation of Finland to the OSCE PA, Ville Kaunisto, underscored the continuing potential of the Helsinki Final Act to build a peaceful future through dialogue and mutual understanding, emphasizing the particular relevance of this principle for the Baltic region. He urged the leadership to incorporate Baltic Sea security in the PA's overall programme, underlining that this is important not only for Finland but for all OSCE countries to understand new risks in the region.

The leadership discussed improving election monitoring to better address modern challenges, such as disinformation and artificial intelligence, noting that the procedures need to be developed so that election monitoring activities do not end on election day. Bureau members also discussed follow-up on the recent election in Georgia, as well as upcoming activities including next month's Winter Meeting in Vienna, and scheduled visits to Türkiye, Ukraine, and the Middle East.

## SG Montella and staff participate in opening of Finnish OSCE Chairpersonship

Secretary General Roberto Montella was in Vienna last week for the launch of the 2025 Finnish OSCE Chairpersonship. He met with several Permanent Representatives, as well as new OSCE/ODIHR Director Maria Telalian, Representative on Freedom of the Media Amb. Jan Braathu, High Commissioner on National Minorities Christophe Kamp, and Amb. Petr Mareš, Special Representative of the OSCE CiO, Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine. In discussions, SG Montella sought to explore common areas of work and advance co-operation between the Assembly and other OSCE institutions.

Following the launch of the Finnish Chairpersonship and the inaugural Permanent Council meeting, staff members of the OSCE PA International Secretariat attended the Regional Work-



Francesco Pagani, Miodrag Pančeski, Roberto Montella and Jan Braathu, Vienna, 23 Jan. 2025

ing Groups meetings in Vienna. Topics of discussion during the working group sessions included OSCE engagement with host countries, strengthening regional co-operation and synergies in all three dimensions of security, and institutional co-ordination with OSCE executive bodies.

## OSCE PA gender network meeting prioritizes Women, Peace and Security agenda

At the fifth informal gender network meeting, hosted by OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues Hedy Fry (Canada) on 22 January, Saara-Sofia Sirén, the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Gender, outlined the Finnish Chairpersonship's gender priorities. Focusing on implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda, Sirén said that it is essential to promote the role of men and civil society in promoting gender equality. The Finnish Chairpersonship, she said, is also committed to combating gender-based violence in all its forms and integrating gender

perspectives into climate policies.

In the discussion, OSCE parliamentarians stressed that gender equality is increasingly at risk as democratic backsliding accelerates, with restrictive policies and diminishing protections threatening progress in many regions. It was also emphasized that gender equality remains a global priority, as it is fundamental to societal progress, peace, and security, and that women continue to face significant barriers worldwide, including gender-based violence, limited political representation, and economic inequality.

## Special Representative Pritchard discusses Arctic and High North issues in Helsinki



Mark Pritchard and Erja Outi-Heino in Helsinki, 24 Jan. 2025

Following last week's Bureau meeting in Helsinki, OSCE PA Vice-President and Special Representative on the Arctic and High North Mark Pritchard (United Kingdom) visited Finland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs where he met with Erja-Outi Heino, Deputy Senior Arctic Official at the MFA. Pritchard and Heino discussed priority topics including security developments and the impacts of climate change in the Arctic, as well as the importance of international co-operation in the region.

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