



## **29th Annual Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly**

Birmingham, United Kingdom

Opening Plenary Session, 2 July 2022

Address by OSCE PA President Margareta Cederfelt

*Check against delivery.*

Madam Secretary General Helga Schmid,

Dear colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a true pleasure to see so many delegates taking part in the Annual Session.

After almost two and a half years of non-physical meetings, I am very pleased to welcome you here in Birmingham, especially those of you who have attend an Annual Session in person for the first time. Let me also express my most sincere gratitude to the Parliament of the United Kingdom for hosting us.

I address you today having returned from Ukraine just a few days ago.

In Bucha and Irpin, I saw the desolation of once-peaceful cities.

Apartment blocks and houses turned to dust. Hospitals turned to rubble. Civilians murdered and women raped.

As war rages on throughout Ukraine, many more innocents will be killed. The recent attacks on Kremenchuk and Odessa clearly demonstrate the point.

To our dear friends in the Ukrainian Delegation, my message is clear:

We stand with you.

We will continue to defend your right to live in peace.

With full respect for the decision of our hosts, in the spirit of our Assembly, I would rather have engaged our Russian Members in our debates to show our clear opposition to the war of aggression in Ukraine.

Although they are not here today, I hope that they will listen to us.

The OSCE PA's position has been clear since 2014.

We have denounced the illegal annexation of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol since the beginning of military confrontation in eastern Ukraine.

We have consistently urged a resolution of the conflict through the full and good-faith implementation of the Minsk Agreements.

Before that, we had also been frank in our condemnation of the illegal occupation by the Russian Federation of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali.

At the same time, we have always kept open a door for dialogue. Despite these violations of the Helsinki Final Act, we have looked for common ground to respond to joint challenges.

But we cannot sweep our values under the rug.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly was not established to ignore gross violations of our shared principles and just carry on with business as usual. We are not here to only exchange friendly statements and refrain from addressing issues one Delegation or another would want to brush aside.

This is especially true today, in the face of the most brazen attack on European security since the Second World War. As a matter of fact, in the span of just four months, the Russian Federation has violated every single one of the ten Helsinki Principles.

Russia denies Ukraine's sovereignty. Russia uses force against Ukraine. Russia has assaulted Ukraine's frontiers.

Since 2014, Russia has undermined Ukraine's territorial integrity. Russia has walked away from peaceful mediation. Russia has violated the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of Ukraine.

Atrocities paint a clear picture of Russia's contempt for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the people of Ukraine.

Russia has denied the most basic rights to those under occupation. Russia has sabotaged international co-operation. And Russia continues to ignore all its obligations under international law.

These facts are not up for debate.

But many questions remain:

What can we do, as a Parliamentary Assembly, to hold the Russian Federation accountable and support a sustainable solution to the war in agreement with Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty? How can the OSCE PA continue to support Ukraine?

And, as we move towards the fiftieth anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, what impact will these massive violations have on the future of the OSCE?

I look forward to hearing what Secretary General Schmid and Chairman-in-Office Rau think about the current situation during this Annual Session.

Dear Members,

Today, perhaps more than ever since the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, we need to fully play our role as the OSCE's democratic backbone.

The OSCE PA must continue to fully support the invisible but crucial work that the OSCE carries out every single day. In our long quest for peace and stability, we all benefit from the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security.

While continuing to denounce the terrible acts of war of the Russian Federation, we must not forget about the other crucial tasks we carry as OSCE Parliamentarians.

To perform election observations to support democratic development in the OSCE region. To put pressure on our governments to fulfill and strengthen the OSCE commitments.

Importantly, to use the tools we have available to support stability and peace in the OSCE region. We must continue endeavor to safeguard our international order, based on shared rules, shared principles, and shared commitments as stated in the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter.

We are here, in Birmingham, to reaffirm these values and to reinforce international co-operation.

We must also continue to generate ideas, to share experiences, and to find solutions to the multitude of security challenges that we face.

Over the next five days, we will have ample opportunity to discuss the war in Ukraine as well as the multitude of challenges facing the OSCE region.

I look forward to vigorous debates and honest exchanges. Together, we will produce the first PA Declaration since 2019. In doing so, let's keep in mind the demands and expectations of the citizens we represent.

Dear colleagues,

In closing, let me thank once again our British hosts and the International Secretariat for bringing us together today. I wish us all fruitful exchanges and a pleasant stay in Birmingham.

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