

OSCE PA's 29th Annual Session opens in Birmingham



The OSCE PA's 29th Annual Session opened Saturday in Birmingham with calls by OSCE leaders and host officials to alleviate humanitarian suffering in Ukraine and restore its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Addressing nearly 250 parliamentarians gathered for the event, speakers denounced the Russian Federation's invasion, shared their observations from visiting Ukraine and meeting Ukrainian refugees, and urged full investigations and accountability for alleged war crimes and atrocities.

In her speech, OSCE PA President Margareta Cederfelt (Sweden) emphasized that the OSCE PA's position has been consistent since the onset of hostilities in Ukraine in 2014, noting that the PA has denounced the illegal annexa-

tion of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and consistently urged a resolution of the conflict through the good-faith implementation of the Minsk Agreements.

John Whittingdale, Head of the UK Delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, stressed that security co-operation is of paramount importance, and Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon emphasized that the UK stands resolutely with Ukraine. Sir Lindsay Hoyle, Speaker of the House of Commons, also offered welcoming remarks.

OSCE Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid underlined the importance of the OSCE continuing to provide practical support to OSCE participating States in upholding the principles of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act.

Following the opening speeches, the plenary took up consideration of the supplementary item The Russian Federation's War of Aggression Against Ukraine and Its People, and Its Threat to Security Across the OSCE Region. Principally sponsored by Vilija Aleknaite Abramikiene (Lithuania), Mykyta Poturaiev (Ukraine), and Roger Wicker (United States), the resolution was adopted with several amendments.

Standing Committee allocates supplementary items, approves budget



Ten supplementary items were approved for inclusion on the agenda of the Annual Session by the Standing Committee on Saturday, with one sent to the plenary, three to the First Committee, three to the Second Committee and three to the Third

Committee. The Russian Federation's War of Aggression Against Ukraine and its People, and its Threat to Security Across the OSCE Region was placed on the agenda of the plenary.

The following supplementary items were allocated to the First Committee: Victims of Terrorism; The Arctic Region; and Effective Youth Engagement Towards Secure, Inclusive, and Democratic Societies. The supplementary items Code of Conduct for Members of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly; Implementing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in the OSCE Area; and Accelerating the Green Energy

Transition were allocated to the Second Committee.

The Third Committee will consider the following supplementary items: Combating Violence Against Women Journalists and Politicians; The Importance of the Human Dimension in the Context of Current Threats to Security in the OSCE Area Stemming from the Russian Aggression against Ukraine; and Ensuring the Safety of Journalists in Conflict Zones. The Standing Committee also unanimously approved the budget for fiscal year 2022/2023.

During the Standing Committee meeting, the Ukrainian Delegation proposed an amendment to the Rules of Procedure, which would provide mechanisms for suspending the mandate of an OSCE PA delegation whose country had violated the sovereignty and territorial integrity of another OSCE participating State. The committee gave its general support to the principles behind the proposal and agreed to refer the matter to the OSCE PA's Rules Committee.

The Standing Committee also included a discussion of current international political issues, information on upcoming meetings of the Assembly, and reports by OSCE PA President Margareta Cederfelt, Secretary General Roberto Montella, and Treasurer Peter Juel-Jensen.

Special Representative on Central Asia meets with delegations from region

On Saturday morning, the OSCE PA's Special Representative on Central Asia, Vice-President Pia Kauma (Finland) convened a joint meeting of the Central Asian delegations and Mongolia to discuss recent developments in the region, opportunities for shared responses and areas where the OSCE and the OSCE PA can offer further support.

Four of the five Central Asian delegations participated: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, plus Mongolia. In addition, Kauma will hold a number of bilateral meetings including with the delegations of Turkmenistan and Mongolia on the margins of the session and will report to the plenary on Tuesday.