

OSCE PA's 32nd Annual Session opens in Porto



Opening plenary session in Porto, 29 June 2025

The 32nd Annual Session opened Sunday with speeches welcoming this 50th anniversary year of the OSCE as a time to activate the same bold and strategic vision that led to the adoption of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975. Speaking at the opening session, President of the Portuguese Republic Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, President of the Portuguese Parliament José Pedro Aguiar-Branco, OSCE PA President Pia Kauma, United Nations Secretary General António Guterres, and Head of the OSCE PA's Portuguese Delegation Paula Cardoso recalled the enduring importance of dialogue and co-operation.

Speakers recalled the OSCE's five-decade legacy, highlighting its successes in managing post-Cold War upheavals by building security through dialogue and consensus, but regretted that the Russian Federation's full-scale war against Ukraine has cast a shadow over this commemoration. President Kauma told the Assembly that Ukraine must remain top of the PA's agenda, urging parliamentarians to not only maintain pressure to bring an end to the fighting but also to prepare for the day after the fighting has stopped.

"You gather as our world faces great and grave challenges – from raging conflicts, to rising inequalities, to the out-of-control climate crisis," Secretary General Guterres said. "By encouraging dialogue between parliaments, you have helped strengthen democracy, advance co-operation, and promote comprehensive security."

Also in the plenary session today, OSCE parliamentarians adopted three supplementary items: "50th Anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act: Global Challenges for Peace and Security in the OSCE Region," principally sponsored by Mykyta Poturaiev (Ukraine), "The Helsinki Process Fifty Years On," principally sponsored by Pia Kauma (Finland), and "Strengthening a Positive Agenda for Co-operation in the Western Balkans," principally sponsored by Kyriakos Hadjiyianni (Cyprus). The leaders of recent election observation missions also reported to the Assembly.

Ahead of the opening session, OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues Hedy Fry (Canada) met with civil society organizations (CSOs) working on gender equality in Portugal. The meetings provided an opportunity for CSOs to present their work, and for Dr. Fry to share her new report on sexual and reproductive health and rights in the OSCE region. Also meeting on the sidelines of the Annual Session was the Silk Road Support Group for discussions on connectivity and sustainable development in the OSCE area, and Special Representative on Central Asia Farah Karimi (Netherlands) who met with delegations from the region to enhance inter-parliamentary dialogue.

Standing Committee approves budget, allocates supplementary items



The Assembly's Standing Committee meeting on 29 June

Meeting on Sunday, the OSCE PA's Standing Committee heard reports from President Pia Kauma (Finland), Treasurer Johan Büser (Sweden), and OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella. In his remarks, the Treasurer welcomed the strengthening of the Assembly through increased transparency, openness and accountability. Following his presentation, the Standing Committee approved the budget for the 2025-2026 Financial Year.

Delegates also approved 21 supplementary items for debate in the general committees and plenary sessions. Four SIs were allocated to the plenary, five to the First Committee, six to the Second Committee, and six to the Third Committee. Parliamentarians will debate Russian aggression against Ukraine, regional issues, critical infrastructure and nuclear safety, water scarcity and migration, artificial intelligence and misuse of technology, youth radicalization and violent extremism, energy

security, child trafficking and sexual exploitation, and OSCE institutional co-operation, as well as a number of other topics. It was also agreed that the current situation in the Middle East will be debated in the plenary on 2 July.

President Kauma thanked Portugal on behalf of the Parliamentary Assembly for hosting Annual Session and expressed her satisfaction that over the past two years of her presidency, there have been opportunities to consider long-term strategic planning to ensure that the Assembly is making best use of its comparative advantage. She also noted the breadth of discussions taking place within the context of the OSCE PA.

In his report, Secretary General Montella welcomed Portugal's role in the Assembly, including by being active in the Bureau and hosting the Annual Session, and noted the high level of participation in Porto. Montella stressed the added value of parliamentary diplomacy to the broader efforts to build security and thanked President Kauma for her leadership in maintaining the guiding spirit of Helsinki that is at the heart of the OSCE.

The Standing Committee also discussed the possibility of institutionalizing the OSCE PA's Network of Young Parliamentarians as an ad hoc committee, with the President and several members expressing support for the idea, although no decision was taken.