

Bureau members meet online for discussions on OSCE PA activities during COVID pandemic



The OSCE PA's elected leadership met online Wednesday for informal discussions on the Assembly's activities during the coronavirus crisis, including adaptations being made for upcoming meetings. The Bureau members agreed to endorse the recent call by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres for a global ceasefire, and were briefed by Vincenzo Amendola, Italy's Minister of European Affairs, who provided an update on the situation in his country and the European institutions' reaction to the crisis.

In his remarks, Minister Amendola stressed that multilateralism is needed now more than ever. He emphasized the need to reshape multilateral tools and decision-making procedures considering that the coronavirus crisis is not "business as usual." In terms of Italy's response to the crisis, he stressed that the first pillar is health care and the second pillar is economic recovery, noting that Europe needs to stand together to make a full recovery.

Head of the Canadian Delegation Hedy Fry briefed the Bureau members on the decision to cancel the 2020 Annual Session in Vancouver. Noting the difficulty of making this call, she pointed out that the COVID-19 pandemic is a crisis that we have no control over and considering Canada's travel restrictions, organizing an international meeting was not realistic. Canada would, however, be interested in hosting another Annual Session in the years ahead, she said.

Discussions touched on possibilities for rearranging upcoming Annual Sessions in 2021 and 2022 in order to ensure that Canada has the opportunity to host the meeting in the near future. Members also raised the possibility of adopting documents and producing recommendations without physically holding the summer meeting where these decisions are usually made. As far as the composition of the Bureau is concerned, it was agreed that no changes would be made until the 2021 Annual Session when proper elections for officers could take place.

Secretary General Roberto Montella stressed that the PA is working closely with other organizations in a way to promote cohesion, share information and facilitate co-operation. PA President George Tsereteli highlighted the economic hardship that the crisis may have on parliaments, and how this could impact the work of the Assembly. Nevertheless, he expressed confidence in the work of parliamentarians, who are continuing to meet the challenges of this period.

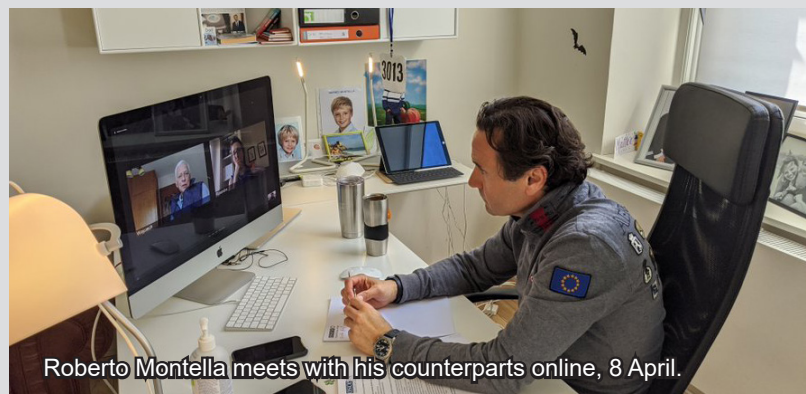
Discussion also focused on various opportunities for continuing OSCE PA work by using tools such as webinars. The OSCE PA's general committees could meet in an online forum, it was emphasized, to discuss the impact of the pandemic on the OSCE's three dimensions of security. Members also discussed ways to ensure that the work of ad hoc committees and special representatives can continue during this period.

COVID-19 infographic published

The OSCE PA has published an infographic entitled "COVID-19: Overview of OSCE participating States' responses." The publication provides a visual representation of how the OSCE participating States have responded to the coronavirus crisis. You can find the infographic at www.oscepa.org or on the PA's Twitter feed.

OSCE PA, NATO PA and PACE SGs discuss common challenges for inter-parliamentary organizations

In a meeting of the secretaries general of the OSCE PA, NATO PA and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on Wednesday, OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella discussed common challenges facing the three organizations, with a focus on the holding of online meetings for parliamentarians. Montella, PACE Secretary General Wojciech Sawicki and NATO PA Secretary General Ruxandra Popa shared their ideas and discussed alternatives to holding physical meetings, with a focus on ensuring high quality for members. One practical challenge that they discussed was the feasibility of simultaneous interpretation in online forums.



Roberto Montella meets with his counterparts online, 8 April.

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