

# News from Copenhagen

## Annual Session opens in Minsk, counter-terrorism committee agreed to



President Aleksandr Lukashenko addresses OSCE PA Annual Session in Minsk, 5 July 2017.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's 2017 Annual Session began today in Minsk with calls for building trust in the OSCE area through constructive dialogue and mutual co-operation.

Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko, Chairman of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus Vladimir Andreichenko, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President Christine Muttonen, and the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Austrian Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz, delivered keynote addresses to open the 26th Annual Session, being held in the Belarusian capital under the theme "Enhancing mutual trust and co-operation for peace and prosperity in the OSCE region."

President Lukashenko stressed that the Parliamentary Assembly is "an effective forum for strengthening security in our region," critical for the OSCE. President Lukashenko highlighted in particular terrorism, climate change, migration, and the crisis in and around Ukraine as matters requiring urgent attention, noting the potential for greater co-operation in the politico-military sphere, including on counter-terrorism and cybersecurity. He further called for an OSCE summit of heads of state to take place in the near future and stressed the need to reinvigorate the OSCE's founding principles.

President Muttonen noted that based on their shared historical experiences, OSCE countries have adopted common

values and commitments to promote a comprehensive model of security that places democracy and human rights at the forefront. "We have learned that real security means more than just the absence of war. Real security means ensuring that human rights are respected, that elections are democratic, that corruption is contained and that the rule of law is upheld," she said.

Chairman Andreichenko stressed the role of parliamentary diplomacy in meeting common challenges facing all countries of the OSCE. "Parliamentary diplomacy must be used to build bridges and not to create division lines. Making a step towards each other in terms of main issues we will achieve progress in resolution of minor ones as well," he said.

The OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Austrian Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz, stressed that in the face of deep-rooted conflicts and increasing transnational threats, parliamentarians create opportunities for constructive dialogue and demonstrate commitment. "I am counting on the parliamentarians and their networks among their domestic population to exert their influence, so that concrete progress can be made, not least in the crisis in and around Ukraine," he said.

Earlier in the day, the OSCE PA's Standing Committee met and unanimously agreed to establish an ad hoc committee to counter terrorism, which will be tasked with developing an effective international response to extremist violence.

Also in the Standing Committee, members agreed to allocate 14 supplementary items for general debate in the Annual Session, heard plans for OSCE PA election observation missions to upcoming elections in Kyrgyzstan and Germany, and unanimously adopted the PA's budget for fiscal year 2017-18, as well as new financial regulations for the Assembly.

On Tuesday, the OSCE PA's Ad Hoc Committee on Migration met to discuss recent activities and ongoing work, including a number of migration-related resolutions under consideration during the Annual Session.

## OSCE PA Special Representative in Vienna for meetings on South Caucasus

OSCE PA Special Representative for the South Caucasus Kristian Vigenin (Bulgaria) was in Vienna earlier this week for meetings related to developments in the South Caucasus, including on negotiation efforts related to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In his meetings, Vigenin stressed the importance of continued efforts through agreed discussion formats, while noting the potential for parliamentary dialogue to contribute to political will.

While in Vienna Vigenin met with senior diplomatic representatives from Armenia, Azerbaijan and the OSCE Austrian Chairmanship, as well as with the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group tasked with finding a peaceful solution

to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and the OSCE Secretariat. He was supported in his visit by Andreas Baker from the International Secretariat. The Special Representative reported on his recent activities, including his meetings in Vienna, to the PA's Standing Committee meeting in Minsk on Wednesday.



Kristian Vigenin speaks to the press in Minsk, 5 July 2017.