



REPORT
OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL
TO THE OSCE PA STANDING COMMITTEE



By Secretary General Roberto Montella
25 November 2022

I. Introduction

The 2022 Annual Session in Birmingham was the first Annual Session held fully in-person since the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic. It was vital for the Assembly to be able to come together to discuss and debate the multitude of security challenges in the OSCE region, to adopt the Birmingham Declaration representing the collective voice of OSCE parliamentarians as well as to elect the Assembly's officers; the 2022 Annual Session reaffirmed in-person exchanges are indispensable for parliamentary diplomacy and for the activities of the OSCE PA. As we move forward to fully transition to a post-pandemic working model, we are carefully balancing the advantages of the technological means at hand which allowed us to "meet" online during the pandemic, and the need for regular in-person meetings to continue to build and foster interparliamentary dialogue, particularly as it pertains to the core activities of the OSCE PA.

This report covers five months of activities (August 2022 – November 2022) and follows up on the report I presented at the 2022 Annual Session in Birmingham. I would like to underline that our main focus remains the on-going war in Ukraine and its severe and far-reaching security implications, which are reflected in almost all of the activities of the OSCE PA. In this regard, the OSCE PA leadership has stressed it is paramount we continue to make full use of the comprehensive toolbox of the OSCE PA, while simultaneously ensuring to sensibly prioritize, and to maintain a prevalence of quality over quantity in all our activities to be able to make meaningful contributions of distinct parliamentary value, especially in the context of the war in Ukraine. Hence, we must continue to plan future activities in close coordination with OSCE executive structures and partner organizations to aim for greater complementarity of activities, and to capitalize on the key assets of the Assembly to advance security in the OSCE region.

While continuing to lend support to Ukraine is of utmost priority for the Assembly, the OSCE PA leadership also acknowledged other areas of concern in the OSCE region equally require attention. As such, this two-fold approach shows in the wide range of activities - of which you find a comprehensive overview in the annex to this report - we have engaged in directly relating to the crisis in and around Ukraine, as well as in support of our organization throughout the entire OSCE region. Overall, the Secretariat has continued to adapt to changing circumstances, emerging requests and new priorities by providing policy advice and operational support to the President and to the leadership alike. The International Secretariat's capacity to support the respective mandates of the Assembly's leadership in challenging times for the OSCE region was preserved and characterized by improved overall coordination. This has also enabled the International Secretariat to provide the necessary and expected support towards initiatives led by parliamentarians which aim at promoting greater convergence and lead to a shared vision. These included a "vision paper" conceptualized by the President with the support of the International Secretariat. Below, I will highlight some key activities:

II. Activities

Call for Action – Helsinki + 50 initiative

Within the framework of the OSCE PA Call for Action - Helsinki + 50 initiative, the Finnish Delegation to the OSCE PA hosted the seminar “The Role of the OSCE and its Parliamentary Assembly in the Changing European Security Architecture” in Helsinki in September. The seminar brought together the OSCE PA leadership and expert speakers to reflect on concrete, actionable ways to reform the OSCE and the OSCE PA in view of the challenges the organization is facing, particularly in the current context of operating in radically changed circumstances as a result of Russia’s aggression against Ukraine. Further, a Web Dialogue on the “The War in Ukraine and its Consequences” was held in October, in which OSCE PA members heard from Ukrainian parliamentarians regarding the situation on the ground and discussed with expert speakers about different means to sustain the needed support for Ukraine.

High-level Visit to Incoming 2023 OSCE Chairpersonship

In November, the President and I completed a visit to North Macedonia. We met with President Mr. Stefan Pendarovski and Minister of Foreign Affairs and incoming Chairman-in-Office Mr. Bujar Osmani, to discuss areas in which the 2023 OSCE Chairmanship of North Macedonia and the OSCE PA can co-operate and build upon each other’s expertise and responsibilities. Particularly as North Macedonia is taking on the OSCE Chairpersonship in a time in which the organization is facing unprecedented security challenges, returning to its core objective of maintaining security through cooperation and dialogue is the key objective; the OSCE PA will support the Macedonian Chairpersonship by all possible means to restore a minimum level of stability in the organization that will hopefully allow the OSCE to continue to carry out its basic functions.

Election Observation

In this reporting period, the International Secretariat deployed two elections observation missions, namely to the 2 October General Elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to the 8 November Midterm Elections in the U.S.A. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, 54 parliamentarians from 30 participating observed election day procedures in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska. As for the U.S., 121 parliamentarians from 36 countries were deployed across 8 states for election day. The size of both observation missions accounted among the highest participation in OSCE PA election observation missions, demonstrating the commitment and strong engagement of the parliamentarians of our Assembly to lend their contribution in helping to increase transparency and trust in the electoral systems of the OSCE region. The International Secretariat anticipates deploying election observation missions to the 2023 Turkish General Elections and 2023 Kazakh Legislative Election next.

III. Revision of the OSCE PA Rules of Procedures and Working Practices

In view of future activities, the International Secretariat continued to support the Subcommittee on Rules of Procedure and Working Practices in addressing past requests by the Assembly to optimize its impact, relevance as well as its efficiency and effectiveness through amendments to the Rules of Procedure which would, inter-alia, preempt conflicting interpretations on vitally important topics such as voting practices. Notably, the Covid-19 pandemic was a clear indicator that the rules, which were conceived when the OSCE PA was founded, do not account for the ever-evolving dynamics of the Assembly; as such, the agenda and areas of engagement of the Assembly have substantially diversified, and overall activities have seen a steep increase, particularly from 2016 onwards. Additionally, the introduction of the use of technological means has raised a number of additional questions, all of which require a general overhaul of the rules to best reflect the current practices of the Assembly in a comprehensive manner.

IV. Administration

Budget

I wish to sincerely thank the Assembly for its continued support by approving the 2022/2023 budget proposal, which will allow the International Secretariat to meet its commitments to implement the activities our parliamentarians wish to carry out. On this note, it is important to note that while the 2022/2023 budget is commensurate with the basic minimum needs of the Assembly in light of the increased level of activities, high inflation rates and continued economic uncertainty will require an even more vigilant budgetary approach, which is why I am grateful to the OSCE PA leadership and the Special Representatives for our common understanding to sensibly plan activities which are realistic and sustainable within our available resources.

On this note, I would also like to express my gratitude to the Danish and Austrian authorities for hosting and co-hosting our premises in Copenhagen and Vienna respectively, as well as Germany and Italy for seconding staff to the International Secretariat.

Staff

As previously stated in my report to the Standing Committee during this year's Annual Session, the International Secretariat continues to operate as a single entity with its Headquarters in Copenhagen, and its Vienna Office primarily coordinating with the OSCE Secretariat and Vienna based OSCE Institutions, including through regular exchanges with the Chairpersonship-in-Office and statements on the OSCE PA key activities and main political messages of the Assembly at the OSCE Permanent Council.

Further, as we continue to adjust to ever changing dynamics, the International Secretariat has recently introduced Town Hall Meetings, which serve as tool for greater transparency as it concerns the daily work of the Assembly and the Secretariat. The open Town Hall Meetings are also an opportunity to ask any questions concerning activities and administrative matters, and the most pressing issues on the agenda of the OSCE PA and OSCE.

As Covid-19 restrictions have been lifted in both Austria and Denmark, we have devised a working model requiring the physical presence of staff in both offices in Copenhagen and Vienna, with the option to telework up to 2 working days per week at an alternative work site. Nonetheless, this hybrid working model is based on a cautious and flexible approach, and dependent on the guidelines and recommendations issued by our respective host countries.

Lastly but certainly not least, I wish to thank the staff of the International Secretariat for their commitment and hard work, which lies at the heart of the Secretariat's support to the OSCE PA leadership and all of the Assembly's members.

Annex – OSCE PA Activities in the Reporting Period of July to November 2022

2022		
Event	Place	Date
PA ANNUAL SESSION	Birmingham	2 - 6 July
CfA - Helsinki +50 Group of Friends	Online	25 August
CfA - Helsinki +50 Webinar	Online	7 Sept.
Visit of VP Pritchard to the International Secretariat	Copenhagen	7-8 Sept.
CCT Chair participation at UN Congress of Victims of Terrorism	New York	8-9 Sept.
Austrian Delegation Visit to Secretariat	Copenhagen	12 Sept.
Visit to San Marino	San Marino	12-13 Sept.
2nd Committee Leadership Online Meeting	Online	15 Sept.
Town Hall Meeting SoDs	Online	16 Sept.
Migration Committee Meeting	Online	20 Sept.
President UNGA 77th Session	NYC	20 - 22 Sept.
SR Digital Agenda Visit to Helsinki on margins of Call for Action Seminar	Helsinki	22 Sept.
Helsinki +50 Seminar	Helsinki	22-23 Sept.
Assessment Visit Warsaw	Warsaw	26 - 27 Sept.
Warsaw Human Dimension Conference	Warsaw	26 Sept - 7 Oct.
President Visit to CPH Secretariat	Copenhagen	28 Sept.
EOM Bosnia & Herzegovina	Sarajevo	2 Oktober
SG Participation in CIS Conference on Election Standards	Online	7 Oktober
Town Hall Meeting with Members and SoDs	Online	14 Oktober
Conference of the Informal Silk Road Group	Istanbul	18 October
Meeting of Sub-Committee on Rules	Online	18 October
Call for Action Helsinki + 50 on Ukraine	Online	19 October
2nd Committee Consultation Meeting	Online	20 October
OSCE PA SG Partipation in OSCE Mediterranean Conference	Amman	24-25 October
President Participation in 1st Parliamentary Summit of the Crimea Platform	Zagreb	25 October
Meeting of Sub-Committee on Rules	Online	26 October
OSCE PA Women's Network Meeting	Online	27 October
Address to the OSCE Permanent Council	Vienna	27 October
President Participation in Baltic Assembly	Riga	27 - 28 October
EOM USA	DC	8 November
SR on Youth Visit to UN Headquarters NYC	New York	10 - 11 November
Meeting of the OSCE PA Informal Network of Young Parliamentarians	Yerevan	12 - 14 November
High Level Visit to North Macedonia	Skopje	14 - 15 November
PA AUTUMN MEETING	Warsaw	24-26 November