

Winter Meeting addresses anti-Semitism, intolerance, conflicts, climate change and human rights



Standing Committee Meeting, Vienna, 20 February 2020

Wrapping up the 19th Winter Meeting on 21 February, OSCE parliamentarians held a spirited debate on combating anti-Semitism, discrimination and intolerance in the OSCE region. The debate was opened by President of the Austrian National Council Wolfgang Sobotka and the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Anti-Semitism, Rabbi Andrew Baker, and included the participation of some 30 parliamentarians.

OSCE PA Special Representative on Anti-Semitism, Racism and Intolerance Ben Cardin (United States) addressed the joint session by video link from Washington. He highlighted trends of discrimination against minorities and migrants and stressed the need to safeguard democracy by speaking out and using legislative tools to protect against division and hate.

Also speaking at the closing session was OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues Hedy Fry (Canada). In her report, Special Representative Fry applauded the significant strides and improvements the OSCE PA and OSCE countries have made in the pursuit of gender equality, but noted that significant challenges remain. She highlighted in

particular violence against women, including a troubling rise of violence against female journalists and politicians.

The OSCE PA's three general committees met over two days to hear from experts and discuss issues such as how to efficiently leverage the tools and mechanisms of the OSCE to resolve protracted conflicts, the security implications of climate change, and multilateral human rights co-operation. OSCE PA Rapporteurs presented to the General Committees their ideas and intentions for the 29th Annual Session in Vancouver.

In his opening speech on 20 February, PA President George Tsereteli highlighted multiple crises, challenges, and demands for change that political leaders must address, noting that the OSCE can help meet the expectations of citizens through concrete achievements, including a peaceful resolution of the region's conflicts.

Tsereteli also addressed the PA's Standing Committee on 20 February, along with Secretary General Roberto Montella, Treasurer Peter Juel-Jensen, Special Representatives and Rapporteurs, and representatives of Ad Hoc Committees. On the margins of the Winter Meeting, Tsereteli and Montella held a series of bilateral meetings with PA delegations, OSCE officials and representatives of international organizations. A meeting with UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet focused on the human rights situation in the OSCE area and opportunities for joint work between her office and the PA.

Meetings were also held with the Secretary General of the CSTO PA and the TURKPA Secretary General, as well as the PA delegations of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkey, Armenia, the Netherlands, Ukraine, and San Marino.

PA President appoints CCT Chair and Special Rapporteur on Disinformation and Propaganda

OSCE PA President George Tsereteli (Georgia) has appointed Reinhold Lopatka (Austria) as Chair of the OSCE PA's Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism (CCT) and Oscar Mina (San Marino) as Special Rapporteur on Disinformation and Propaganda.

In a report to the PA's Standing Committee last week, Lopatka outlined several areas of work for the CCT. He noted that the recently signed Memorandum of Understanding between the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism and the OSCE PA should result in concrete follow-up action to build on the special role of parliamentarians. He also highlighted ongoing co-operation with the Albanian OSCE Chairmanship.

As Special Representative on Disinformation and Pro-



George Tsereteli, Oscar Mina, Roberto Montella in Vienna, 21 Feb

paganda, Mina will work to counter the phenomenon of fake news, promote cybersecurity, and develop policies to promote an environment where good journalism can thrive. Mina, a former Head of State of San Marino, has been a member of parliament since 2006.

In memoriam: Bruce George (1942-2020), former President of the Assembly

Former OSCE PA President Bruce George (United Kingdom) died Monday at the age of 77. Mr. George served two terms and led numerous election observation missions. First elected to the House of Commons in 1974, he served as Chair of the PA's First Committee and as Vice-President before becoming President in 2002. During his presidency, he worked to enhance co-operation between the governmental and parliamentary dimensions of the OSCE and developed relations with OSCE Partners for Co-operation.



Bruce George leading an election observation mission to BiH in 2000.