

Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism

Vienna, 30 May 2024

Introduction

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (PA) works to advance global counter-terrorism efforts in the OSCE area in synergy with relevant OSCE executive structures and international partners. With a focus on cross-dimensional aspects of security – incorporating the political-military, economic and environmental, and the human dimensions – the PA has sought to support OSCE participating States’ efforts to develop effective and human rights-compliant responses in this field, adopting over 20 related resolutions since 2001.

In July 2017, the OSCE PA established the **Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism (CCT)** to strengthen the contribution of OSCE parliamentarians in addressing violent extremism and radicalization through (a) the timely exchange of emerging trends, key lessons learned and new approaches, that may lead to (b) innovative policy development, and (c) co-ordinated parliamentary initiatives.

The CCT - which comprises 12-18 legislators from across the OSCE space, who are lead by a Chair appointed by the OSCE PA President - quickly identified the following key areas of focus: (1) **promoting successful prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration** of FTFs and their families, including women and children, in the OSCE area; (2) **strengthening border security and information sharing** through sound Advance Passenger Information (API), Passenger Name Records (PNR) and biometric data management systems, in accordance with UNSCR 2396 (2021); (3) **fostering prevention efforts** and promoting sensible global guidance to counter violent extremist content, especially online; (4) **supporting victims of terrorism** and strengthening the role of victims’ associations through advocacy and awareness-raising; and (5) **exploring the intersections of terrorism** with other serious threats, such as, organized crime, nuclear proliferation and hybrid/digital threats.

Since then, the CCT and its members engaged in a [wide range of targeted initiatives](#) to pursue the Assembly’s counter-terrorism objectives and bring a distinct parliamentary value, which are implemented in coordination with key internal and external partners.

Recent Highlights

While paying special attention to the latest trends, and how these affect national and international counter-terrorism efforts, the CCT strives to identify emerging needs and raise parliamentary awareness around them. For instance, in February 2024, the CCT held a high-level panel discussion in Vienna (Austria) exploring the multidimensional

relationship between **Artificial Intelligence, terrorism, and extremist activities**, which featured experts from Big-Tech and examined both the ways in which AI can contribute to combating terrorism and the potential for terrorists to exploit AI for their purposes. Remaining seized on the matter, the CCT proposes a timely resolution on AI and the Fight against Terrorism for adoption at the OSCE PA Annual Session in Bucharest, 29 June - 3 July 2024.

In the context of the **war in Ukraine**, the OSCE PA in 2023 adopted a [resolution](#) condemning the terroristic nature and actions of the private military company (PMC) Wagner. This timely resolution called on all OSCE participating States to consider designating the Wagner Group as a terrorist organization, to hold it accountable for all crimes committed, and to thwart its presence wherever it operates. The resolution gathered plenty of media visibility and served as a solid basis for national Parliaments to adopt similar stances.

Moreover, since June 2022 the OSCE PA has been coordinating the counter-terrorism work of 18 assemblies across the globe as elected **Chair of the Co-ordination Mechanism of Parliamentary Assemblies on Counter-Terrorism** under UN *aegis*. The OSCE PA has thereby extended the reach of its counter-terrorism work by spearheading inter-parliamentary cooperation and global efforts to exchange regional experiences and lessons learned in fighting terrorism and violent extremism, as well as in preventing radicalization that leads to terrorism.

Strengthening Parliamentary Engagement on Counter-Terrorism

The OSCE PA aims to enhance parliamentary engagement on counter-terrorism in several thematic areas to which parliaments could add value through different types of initiatives, including regular meetings, official country-visits and thematic conferences.

Since its inception in 2017, the **CCT held 18 official meetings** where members had the opportunity to learn more about the latest terrorism trends, often through presentations of renown experts, assess priority areas of engagement and agree on upcoming activities. Key topics discussed in these meetings ranged from countering terrorism financing to the impact of AI on counter-terrorism, and from the terroristic nature of the Wagner Group to regional efforts to address the FTFs threat.

These meetings are usually complemented with **detailed (public) reports** addressed to the Plenary of the Assembly, whereby the Chair of the CCT updates our 323 members about the latest terrorism trends, emerging challenges, and initiatives undertaken by the CCT to address them.

Furthermore, the CCT conducts **regular field visits**. These visits enable members of the CCT to engage with the local stakeholders - including relevant parliamentary bodies - learn about national counter-terrorism efforts, determine the needs on the ground and share important lessons learned. The most recent visits were conducted to [Türkiye](#) in May 2024, [Switzerland](#) in 2023 and Italy in 2022. Before the pandemic, visits to national counter-terrorism authorities were organized to [Norway](#) (2020), [France](#) (2019), [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) and [Belgium](#) (both 2018), as well as to [Morocco](#) (2017).

Finally, the CCT frequently organises and/or contributes to numerous **thematic counter-terrorism events** with fellow experts and politicians, with the aim to bridge the gap between policy and practice. Over the years, the OSCE PA was directly involved in dozens of such events. Just to name the most recent example, in May 2024 the OSCE PA organized - jointly with the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) - the Third Parliamentary Policy Dialogue on the Protection of Religious Sites, Symbols and Objects in Istanbul (Türkiye). Another noteworthy example is the Policy Dialogue held in Vienna (Austria) in October 2022 focused on addressing the FTF threat in South-East Europe, which was co-organized with the OSCE Action Against Unit.

Developing Policy Guidance

A key objective of the OSCE PA in this context is to **promote policy convergence** among participating States through timely [Resolutions](#) which address key counter-terrorism priorities of the international community through a whole-of-society approach.

The above-mentioned [2023 Vancouver Resolution](#) on the Wagner Group's Terroristic Nature and Actions and the [2022 Birmingham Resolution](#) on Victims of Terrorism are exemplary of this thorough effort. Preceding efforts include the [2019 Luxembourg Resolution](#) on Addressing the Threats Stemming from the Return and Relocation of Foreign Terrorist Fighters, an issue that remains very high on the international agenda, and the [2018 Berlin Resolution](#) on Preventing and Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism, which explores the causes of radicalization to violence and highlights a range of policies aimed at preventing it.

This year, the CCT has presented an innovative resolution on the impact of AI on counter-terrorism, which will be duly debated before being adopted at the [31st Annual Session of the OSCE PA](#), thus placing the Assembly at the very forefront of this critical topic.

While these resolutions are not legally binding, they nonetheless attest the strong will of OSCE legislators to find common solutions to priority concerns of the international community in the field of preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism. As soft-law, they codify important policy guidance in critical counter-terrorism fields, thereby influencing national legislation efforts and resonate highly at international level.

Contributing to the Implementation of the International Counter-Terrorism Framework

The OSCE PA, together with its partners, aims to enhance the swift implementation of the international counter-terrorism framework. To achieve this, the CCT actively supported the **development and distribution of several key publications** addressed specifically to law-makers and intended to promote, facilitate and enhance their counter-terrorism engagement at both national and international levels.

Noticeable examples are represented by the recently launched [Parliamentary Handbook on Promoting the Implementation of UN Security Council 1373 \(2001\) on Countering Terrorism](#) from May 2024, and the [Model Legislative Provisions to Support the Needs and Protect the Rights of the Victims of Terrorism](#), from 2022. Similarly, The OSCE PA also contributed to the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law (IJ) publication

[“The Role of Parliamentarians in Nexus with the Criminal Justice Sector in Countering Terrorism - A Handbook for Parliamentarians and Criminal Justice Practitioners”](#).

Moreover, in 2019 the OSCE PA issued its own publication on [„Strengthening Border Security and Information Sharing in the OSCE region: A Parliamentary Oversight Exercise”](#), which focused on assessing the implementation of key international obligations on border security and information sharing (*i.e.* API/PNR/Biometrics) stemming from UNSCR 2396 (2021).

With this oversight initiative, the OSCE PA supported the implementation of critical UN Security Council Resolutions, identified key legal and operational challenges in the context of border security and put forward a set of pragmatic recommendations to the attention of OSCE participating States.

This latter initiative was commended also by the United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee, on the occasion of its closed briefing on [“Strengthening the role of parliaments in enhancing Member States’ counter-terrorism efforts”](#) which took place in the Headquarters of the United Nations on 2 July 2019.

Improving International Co-operation & Coordination

Finally, the OSCE PA seeks to strengthen international co-ordination in counter-terrorism matters with OSCE governmental structures, as well as to build solid partnerships with the UN (e.g., [Memorandum of Understanding with UNOCT from 2020](#)) and relevant regional inter parliamentary assemblies to advocate for inclusive, effective and human rights-compliant counter-terrorism responses.

For instance, the CCT also holds regular coordination meetings with the **OSCE executive structures**, including with ODIHR, to align agendas, complement efforts and consult on critical counter-terrorism issues. OSCE experts frequently contribute and inform the CCT policy deliberations, for instance during official CCT meetings, and frequently join official CCT country visits, such as in the case of Switzerland and Belgium. Moreover, the CCT Chair reported to the OSCE Security Committee on multiple occasions and regularly addressed the OSCE Counter-Terrorism Conferences, insofar as they took place in 2018, 2019 and 2020. Finally, CCT representatives actively contribute to the OSCE Focal Points Meetings, organized by the OSCE Action Against Terrorism Unit, to share its policy experience with the OSCE field missions and relevant institutional structures.

Besides regularly co-operating with a number of international partners, the OSCE PA has actively promoted the establishment of the global **Counter-Terrorism Coordination Mechanism of Parliamentary Assemblies** under the UN aegis, which it has also Chaired since 2022. The Coordination Mechanism greatly boosted inter-parliamentary collaboration and built global parliamentary capacity in preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism.

The first such [Coordination Meeting](#) was held successfully in December 2021 in Doha. At the [second Meeting](#) in Naples in June 2022, the OSCE PA was elected to assume the first Presidency of this mechanism, represented by the Chair of the CCT, Mr. Reinhold Lopatka. In this role, the OSCE PA co-organized the third Coordination Meeting and the [first](#)

[Parliamentary Policy Dialogue](#), in January 2023 in Doha, which focused on Border Security and Cross-Border Co-operation in the Context of Counter-Terrorism. In this regard, developing the above-mentioned publication on „[Strengthening Border Security and Information Sharing in the OSCE region: A Parliamentary Oversight Exercise](#)” was highlighted as a good practice which could be replicated by other parliamentary assemblies across the globe.

The [fourth Coordination Meeting and the second Parliamentary Policy Dialogue](#), focussing on the Sahel region and on the impact of terrorism and violent extremism on youth took place in Vienna in October 2023, where the OSCE PA was re-elected as chair of the Coordination Mechanism for another one-year term. [The fifth Coordination Meeting and the third Parliamentary Policy Dialogue](#) on the protection of religious sites, symbols and objects, took place under the OSCE PA Presidency in Istanbul in May 2024.