



REPORT OF OSCE PA SECRETARY GENERAL
ROBERTO MONTELLA
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As we meet in Porto, just weeks away from the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act that gave birth to this organization, it is incumbent upon us to consider our role in the Helsinki process. Would those leaders who placed their signature on the Final Act recognize our current organization as a body they created? With some pride, I believe that within the Parliamentary Assembly we can see that the Helsinki spirit lives on in the bold and spirited debates that parliamentarians regularly engage in.

The Helsinki Final Act was not an agreement among friends, nor were those that affixed their signatures idealists and dreamers. I believe that they were realistic politicians who were seeking a more secure and stable world based on common understanding and who put aside significant differences to this end. Given the many security challenges facing our region today, their efforts to seek and reach agreement amid diverging interests is important to reflect upon.

In the Secretariat we seek to set a framework for discussions among Members and **enable exchanges that are to the benefit of our collective security**. I believe that we have been effective in channeling interest among parliamentarians in the organization and its possibilities. The engagement of Members of Parliament in the OSCE process is an effective way to ensure continued political attention to a process that requires high-level commitment, and I'm continuously proud of the cost-effective and professional manner that the Secretariat I lead supports this work.

I want to take this opportunity to **thank the Portuguese parliament** for its remarkable hospitality in hosting us in Porto, even amidst a challenging period for the parliament following elections. Hosting major Assembly meetings is the greatest contribution to the Assembly, and I encourage all parliaments to consider the possibility to organize an OSCE PA meeting from 2027.

PA Contributions to the OSCE and regional security

Whereas the Assembly's primary role remains as a forum for dialogue, the level of activities between our main statutory meetings continues to increase. Of the many activities in recent months, our convening of a meeting of the Assembly's Bureau in Kyiv remains a highlight. I applaud the Ukrainian Parliament for their remarkable efforts to this end, as well as **President Pia Kauma and our Parliamentary Support Team for Ukraine for**

the leadership shown in making the OSCE PA the first organization to convene a major meeting in Kyiv since Russia's full scale invasion. Since 2014 our Assembly has been a leader in clearly condemning Russia's unprovoked and uncorrected violations of the Helsinki Final Act in Ukraine, and I welcome the responsiveness of our work to Ukraine's needs in recent years through the PSTU. We will continue to support parliamentary efforts as Russia's war and overall breaches of our collective security remain at the top of the OSCE PA's agenda.

As President, **Pia Kauma has remained vocal in condemning Russian atrocities** in Ukraine and in encouraging not only short-term humanitarian relief, but also engaging in conversations on longer-term perspectives. As a long-time employee of the OSCE, I also particularly appreciate her advocacy on behalf of the three OSCE staff members illegally detained by Russia: Vadym Golda, Maxim Petrov, and Dmytro Shabanov. Both bilaterally, and in multilateral settings such as the European Conference of Presidents of Parliament, President Kauma has worked to represent the Assembly with political leaders and to highlight Assembly priorities. **President Kauma has also made significant efforts to include a broader group of Assembly Members in her work, including being joined in Israel and the West Bank by Vice-Presidents Kyriakos Hadjiyianni, Pere Joan Pons, and Luis Graca as well as Special Representative Pascal Allizard.** Maintaining a very active schedule, the President has also represented the Assembly in events on topics as varied as gender-sensitive parliaments, combating anti-Semitism, and deported Ukrainian children, ensuring the Assembly's voice is heard at the highest level.

With an open-minded yet realistic approach to diplomacy and political dialogue, President Kauma has effectively embodied the approach of the OSCE's founding fathers fifty years ago. At this critical and unstable time, the Assembly has been fortunate to have a leader who recognizes and acts in accordance with the historical heritage of the Organization.

The continued active work of our ad hoc committees on migration and terrorism have also ensured a further deepening of the Assembly's expertise on these topics which are at the top of national political agendas across the OSCE region. The Secretariat supported a visit of 12 Members from the **migration committee to Madrid and the Canary Islands**, aimed at identifying areas of best practice with respect to migration management and assess areas where further support is needed, in particular with regards to

vulnerable groups such as unaccompanied minors. Just last month, Members of our counter-terrorism committee headed by **Chair Kamil Aydin visited Washington, DC and New York for discussions on the latest terrorism trends** and to expand international co-operation in the fight against violent extremism.

The Assembly's Special Representatives have also remained exceptionally active, representing the OSCE PA on both regional and thematic topics. **Mark Pritchard** has ensured that the Assembly has continued active engagement in Arctic affairs, including through high-level conversations in the United States. **Farah Karimi** has similarly worked to engage broad participation from Central Asian parliaments when she has visited the region. **Kyriakos Hadjiyianni's** work in South East Europe has yielded strong results including enhanced interaction through a series of inter-parliamentary discussions among South East Europe Delegations to the OSCE PA. Members have also shown innovative cross-cutting work, such as **Eugenio Zoffili's** hosting in Rome of a major conference addressing not only countering crime, but connecting also expertise related to corruption led by **Irene Charalambides** and counter-terrorism. The informal network of young parliamentarians led by Special Representative **Lucija Tacer** has also provided valuable opportunities for exchanges among young parliamentarians, just as the informal gender network led by **Hedy Fry** has served as an excellent forum for parliamentary discussions on priority topics related to gender.

Our flagship work in the field of elections has also continued apace, with the Assembly **deploying almost one hundred parliamentarians and staff to observe the elections in Albania in May under the leadership of Farah Karimi and Björn Söder**. This mission also served as an important opportunity to continue our close co-operation with partners not only in the OSCE/ODIHR but also with the PA of the Council of Europe and European Parliament. The Secretariat was also pleased to support a limited observer mission for the **presidential election in Romania. Lucie Potuckova's leadership of this team, on short notice and in a sensitive situation following annulled elections last year, was important**. I'm also very pleased that our Secretariat's elections team successfully organized – during the Winter Meeting – a side event as the first in a series on thematic topics to address common challenges and issues related to elections. These discussions can inform not only our observation work, but also Members' contributions to their own electoral processes at home.

As someone who has personally spent a number of years working in OSCE field missions early in my career, I'm also very pleased with our recently increased engagement in this field. President Kauma has this year led two visits of some 30 Members to Serbia and Tajikistan organized by the Secretariat to personally witness and experience the work that OSCE field missions are engaged in. By combining meetings with high-level officials from the host country with hands-on engagement in OSCE projects, these interesting visits provide useful opportunities for Members to deepen their understanding of the OSCE's tools. Such visits can supplement the **strong institutional co-operation we already enjoy** with the OSCE's Secretariat and Representative on Freedom of the Media in Vienna, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in Warsaw, and the High Commissioner for National Minorities in the Hague.

Budgetary and Secretariat administrative matters

The Secretariat's ability to support and contribute to the many activities indicated above has only been possible due to the continued very careful use of resources. I appreciate the **strong support we have had from Treasurer Johan Büser, whose probing questions and diligent oversight have encouraged continued sound fiscal management, as certified by our external auditors.** In these turbulent times advance planning remains very challenging, but we will continue to work to provide services that are responsive to the needs of the Assembly, while continuing restraint regarding the use of taxpayers' money.

Once again this year, the Russian Federation has chosen not to pay its financial dues, leaving the Assembly short of some 6% of our foreseen budget. This negatively impacts on all Assembly activities, and while we have so far managed to maintain core Assembly work with only minor use of financial reserves, there are limits to how long we can apply this approach. It is my hope that the Assembly's leadership will support a more sustainable solution to this problem.

I want to applaud our Treasurer's efforts to identify new revenue sources to support Assembly work, and have been heartened by the broad support from parliaments in this field. Countries that host our meetings, such as **Portugal and Türkiye this year, and the Netherlands and Andorra**

in 2026, and the United States in the autumn of 2027, very directly provide major contributions to Assembly work. However, there is also a large and growing number of parliaments that contribute beyond their allotted dues. **Denmark's** continued hosting of our headquarters, and **Austria's** support to our Vienna Office are ongoing and major contributions to the Assembly. **Germany and Italy** have for a number of years also supported our work through secondments of staff. The **Luxembourgish** parliament's willingness to provide additional financial resources provides important capacity, yielding important results in our work in South East Europe. In addition, **Switzerland** has provided additional financial resources to bolster our work, and the parliaments of **Estonia, Iceland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, and San Marino** have already met the Assembly's request to voluntarily increase their contributions to a minimum amount of 10,000 EUR. The **Finnish** parliament has also strongly contributed to the Assembly, not only through hosting a Bureau meeting earlier this year, but by supporting the exceptionally active Presidency of Pia Kauma as she represented the Assembly across three continents and beyond over the past two years. **The wide array of countries choosing to dedicate additional resources to the OSCE PA is a very strong vote of confidence in the Assembly and Secretariat's work** that I think we can all be pleased with.

While the above represents an impressive overview of themes and activities, this is far from a full description of the Assembly's activities or of Secretariat support to parliamentarians. I'm proud that the **Secretariat team in Vienna and Copenhagen continue to provide expert and diplomatic guidance on a wide range of issues**, as well as pragmatic solutions to the challenges of running a complex interparliamentary organization. Having a small budget and staff means that all staff must be and are masters at multi-tasking. I am pleased, although not surprised, that so many **Members regularly praise the professionalism of staff they work with in this multi-national, multi-lingual team who do not seek personal attention, who know what they are doing, take pride in what they do, and put their heart into their jobs**. We look forward to continuing this work as the parliamentarians that make up the Assembly continue their efforts at enhancing security within the OSCE region.

Secretary General of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Roberto Montella

Porto, 29 June 2025

