



# The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's 31st Annual Session



**2024**  
**29 June to 3 July**

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**OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's  
31st Annual Session**

**Bucharest, Romania  
29 June - 3 July 2024**

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# Summary

With some 225 parliamentarians from 55 OSCE participating States – plus two Partner States – in attendance, the OSCE PA's 31st Annual Session took place in Bucharest, Romania, from 29 June to 3 July 2024. Opening with addresses by President of the Senate of Romania Nicolae-Ionel Ciucă, Head of the Romanian Delegation to the OSCE PA Dan Barna, and OSCE PA President Pia Kauma (Finland), the event included committee meetings and a number of side events. In a special debate on 2 July, some 30 parliamentarians took to the floor to express their views on the situation in the Middle East.

The Annual Session closed with speeches by OSCE Chairman-in-Office Ian Borg, Romanian Foreign Minister Luminita-Teodora Odobescu, and OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella, and the adoption of the Bucharest Declaration. Pia Kauma was re-elected President, and Luis Graca (Portugal), Richard Hudson (United States) and Gudrun Kugler (Austria) were elected as new Vice-Presidents. The following Members were elected to lead the general committees:

- First Committee Chair Birgir Thórarinsson (Iceland)
- First Committee Vice-Chair Costel Neculai Dunava (Romania)
- First Committee Rapporteur Tobias Winkler (Germany)
- Second Committee Chair Azay Guliyev (Azerbaijan)
- Second Committee Vice-Chair Artur Gerasyimov (Ukraine)
- Second Committee Rapporteur Paula Cardoso (Portugal)
- Third Committee Chair Lucie Potuckova (Czechia)
- Third Committee Vice-Chair Sargis Khandanyan (Armenia)
- Third Committee Rapporteur Carina Odebrink (Sweden)

On 29 June, the Assembly's Standing Committee met and re-elected OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella for a third five-year term. His new mandate begins on 1 January 2026 and ends 31 December 2030.

Meetings of the PA's ad hoc committees dealing with migration, counter-terrorism and parliamentary support for Ukraine took place on the sidelines of the Annual Session, as well as the annual working lunch on gender issues. Chaired by President Kauma (Finland), the Parliamentary Support Team for Ukraine (PSTU) included reports from members of Ukraine's OSCE PA Delegation.

In the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration, chaired by Daniela De Ridder (Germany), members heard from Guido Tintori representing the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, and the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism, chaired by Kamil Aydin (Türkiye), heard from the UNOCT's David Alamos.

Several side events covered issues such as the effects of climate change in Central Asia, anti-Semitism, human trafficking, disinformation, economic connectivity, youth participation, South East Europe, and the displaced people of Ukraine. The OSCE PA Network of Young Parliamentarians also met, focusing on fostering co-operation in energy, environment, and digitalization.



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JUNE 28 TO JULY 3





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# Opening Plenary Session

**A**t the plenary session on 29 June, parliamentarians from 57 countries gathered to open the 31st Annual Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. The meeting, chaired by President Pia Kauma, was addressed by the President of the Romanian Senate, Nicolae-Ionel Ciucă, and the Vice-President of the Romanian Chamber of Deputies, Dan Barna. Parliamentarians also considered a supplementary item on the security and geopolitical challenges facing the OSCE region related to the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine, and a supplementary item on the human rights situation in the Republic of Moldova.

# Opening Plenary Session



## **Nicolae-Ionel Ciucă, President of the Senate of Romania**

President Ciucă recalled that only 200 kilometers from the borders of Romania, war has returned to the European continent, threatening the future of democracy and the international rules-based order.

“The great battle of 2024 is between democracy and dictatorship, to defend the international order and everything that it stands for,” Ciucă said. The crisis affects all three dimensions of the OSCE as the war is being fought on multiple fronts beyond the battlefields. Disinformation and propaganda are feeding extremism and radicalism, he said, which are both consequences and causes of a crumbling security architecture. Such a context requires a long-term vision that encompasses the impact of conflicts on the economy, the environment, migration, and new technologies. The OSCE and its Parliamentary Assembly should address these priorities with urgency, by continuing to support Ukraine’s efforts, providing a platform for multilateral dialogue, and meeting “the imperatives of the moment,” President Ciucă stressed.

## **Dan Barna, Vice President of the Chamber of Deputies of Romania and Head of the Romanian Delegation to the OSCE PA**

In his opening remarks, Dan Barna praised the work of the OSCE in documenting the violations of international law by the Russian Federation and in holding it accountable for its actions in Ukraine. Barna noted that Romania, as a member of the European Union and NATO, has stood by its neighbour from day one, providing humanitarian, financial and military assistance, and would continue to do so as long as necessary.

Reiterating his firm call on the Russian Federation to stop its aggression and on Belarus to cease its support, Barna noted the importance of addressing the impact of the conflict on global food security and reiterated the support of Romania, the EU and Moldova for the supply of agricultural products from Ukraine. He spotlighted the situation in Moldova, which continues to be the target of hybrid attacks from the Russian Federation, and commended its resilience. Referring to the effectiveness of the OSCE and its institutions in the face of such difficult times, Barna concluded by noting that “if something is not working, it should be changed. But when something works, we should keep it.”

## **Pia Kauma, President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly**

“There is nothing more valuable than peace and harmony,” President Kauma said in her opening remarks, quoting Romanian poet Mihai Eminescu. She identified the Russian

# Opening Plenary Session



Federation's war against Ukraine, the peace process in Moldova, the 7 October attacks on Israel and the humanitarian tragedy in Gaza amid the war with Hamas as some of the most pressing challenges for the future of common security. Kauma paid tribute to the "courage and resilience" of the Ukrainian people in resisting Russian aggression and defending their sovereignty and territorial integrity, which remain "non-negotiable." She also noted the rise of anti-Semitism and the tensions,

hatred, and extremism that have the potential to lead to greater violence and conflict.

"Security is not just the absence of armed conflict," said President Kauma, adding that economic stability, protection of the environment,

respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law are all essential elements of a secure world. In this context, a properly

equipped OSCE is needed, with strong leadership and adequate financial resources.

“There is nothing more valuable than peace and harmony.”

- Pia Kauma

# Opening Plenary Session



## Supplementary Items

Two supplementary items were considered and agreed to by a majority in the plenary session: "Security and Geopolitical Challenges in the OSCE Region: Ten Years of Armed Aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine," principally sponsored by Mykyta Poturaiev (Ukraine), and "The Deterioration of the Human Rights Situation in the Transdniestrian Region of the Republic of Moldova," raised by Veronica Rosca (Moldova).

The first supplementary item reaffirms the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's strong support for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. Reiterating Ukraine's right to self-defence, the item calls upon participating States to continue to provide military assistance and fundraising efforts to Ukraine. It calls for greater commitment to addressing the atrocities committed by the armed forces of the Russian Federation, welcoming the

establishment of the Registry of Damages and urging OSCE participating States to join the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children.

The resolution on Moldova stresses that the outcome of the Transdniestrian settlement process should result in a comprehensive, peaceful and sustainable resolution based on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova within its internationally recognized borders. It commends the work of the OSCE Mission in the face of the deterioration of human rights and freedoms in the Transdniestrian region.

The document urges the Russian Federation to withdraw its troops from the Republic of Moldova and stresses the need to ensure free access to Transdniestria for the exercise of public duties. Lastly it reiterates the Parliamentary Assembly's support to the authorities of the Republic of Moldova to ensure peace, stability and the rule of law.



# Standing Committee Meeting

The meeting of the Standing Committee on 29 June began with members voting to renew the mandate of OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella. President Pia Kauma commended Montella's strong track record in challenging times and congratulated him on the renewal of his mandate.

The President presented her report, underlining the importance of retaining Russia's war against Ukraine high on the agenda. She highlighted the creation of the Parliamentary Support Team for Ukraine during the previous Annual Session in Vancouver as evidence of this commitment. Additionally, she stressed the need to stay actively engaged and address security challenges in other regions, including the Mediterranean and South Caucasus.

The President applauded the Assembly's efforts to refocus on the Mediterranean, giving greater attention to the challenges faced in the region. Kauma shared details of her participation in visits to Italy and Türkiye, as well as in the OSCE Conference on Combating Anti-Semitism and the Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), exploring avenues for parliamentary contributions to aid in resolving the ongoing crisis in the Middle East. President Kauma also noted with appreciation several OSCE PA events organized with member parliaments in the spring, including the Lisbon Conference on "Security in the Age of Artificial Intelligence," co-organized with the Parliament of Portugal, and the Leinsweiler Seminar, which focused on the role of the OSCE in the context of Russia's war against Ukraine and was co-organized with the Bundestag and the German Federal Foreign Office.

Focusing on the institutional crisis facing the OSCE, Kauma expressed confidence that the Bucharest debates and resulting Declaration, stemming from the collective efforts of all members, would help identify solutions and would serve to safeguard, strengthen, and advocate for the various OSCE instruments at the disposal of all participating States.

OSCE PA Treasurer Johan Büser (Sweden) presented his report, providing an overview of the financial situation and the status of annual contributions. Büser noted that the Russian Federation has not paid its contribution since the last fiscal year, resulting in financial gaps requiring compensating measures. Büser reflected on the process of compromise, reinforcing the commitment to sustaining the Assembly's crucial activities, such as election observation missions, without resorting to significant increases in participating States' contributions. Following the report's presentation and the open debate, the budget was approved for the 2024-2025 financial year.

Members debated a proposed amendment to the Rules of Procedure regarding the principle of consensus-minus-one for decisions taken in the Standing Committee. The proposed amendment was not adopted.

Irene Charalambides (Cyprus) reported on work in the Rules Committee on a proposal to extend the term of the OSCE PA President to two years, non-renewable. This proposal will be considered by the Standing Committee during the Autumn Meeting in Dublin and would apply from the 2025 Annual Session.

# Standing Committee Meeting



Secretary General Montella presented his report and expressed gratitude to the members of the Standing Committee for the vote of confidence and renewal of his mandate. In his report, Montella emphasized the challenges faced by the OSCE, particularly regarding the renewal of mandates for heads of institutions, and stressed that one of the PA's key strengths lies in its majoritarian voting procedure. Montella expressed confidence that the PA will assume responsibility in case of paralysis on the OSCE's governmental side.

In concluding the meeting, the President informed the Standing Committee of the dates and locations of upcoming statutory meetings of the OSCE PA, noting that the 22nd Autumn Meeting would take place in Dublin from 2 to 4 October 2024, to be followed by the next Winter Meeting in Vienna in 2025.

The 32nd Annual Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Kauma announced, would take place the following summer in Porto, Portugal.

# General Committee on Political Affairs and Security

Committee Chair Richard Hudson (United States) opened the meeting of the Committee on Political Affairs and Security on 30 June. The committee amended and adopted the draft resolution authored by Rapporteur Tobias Winkler (Germany), as well as supplementary items related to synthetic opioids and organized crime, the weaponization of sexual violence in conflict zones, building a comprehensive European security architecture, and strengthening support for Ukraine. The committee concluded its work with elections of officers for the coming year.



# General Committee on Political Affairs and Security

Opening the meeting of the First Committee on 30 June, Chair Richard Hudson (United States) noted that the OSCE area currently faces the starkest test of the international security order since the Helsinki Final Act was adopted nearly 50 years ago. He reiterated the OSCE PA's unwavering support for Ukraine and condemned the Russian Federation's military aggression, stressing the need to hold perpetrators of war crimes accountable. He mentioned in particular the attack on the Kakhovka Dam, as well as nuclear power plants.

Touching on the situation in the Middle East, Hudson voiced support for Israel's right to defend itself. Meanwhile, Moldova is experiencing hybrid warfare, Hudson said, and Belarus's sovereignty is being eroded while democracy is backsliding in Georgia. With all of the cascading effects of various crises facing the OSCE region, Hudson pointed out that the work of the First Committee work is more essential than ever. The OSCE PA, he said, allows policymakers to devise practical political solutions. He therefore underlined the importance of asserting the organization's mission and purpose as parliamentarians work to ensure unwavering support for democracy and the rule of law.

## Report and Resolution

Rapporteur Tobias Winkler (Germany) presented his report and draft resolution, underlining that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine remain paramount. The rule of law must be upheld, Winkler stressed, pointing out that war crimes must be documented and prosecuted. The draft resolution condemned the Russian undermining of the international

rules-based order, Winkler said, stressing that the collective response must be an unwavering and unified reaffirmation of the supremacy of international law, the UN Charter, and the Helsinki Final Act.

His report and draft resolution also covered the Israel-Hamas war. The security of the Middle East is linked to the security of the OSCE region, Winkler said, reiterating the OSCE PA's condemnation of the attacks of the 7 October 2023, and expressing concern over the situation in Gaza. The report and resolution highlight developments in Moldova and Transdniestria, pointing out that the 5+2 talks remain vital, as well as discussions in the 1:1 format. Comprehensive and sustainable peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan must also be achieved, Winkler said.

The Rapporteur noted that the OSCE faces institutional challenges, including regarding its budget, emphasizing the need to reaffirm the commitment to multilateralism. It is imperative to overcome these obstacles so that the OSCE has the capacity to uphold its mission, Winkler said.

In the debate, members stressed that a variety of means should be employed to advocate for peace and long-term stability, noting that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine must be guaranteed. Concern was expressed over the situation in the Middle East, the suffering of civilians, and the potential effects on regional stability.

The First Committee resolution was adopted with a total of 23 amendments.

# General Committee on Political Affairs and Security

## Supplementary Items

The committee moved on to consider the supplementary item on drugs and organized crime, principally sponsored by Eugenio Zoffili (Italy). The item calls on OSCE participating States to enhance cross-border co-operation and the exchange of experiences within the OSCE in order to counter the criminal organizations engaged in drug trafficking, and in particular in the illicit production and distribution of synthetic opioids, including the chemical precursors used to produce them. It was adopted unamended.

Introducing “Condemning the Weaponization of Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones,” Susanna Campione (Italy), stressed that violence against women can be used as a weapon of war, making women particularly vulnerable during armed conflicts. The supplementary item, she said, was intended to increase the implementation of international treaties and conventions, and condemns all forms of sexual violence against women and their use as a weapon of war. The resolution was adopted with three amendments.

“Building a Comprehensive European Se-

curity Architecture against Aggression” was introduced by its principal sponsor Joe Wilson (United States), who noted that the post-World War II security architecture hasn’t worked as effectively as intended. He highlighted the ongoing wars in Ukraine and the Middle East as indications that an enhanced security architecture is needed for the 21st century. His supplementary item, Wilson pointed out, is intended to help deter wars and bring stability. It was adopted with two amendments.

The First Committee also considered the supplementary item on strengthening support for Ukraine. Principally sponsored by Didier Paris (France) and introduced by Stephane Demilly (France), the SI invites OSCE participating States to forge bilateral security agreements with Ukraine, and to strengthen co-operation with Ukraine in respect of security. The resolution was amended and adopted with overwhelming support.

## Election of Officers

Chair: Birgir Thórarinnson (Iceland)

Vice-Chair: Costa Denuva (Romania)

Rapporteur: Tobias Winkler (Germany)



# General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment

Committee Chair Azay Guliyev (Azerbaijan) chaired the four sessions of the General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment during the Annual Session in Bucharest. Members considered the report and resolution proposed by Gudrun Kugler (Austria) and four supplementary items dealing with climate change and water scarcity in Central Asia, youth perspectives on the future of international relations, corruption and foreign policy, and environmental protection in armed conflicts.



# General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment

In his opening remarks, Committee Chair Guliyev (Azerbaijan) emphasized the need for collaborative efforts to address interconnected threats stemming from technological advancements, environmental degradation, and geopolitical tensions. He underscored the importance of enhancing energy security, promoting renewable energy, and the need for international co-operation to safeguard human rights, noting that “we must ensure that

AI is used to enhance human well-being and security.” The Chair called for continued focus on transitioning to a greener economy and stressed the importance

of strategic co-operation with OSCE executive structures. “By sharing best practices and fostering international co-operation, we can continue to develop innovative and well-informed policy guidance,” he said.


## Report and Resolution

Rapporteur Gudrun Kugler (Austria) presented her report and resolution, outlining key priorities for addressing contemporary challenges through technological innovation

and environmental sustainability. The report and resolution cover a wide range of issues, including the need for responsible AI development, climate change, and socio-economic resilience.

Kugler emphasized the importance of responsible AI development and deployment. Highlighting AI’s potential to boost economic competitiveness and governance, she warned

against its misuse in spreading disinformation, human rights abuses, and biased decision-making. Her report and draft resolution also covered issues like environmental sustainability and climate change.



Parliaments should work towards a stronger recognition of environmental war crimes in national legal frameworks.

- Second Committee Report

The documents urge countries to transition to renewable energy, protect ecosystems, and address climate threats, especially in vulnerable regions like the Arctic. The resolution emphasizes social inclusion in the energy transition, with Kugler advocating for fair distribution of costs and benefits, protection of vulnerable populations, and comprehensive disaster preparedness. The overarching goal, Kugler said, is to foster sustainable development, protect human rights, and ensure that technological and economic advancements



benefit all segments of society.

Dozens of parliamentarians took the floor to debate the resolution, emphasizing the challenges posed by AI, the migration crises stemming from conflicts, the impacts of natural and man-made disasters, climate action and water resource issues, the importance of reusing frozen assets, the brain drain affecting younger generations, and ensuring that no one is left behind in the adoption and use of new technologies. Following the discussions, the resolution was adopted with overwhelming support, with seven amendments agreed to in total.

## Supplementary Items

Farah Karimi (Netherlands) presented the supplementary item she authored, "Addressing the Multifaceted Impacts of Climate Change and Water Scarcity in the Central Asian Region through Enhanced Regional Co-operation and Parliamentary Dialogue," which addresses the significant challenges posed by climate change and water scarcity in Central Asia. It emphasizes the importance of regional co-operation and dialogue to develop effective strategies for managing these issues, calling for the implementation of sustainable water management practices and the adoption of climate-resilient agricultural techniques. The resolution was adopted unanimously with two amendments.

Committee members considered the supplementary item "Youth Perspectives on the Future of International Relations, Multilateralism, and Sustainable Development," principally sponsored by David Stögmüller (Austria), which stresses the importance of integrating young people's voices into international relations and sustainable development strategies.

It calls for greater youth participation in decision-making processes at all levels, recognizing their unique insights and innovative approaches. The item was adopted unamended with overwhelming support.

The committee also took up the item "Preventing Corruption from being used as a Foreign Policy Tool," principally sponsored by Irene Charalambides (Cyprus) which highlights the severe impacts of corruption on national institutions and governance, emphasizing its role in fueling conflicts, enabling malign foreign influence, and undermining democratic systems. It calls for robust international co-operation to combat grand corruption and state capture, the establishment of stringent oversight mechanisms for international aid, and the implementation of comprehensive anti-corruption laws. The item was adopted unanimously with no amendments.

Lastly, the members amended and adopted with overwhelming support the SI on "Environmental Protection in International Armed Conflicts," principally sponsored by Federica Onori (Italy). The resolution acknowledges the severe, long-lasting damage that warfare can inflict on ecosystems and calls for stricter international regulations to mitigate these impacts. It advocates for the recognition of ecocide as an international crime and urges participating States to collaborate on creating robust legal frameworks to prosecute environmental crimes.

## Election of Officers

Chair: Azay Guliyev (Azerbaijan)  
Vice-Chair: Artur Gerasymov (Ukraine)  
Rapporteur: Paula Cardoso (Portugal)



# General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions

The Committee on Democracy, Human Rights, and Humanitarian Questions, chaired by Lucie Potuckova (Czechia), convened four times during the Bucharest Annual Session. Delegates reviewed a report and draft resolution presented by Malik Ben Achour (Belgium) and five supplementary items. Discussions in the Third Committee focused on human rights violations and breaches of humanitarian law in the context of Russian aggression against Ukraine, as well as the situation in Georgia, the South Caucasus, and the Middle East. Key topics addressed included media freedom, civil society, and the democratic and socio-economic challenges within the OSCE region.



# General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions

In her opening remarks, Chair Lucie Potuckova (Czechia) expressed gratitude to the Rapporteur, Vice-Chair, and all institutions and national parliaments that have contributed to the committee's work. She emphasized the deteriorating human rights situation across the OSCE region, particularly highlighting the war crimes committed during the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Additionally, she addressed the humanitarian impact of the Israel-Hamas conflict and its spillover effects in the wider region. Chair Potuckova stressed that only a collaborative approach can effectively initiate meaningful change.

## Report and Resolution

Rapporteur Malik Ben Achour (Belgium) focused on four main topics: the population exposed to the violence of armed conflicts, the situation of displaced people, fundamental freedoms, and the safeguarding of the OSCE as an organization that defends human rights. He emphasized that the common thread among these issues is the universality of international law and fundamental principles, which must be defended and applied without exception, regretting however that these principles are under threat throughout the OSCE

region, including in Western countries.

In this respect it is essential to apply the same standards to all. "Every double standard is a slow poison to democracies," he warned

During the debate, parliamentarians expressed concerns about the erosion of democratic institutions and the rule of law in the OSCE region. They highlighted the effects of the war in Ukraine, including mass displacement and the targeting of civilians, with some calling for the establishment of an international war crimes tribunal. Concerns were also raised about the allegations of genocide on the part of Israel, the human rights situation in Georgia and Belarus, as well as issues related to gender equality and women's rights, national minorities and LGBTQI+ individuals, migrants, media freedom, political prisoners, NGOs and civil society. Despite these challenges, some speeches noted improvements, such as the gradually improving peace and security situation in the South Caucasus. Members agreed that parliamentary diplomacy could play a significant role in fostering peace and security.

The committee considered 16 amendments to the resolution, ultimately agreeing to 13. The resolution was adopted unanimously.



# General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions

## Supplementary Items

The first supplementary item, “Strengthening Safe and Regular Pathways for Migration,” was presented by Daniela De Ridder (Germany). She stressed that migration is a major challenge, underlining the importance of continuing the work of the OSCE PA. De Ridder also underscored the urgent need to address the root causes of migration through targeted actions. Following a debate, the supplementary item was adopted with four amendments.

Roger Wilson (United States), on behalf of the principal sponsor Chris Smith (United States), introduced the supplementary item “Strengthening Actions to Prevent Human Trafficking and Protecting Survivors to Prevent Re-Trafficking.” He emphasized the need for providing essential health care to victims, who face severe challenges and are at risk of re-victimization. The supplementary item was unanimously adopted with two amendments.

The supplementary item “Ending the Scourge of Antisemitism in the OSCE Region” was presented by Ben Cardin (United States). He urged participating States to develop strategies and share best practices to combat this issue. The committee unanimously adopted the supplementary item with one amendment. Hedy Fry (Canada) invited committee members to support the supplementary item “The Role of Civil Society in Fostering Democratic and Inclusive Societies,” highlighting the decline of freedom in democracies and the need to support civil society actors. The supplementary item was unanimously approved without amendments.



The final supplementary item “Navigating Contemporary Journalism and Gender-Related Challenges” was principally sponsored by Daniela De Ridder (Germany). She highlighted the courage of journalists who face unlawful threats or are killed while performing their duties, especially women, emphasizing that “freedom of the press is a sensitive issue for our democracies” in light of recent changes in the journalism landscape.

Following a debate, the resolution was adopted with one oral amendment.

## Election of Officers

Chair: Lucie Potuckova (Czechia)

Vice-Chair: Sargis Khandanyan (Armenia)

Rapporteur: Carina Odebrink (Sweden)

# Working Lunch on Gender Issues

OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues Hedy Fry (Canada) welcomed participants to the Working Lunch on Gender Issues on 30 June, held under the theme “Progress and Setbacks: The State of Gender Equality in the OSCE Region.” Dr. Fry focused on the advancements and ongoing challenges in integrating gender perspectives into parliamentary and governmental work, stressing the importance of civil society organizations in promoting gender equality.

Special Representative Fry emphasized that women are equal members of society and play a crucial role in public and political life. She highlighted the significance of non-discriminatory laws and policies in increasing women’s participation in politics and electoral processes. Dr. Fry praised the progress made since the adoption of the OSCE 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality but underscored that much work remains to be done to achieve true parity.

In her remarks, President Pia Kauma (Finland) praised Special Representative Fry and the Romanian Parliament for organizing the working lunch. President Kauma reinforced the commitment to gender equality within the OSCE PA, urging parliaments to ensure gender balance in their delegations. She highlighted the International Secretariat’s achievement of a 50 per cent gender balance as a benchmark for other institutions.

OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella also addressed the gathering, highlighting the progress made within the Assembly

in promoting gender equality and the importance of continuous efforts in this area. He reiterated the commitment of the International Secretariat to maintain a gender-balanced workforce and to support initiatives that advance gender equality across the OSCE region.

Other notable speakers included Liliana Palihovici, OSCE Chairpersonship-in-Office Special Representative on Gender, and Monica Ferro, Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Representation Office in London. They discussed the critical role of women in public and political life and the necessity of supporting women’s participation through appropriate legislative measures and policies.

During the discussions, parliamentarians considered concrete actions that parliaments and governments can take to advance gender equality. Emphasis was placed on the importance of gender-sensitive international assistance policies and the specific challenges faced by women and girls in conflict situations, including food security, economic hardship, and access to health care, including mental health services.

To respond to these challenges, it was stressed that participating States must incorporate intersectional gender perspectives into their humanitarian support efforts. Participants concluded that ongoing dialogue and collaboration are essential for overcoming setbacks and achieving significant progress in gender equality across the OSCE region.

# Parliamentary Support Team for Ukraine

The OSCE PA's Parliamentary Support Team for Ukraine (PSTU) met on the sidelines of the Annual Session on 30 June. With introductory remarks by OSCE PA President Pia Kauma (Finland), the PSTU welcomed new MPs and heard reports on recent developments in Ukraine. PSTU members discussed the biggest threats facing Ukraine, including electricity shortages, landmines and massive displacement of people. There was also discussion of war crimes and the increase in electronic warfare, as well as efforts to ensure that children can continue in school.

The PSTU meeting also included a follow-up discussion on the supplementary item "Security and Geopolitical Challenges in the OSCE region – 10 years of Military Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine," which had been adopted in plenary session the previous day. Principally sponsored by Mykyta Poturaiev (Ukraine), the resolution reaffirms the OSCE PA's strong support for the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, and urges OSCE participating States to continue their co-operation with Ukrainian authorities.

In the discussion, PSTU members highlighted several specific needs of Ukraine, including more generators, increased air defence capability, demining, and enhanced electricity production. Poturaiev pointed out that even with all the Western support in rebuilding, it will be uphill challenge to provide Ukrainian citizens normal and decent lives in all aspects, including education, health care, and living

conditions. Unfortunately, he said, Russia is not showing any intention to start reasonable negotiations, and therefore the war should be expected to continue. He also emphasized the threats posed not only to Ukraine, but all Western democracies.

In the discussion, attention focused on Ukraine's demining efforts, the importance of ensuring the safe return of children who have been abducted and displaced, the need for greater numbers of drones and generators in Ukraine, and reconstruction. It was stressed that promoting peace, justice and security in Ukraine must remain high on the agenda of the OSCE and the broader international community, and that contributions must continue.

President Kauma spoke about the recent peace summit in Switzerland and underscored that citizens of the West are increasingly questioning the effectiveness of the finances allocated to Ukraine, stressing the need for Europe to demonstrate leadership and strategy. While politicians are naturally focused on domestic policies in the context of elections, it is important to ensure that proper attention be paid to the vital mission of restoring peace and territorial integrity in Ukraine, she said.

Members agreed on the need to ensure that the war in Ukraine does not disappear from the public's consciousness, to prevent people from forgetting what is happening. This is particularly important, it was stressed, considering the evolving political realities in many OSCE countries.





# Ad Hoc Committee on Migration

The Ad Hoc Committee on Migration met in Bucharest on 30 June to review implemented activities, in particular the key takeaways of recent field missions to Italy and Türkiye, and to discuss ideas for upcoming activities in 2024-25. The committee also heard a presentation by an expert from the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA).

The meeting was opened by Committee Chair and OSCE PA Vice-President Daniela De Ridder (Germany), who officially welcomed three new members of the committee, and thanked the Italian and Turkish delegations for hosting the recent visits of the committee.

OSCE PA President Pia Kauma (Finland) briefly addressed the committee, noting that migration was probably the biggest topic in nearly all the elections being held in the OSCE region, and that this issue was not going to disappear. She emphasized the usefulness of field visits to better understand firsthand the challenges being experienced.

In his presentation "Migration management between politics and policies: The strategic role of evidence and data," Dr. Guido Tintori, Economic Affairs Officer at the OSCE-OCEEA in Vienna, presented an overview of how the OSCE-OCEEA is planning to support and contribute to migration management through the implementation of activities within the framework of the OSCE's mandate and commitments.

Following Tintori's remarks, committee members discussed how to effectively enhance migration governance by ensuring that it is supported by sound data.

The Chair summarized key takeaways of the committee's recent field visits to Italy (including Rome and Lampedusa) in March 2024 and the visit to Türkiye (including Ankara, Adana and Gaziantep) in May 2024. De Ridder emphasized the need to enhance regular pathways for migration in order to prevent deaths at sea. The importance of learning from other countries' experiences was also underlined, including Türkiye's challenges hosting more than 3 million Syrian refugees for a prolonged period.

An appeal was also made to European states to respect the provisions of the 1951 Refugee Convention rather than adopting a purely security-based approach to migration. Sustainable solutions need to be based on addressing the 'root causes' of migration such as war, environmental disasters, and economic inequalities, it was emphasized. There were also calls to prioritize national interests, with some Members pointing out the unique challenges faced by countries heavily affected by migratory flows which limits the use of "one size fits all" strategies.

The Chair also sought feedback from the committee on proposals for upcoming activities, including a field visit to Morocco in September. Members expressed their preference for a visit to Spain as well as to the border between Poland and Belarus. The Chair also raised the situation on the US-Mexico border, the West Bank and Cyprus. A suggestion was also made for the committee to address climate change-induced migration.

Members commended the Chair for her work and for enabling them to participate in these valuable field visits.

# Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism

Opening the 18th Meeting of the OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism (CCT) on 30 June, Vice-Chair Kamil Aydin (Türkiye) welcomed all CCT members to Bucharest and expressed his sincere gratitude to the former Chair Reinhold Lopatka (Austria), for his visionary leadership and steadfast commitment to the cause of countering terrorism.

Aydin highlighted several major achievements of the CCT under Lopatka's leadership, including the two-year presidency of the United Nations Global Coordination Mechanism of Parliamentary Assemblies on Countering Terrorism, ten official CCT meetings, three official field visits and three innovative policy resolutions. Lopatka thanked Vice-Chair Aydin and the CCT members for their continuous support over the three years of his chairmanship. He underlined the importance of the effective work of the CCT and predicted that, sadly, terrorism will likely continue to be one of the major challenges of the common security agenda in the future.

OSCE PA President Pia Kauma (Finland) voiced strong appreciation for the work of the CCT and emphasized that one of the committee's main strengths is the opportunity it provides for members to share their national experiences. Secretary General Roberto Montella commended the CCT for its outstanding achievements and highlighted the CCT's successful establishment of a niche in parliamentary work to create value.

The expert guest speaker of the meeting was David Alamos Martinez, Chief of the Parliamentary Engagement Office in Preventing and Countering Terrorism at the United Na-

tions Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT). Alamos extended his gratitude to the CCT for the excellent co-operation and presented his office's recent publication, the Parliamentary Handbook on Promoting the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001) on Countering Terrorism.

The Handbook was developed with the input of the PA, as a reference tool for parliamentarians as they set out to discuss, amend and adopt legislation and national strategies related to countering terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism. Vice-Chair Aydin acknowledged with appreciation the great co-operation with UNOCT and expressed eagerness to discuss an extension of the memorandum of understanding between the PA and UNOCT, set to expire in 2025.

Aydin then provided an update on the CCT's recent activities, including the productive visit to Türkiye in May, which highlighted a concerning trend: the growing connections between terrorist and organized crime networks. He also reported on the 5th Counter-Terrorism Co-ordination Meeting of Parliamentary Assemblies, organized jointly with UNOCT, and the 3rd Parliamentary Policy Dialogue with a special focus on the Protection of Religious Sites, Symbols and Objects. Both events took place in May in Istanbul.

Finally, CCT member Emanuele Loperfido (Italy) presented the Resolution on Artificial Intelligence and the Fight against Terrorism, which he sponsored on behalf of the CCT for consideration at the Annual Session. The resolution, he noted, focuses not only on mitigating AI security-related risks, but also on leveraging AI strengths to boost collective security.

# Plenary Sessions

The plenary session on 2 July, centered on issues ranging from artificial intelligence to migration and the conflict in the Middle East. The closing plenary on 3 July was addressed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania, Luminita-Teodora Odobescu, the Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE and Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade of Malta, Ian Borg, and OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella. Parliamentarians also adopted the Bucharest Final Declaration and received the election results for the Assembly Officers.



## Supplementary Items

After a farewell speech marking the retirement of former Vice-President and long-time OSCE PA Member Ben Cardin (United States), the Assembly unanimously passed the supplementary item “Resolution on Artificial Intelligence and the Fight Against Terrorism,” without amendments. The resolution emphasized the integration of AI technologies into global counter-terrorism efforts. While there was widespread agreement on AI’s potential to detect suspicious behavior and prevent attacks, concerns were voiced over its possible misuse by terrorist groups. The Assembly recognized that AI poses both a security asset and a potential risk if left unregulated, prompting broad support for establishing regulatory frameworks to ensure its responsible use within the rule of law.

## Reports on OSCE PA Activities

Reporting on behalf of the Parliamentary Support Team for Ukraine (PSTU), Vice-President Mykyta Poturaiev (Ukraine) highlighted the PSTU’s commitment to promoting peace and justice in Ukraine, citing the productive visit in February that helped foster discussions for conflict resolution. Poturaiev stressed the ongoing need for international support in Ukraine’s efforts to restore peace and territorial integrity.

The Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration, Daniela De Ridder (Germany), thanked delegations for supporting its work, while Italy reported significant progress in addressing irregular migration, emphasizing the need for solidarity and co-operation among nations. The committee stressed the importance of addressing migration’s root causes while upholding the rule of law. Türkiye emphasized the urgent need to stabilize Syria to allow

refugees to return.

Kamil Aydın (Türkiye), Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Counter-Terrorism, reported on recent meetings in Vienna and Portugal. These discussions focused on AI’s role in terrorism, highlighting the growing threat shifting from the Middle East to Africa. The CCT also held meetings in Türkiye, which fostered discussions on the evolving nature of global terrorism, and recalled the Vancouver Declaration’s contributions to counter-terrorism efforts.

## Special Debate

A special debate was held on the situation in the Middle East. The Israeli Delegation firmly defended the military actions in Gaza, citing the necessity of defeating Hamas, which it described as a terrorist organization posing an existential threat to the Jewish state. Israel pointed to the hostage situation, with over 120 individuals still held by Hamas, and highlighted the significant role Iran plays in supporting the group. The Israeli delegate called on the international community to recognize the threat posed by Iran’s potential nuclear capabilities and to take action to prevent Iran from acquiring such weapons.

Several nations expressed support for Israel’s right to defend itself, condemning anti-Semitism and stressing that it cannot be justified under the guise of free speech. While acknowledging the severe humanitarian crisis in Gaza, these countries maintained that Hamas’s aggression must end before any meaningful peace can be achieved, stressing that Israel’s security and fighting terrorism were top priorities.

However, sharp criticism of Israel’s military

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actions came from other delegations, some of whom raised the question of whether the operation in Gaza could be considered “genocide.” Some delegates called it a disproportionate response, noting that the Palestinian death toll was 30 times higher than Israeli casualties. Critics accused Israel of acting out of revenge rather than legitimate self-defence, labeling its actions as violations of international law and calling for them to be recognized as crimes against humanity. An immediate ceasefire was called for, as well as justice for the victims on both sides, asserting that a lasting peace could only come through international accountability.

Other delegations cited the destruction of infrastructure and the staggering civilian death toll, criticizing the stance of the West in response to the suffering in Gaza, suggesting that international inaction has contributed to the ongoing crisis. Continued violence would only deepen the humanitarian disaster, it was

stressed. These delegations urged the international community to act swiftly to stop the violence.

The discussions also touched on the question of Palestinian statehood, with some delegations arguing for the recognition of Palestine as a sovereign state. An internationally recognized two-state solution is the only viable path to peace, some Members said, with secure borders for both Palestinians and Israelis.

Human rights violations were a recurring theme throughout the debate, with many delegations expressing deep concern over the treatment of civilians in both Israel and Gaza. Some parliamentarians, however, maintained that the focus should remain on eliminating Hamas and the complete dismantling of its terrorist network, which, it was stressed, is the primary obstacle to peace and the eventual normalization between Israelis and Palestinians.

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## Luminita-Teodora Odobescu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania

In her address, Foreign Minister Odobescu focused on the Russian Federation's war against Ukraine, which she stressed is not only an enormous human tragedy, but also a threat to European security and stability. She stated that "until Russia stops its aggression, the OSCE and the Parliamentary Assembly cannot return to business as usual" and must remain a forum for holding the aggressor accountable. Any violation of OSCE principles must be exposed and

addressed, she stressed. She also welcomed the recent accession talks of Ukraine and Moldova to the European Union, stating that they constitute "a point of no return" for the democratic future of the two countries.

“Until Russia stops its aggression, the OSCE and the Parliamentary Assembly cannot return to business as usual.

- Romanian Foreign Minister Luminita-Teodora Odobescu

territorial integrity of states.

Odobescu called on the OSCE to use all its tools to strengthen the resilience of Moldova, which has been particularly affected by the war in Ukraine. Protracted conflicts become an instrument of oppression, she said, feeding corruption and holding back prosperity. It is therefore imperative to preserve the territorial

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## **Ian Borg, Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE and Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade of Malta**

Minister Borg drew attention to the war in Ukraine as an event that “eroded trust and effective dialogue that were once the cornerstones of the OSCE.” He urged the Russian Federation to end its “senseless war,” stressing that long-term solutions are never found in the battlefields but through adherence to commitments and constructive dialogue. Borg recalled the importance and necessity of the OSCE, being an inclusive platform that brings Russia and Ukraine to the same table. He suggested that this inclusivity is indispensable, regretting that not all participating States could be present in Bucharest. Turning to the challenges facing the OSCE, he deplored the abuse of the consensus rule for political opportunism and warned that without a budget, the OSCE’s relevance would diminish. He called on parliamentarians to help solve these problems, reminding them of their unique position to influence national parliaments.

### **Open Debate**

During the open debate members of the Parliamentary Assembly discussed a wide range of issues and challenges affecting both the shared security of the OSCE region and their specific constituencies.

The Russian Federation’s war against Ukraine figured prominently in their discussions. Participants highlighted the need for sustained support for Ukraine, agreeing that the conflict is a broader struggle for democracy. There were calls for greater commitment to holding

the Russian Federation accountable for its violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Parliamentarians also placed importance on the freedom of journalists detained by Russian forces in the occupied territories, as well as on the return of displaced and illegally abducted children.

Several members drew attention to the rights and humanitarian conditions of displaced persons in the context of conflicts and in particular in relation with the war in Ukraine, the occupation by Russian forces of parts of Georgia and in the context of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. Regarding the latter, delegations called for greater support for peace processes and confidence-building measures.

The situation in the Middle East was also a key topic of discussion with members criticizing the ongoing human tragedy unfolding in Gaza and urging for a firmer condemnation of the violations of international law and international humanitarian law. In other remarks, delegations warned about a growing ‘axis of evil’ of authoritarian regimes beyond the OSCE borders, whose actions threaten the rules-based order and seek to dismantle the security architecture.

The session addressed a number of other pressing issues. Members condemned the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war, called for stronger action on climate change, and expressed concern about disinformation and its impact on democratic processes. There were calls for stronger measures to combat hate speech and misinformation, which continue to undermine democratic institutions. Many del-

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egations commended the Assembly's robust election observation missions, calling for more of similar action on the ground. The role of national parliaments in upholding OSCE principles was highlighted, as was the need for full implementation of the resolutions adopted.

## **Adoption of the Declaration**

The 2024 Annual Session of the Parliamentary Assembly resulted in the adoption of the Bucharest Declaration, approved following an open debate and voting process. The document, drafted by the three committees, contains 16 supplementary items and was adopted with the strong support of an overwhelming majority of parliamentarians.

## **Report of the Secretary General**

OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella, welcomed the adoption of the Bucharest Declaration as a document which, drafted by more than 200 parliamentarians present at the Annual Session, reflects the will, interests and aspirations of more than a billion people living in the OSCE region. He praised the breadth of issues covered by the resolutions, which will be presented to the foreign ministers of each of the 57 participating States.

The Secretary General commended the organization of numerous side events on important topics and the social events, which allowed parliamentarians to network and build friendships. He noted that the Assembly had become politically stronger, as demonstrated by the renewal of President Kauma's mandate at a time when Finland, her country of ori-

gin, would also assume the Chairmanship of the OSCE starting from January 2025. On the administrative side, the Assembly has seen, against all odds, an increase in the budget and the introduction of a professional audit service to ensure transparency and accountability in financial management. Montella concluded by expressing his gratitude for the renewal of his mandate.

## **Announcement of the Election Results for the Assembly Vice-Presidents**

At the Bucharest Annual Session, elections were held for three positions of Vice-Presidents. The results were announced at the closing plenary session by President Kauma. Out of the five candidates for the three positions, Luís Graça (Portugal), Richard Hudson (United States) and Gudrun Kugler (Austria) were elected Vice-Presidents.

## **Closing remarks**

The 2024 Annual Session closed with remarks by President Kauma, who noted the challenging year ahead. With many important elections on the calendar, the Assembly will have a prominent role to play, working with ODIHR and offering its expertise in election observation. Kauma reiterated her commitment to supporting Ukraine and said she would continue to monitor events in the Middle East.

With Finland assuming the Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2025, she stated the shared commitment to make respect for the Helsinki principles a priority.

# Bucharest Declaration

**A**dopted on 3 July, the Bucharest Declaration contains three general committee resolutions plus 16 supplementary items dealing with a wide range of topics.

Reaffirming the OSCE's core principles of co-operation and dialogue, and expressing deep concern about the trend of noncompliance with international rules and commitments, the Declaration calls for all OSCE participating States to actively engage in multilateral diplomacy to address current challenges. It calls for stringent adherence to and enforcement of OSCE commitments within national legislatures to promote a culture of compliance and accountability through parliamentary advocacy, legislative action, and oversight.

Referring to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine as "a gross and unprovoked violation of our international rules-based order," as well as "all basic principles of international law and international commitments under the Charter of the United Nations and the Helsinki Final Act," the Bucharest Declaration calls for Russian forces to "completely withdraw from the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders of 1991."

Other key recommendations include calls for full compliance with international law to ensure the protection of the civilian population and for OSCE participating States hosting Ukrainian refugees to maintain a flexible approach to short-term returns to Ukraine.

In addition to the war in Ukraine, the Assembly addressed the situation in the Middle East, condemning in the strongest terms the terrorist attack against Israel on 7 October 2023. It also calls for constructive dialogue aimed at

resolving the conflict and releasing Israeli hostages through an immediate ceasefire and the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza.

Regarding the South Caucasus, the Declaration expresses concern over the ongoing Russian occupation of Georgia, and reiterated support for diplomatic efforts in facilitating dialogue and building confidence between Armenia and Azerbaijan. It also urges a full and robust election observation mission to this autumn's parliamentary elections in Georgia.

In the economic and environmental dimension, the Declaration calls for OSCE participating States to increase efforts in the protection of the environment, sustainable use of natural resources, conservation and restoration of ecosystems and biodiversity. Safeguarding minors from potentially harmful online content was also highlighted as essential.

Regarding fundamental freedoms, the Bucharest Declaration urges OSCE participating States to adopt comprehensive measures to ensure the safety of journalists and calls upon the OSCE to closely examine the impacts and consequences that the conflict in the Middle East is having within the OSCE region, including those related to an increase in incidents of hate speech and hate crimes.

The Bucharest Declaration also addresses the challenges facing the OSCE itself, noting the importance of timely and orderly appointments of the Heads of OSCE Institutions, and the need to ensure the adoption of a unified budget. Other important issues covered in the document include climate change and water scarcity, anti-Semitism in the OSCE region, corruption and foreign policy, and migration.









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