

OSCE PA webinar provides scientific input for policymaking on pollution and public health

Representatives of the scientific community spoke to OSCE parliamentarians Tuesday about the impacts of environmental pollution on health and climate change, stressing the need to promote a strong science-policy interface on these complex issues so that future environmental and development policies in the OSCE region will be informed by the latest scientific findings.

The focus of the Parliamentary Web Dialogue was on the threat to global security that environmental degradation represents and how it impacts socio-economic dynamics. Opening the event was Second Committee Chair Doris Barnett (Germany), who stressed that pollution is not only a contributor to climate change, but is also a contributing factor to COVID-19 infections. It is important therefore to develop timely and well-calibrated environmental protection policies and innovative development approaches based on the latest scientific evidence and international standards, Barnett said.

Parliamentarians heard from a number of recognized experts in the field, including from international organizations such as the World Health Organization and European Union, as well as respected academics from Mainz University and Stanford University. The speakers emphasized that particularly within the context



of the COVID-19 crisis, the problem of air pollution must be prioritized as a public health emergency. Parliamentarians raised issues related to the need for focusing on providing full funding to green programmes and to prioritize the most pertinent issues.

Second Committee Rapporteur Elona Gjebreja Hoxha (Albania) underlined the need for well-informed and coherent strategies and highlighted several areas in particular as important for developing a model in which economic, social, environmental, and public health factors are duly considered and balanced.

Secretary General Roberto Montella also spoke at the event, commending the Second Committee's leadership for pioneering an interdisciplinary approach to environmental security.

Meeting of OSCE PA Arctic delegations focuses on building co-operation, including on climate change

OSCE PA Special Representative on Arctic Issues Torill Eidsheim (Norway) chaired a meeting of OSCE PA members from Arctic countries on 21 May, noting that the strong spirit of co-operation in the High North should be reflected in the international community more broadly. It is important to work together to promote the concept of sustainable development in the Arctic by building synergies where possible, she said, stressing that the meeting served as an important opportunity to discuss the PA's engagement on the region.

"The Arctic is and must remain an area of peace and co-operation," Eidsheim said. Noting that as Special Representative, she has focused on raising awareness on the effects of the climate crisis on the Arctic ecosystem, she stressed its direct

impact on local communities. Eidsheim also offered congratulations to Iceland for its successful Chairmanship of the Arctic Council and wished success to the Russian Federation for its incoming Chairmanship.

In the discussion, members emphasized the sensitivity of the Arctic region, the need for both environmental protection and economic development, the imperative of developing international law in governing Arctic waters, and the impact of climate change. The military build-up in the region was highlighted as troubling, and the need for stronger regulations for shipping was also discussed. OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella spoke at the meeting, thanking Eidsheim for her work and urging synergy within the OSCE and with other organizations.

Migration Committee members meet with Head of Spanish Delegation for discussions on recent developments

Members of the OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Migration, including Chair Margareta Cederfelt (Sweden) and Vice-Chairs Farah Karimi (The Netherlands) and Gudrun Kugler (Austria), met Wednesday with the OSCE PA's Spanish Head of Delegation Pere Joan Pons for discussions about migration challenges facing Spain, particularly the situation in Ceuta and the Canary Islands. Cederfelt welcomed the opportunity to speak with Pons about the situation for unaccompanied minors, in particular, as well as efforts to combat human trafficking related to irregular migration.

Pons pointed out that migration is a European issue, not just a Spanish issue. Speaking about the exceptional influx of migrants last week in Ceuta, he underlined that Spain has worked to address the migrants' humanitarian needs while protecting

the EU's external borders. Ad Hoc Committee members raised questions about the political polarization over migration, as well as the state of relations between Morocco and Spain, and the situation on the Canary Islands. Pons said that the situation is now calm in Ceuta and reported that the migrants not under international protection have been sent back, drawing distinctions between the situation in the Canary Islands and Ceuta. He also called for more assistance from the EU and emphasized the need to rebuild trust with Morocco after the tensions that emerged last week.

Cederfelt looked forward to continuing discussions and to a field visit in the near future and welcomed the opportunity to include a member of the Spanish Delegation in the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration.

President and Special Rep conduct bilateral diplomacy with Central Asian OSCE delegations

The OSCE PA President and the PA's Special Representative on Central Asia have held meetings in recent days with the Permanent Representatives of several Central Asian countries to the OSCE. Meeting with the ambassadors of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan, Special Representative Reinhold Lopatka (Austria) discussed his work in the region and explored possibilities for deepening co-operation. Promoting engagement of

Central Asian parliamentarians in the work of the PA, particularly in election observation missions, was high on the agenda.

PA President Peter Lord Bowness met with the ambassador from Uzbekistan, Abat Fayzullaev, on Tuesday for discussions on the possibility of hosting OSCE PA meetings and plans to deploy an election observation mission for the presidential election in October.