



UNRCCA Strategic Dialogue Seminar
“Role of Parliaments in engaging Afghanistan into Central Asian
Co-operation Framework through Preventive Diplomacy”

(Tashkent, 12 September 2018)

Speech by OSCE PA Vice-President Azay Guliyev

Dear Mr. President,
Dear Ladies and Gentleman,

It is a pleasure for me to be in Uzbekistan and to represent the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly on behalf of President George Tsereteli.

I wish to thank the organizers for this opportunity to highlight the work of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in the region and its use of parliamentary diplomacy to increase dialogue and co-operation with the countries of Central Asia and also with Afghanistan.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly is well positioned to exert preventive diplomacy as it is a flexible organization with a variety of instruments at its disposal to increase engagement with particular countries or regions and to promote parliamentarism.

What Members of Parliament can do

MPs have specific leverages, ways and means to address the various types of crises and to contribute to post-conflict rebuilding.

MPs can open doors which only politicians can open and which professional diplomats or governmental representatives cannot. MPs also enjoy a greater

degree of freedom to launch public debates or make public statements on sensitive topics, thus testing public opinion and leading the way, before governments are ready to take an official stance.

MPs can also pave the way for negotiations and they can promote political dialogue at the level of parliaments, political parties and civil society.

MPs can also promote democracy by election monitoring.

The role of the OSCE PA in Preventive Diplomacy in Central and Eastern Asia

All five Central Asian countries are members of the OSCE and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. Afghanistan has been an Asian Partner for Co-operation of the OSCE and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly since 2003 and borders three OSCE participating States (Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). Partners for Co-operation can participate in a variety of OSCE PA activities such as statutory meetings, election observation missions, etc.

MPs from Central Asian countries, especially Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, have actively participated in OSCE PA events. In recent years the delegations of Uzbekistan and also Turkmenistan have also been regularly attending OSCE PA statutory meetings.

A number of presidential visits have also been organized to countries of Central Asia. In May 2017, then OSCE PA President Christine Muttonen visited Tashkent with the aim to encourage ongoing reforms and potential areas for co-operation with the OSCE PA. This was the first visit to Uzbekistan by a President of the OSCE PA in more than a decade and was intended as a follow-up to the participation for the first time since 2002 of a delegation from Uzbekistan in the OSCE PA Winter Meeting in February 2017 in Vienna.

Special Representatives and ad hoc groups

The OSCE PA has established a number of Special Representatives or ad hoc groups with a thematic or a regional focus which have played an important early warning as well as post-conflict rehabilitation role.

Some of these groups and representatives have particularly made use of the quasi-official status of parliamentary diplomacy. For example, the Parliamentary Team on Moldova a number of years ago was able to organize seminars engaging elected Members from both sides of the Dniester river, helping to establish constructive ties between Chisinau and Tiraspol.

In 2007 the OSCE PA established a **Special Representative for Central and Eastern Asia** (formerly Special Representative for Central Asia). The current mandate of the Special Representative is defined as follows:

- Encourage active participation by parliamentarians from Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan), as well as Mongolia, in the work of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to strengthen parliamentarism in the region;
- To support the work of the OSCE field missions in the region, as well as relevant OSCE institutions, international and regional organizations and diplomatic missions;
- Encourage closer contacts between the parliaments in the region to promote greater intra-regional cooperation in all three OSCE dimensions;
- Promote knowledge of the OSCE and its core principles in the OSCE Asian partner for co-operation countries, notably through building inter-parliamentary ties;
- Report to the President of the Assembly on developments in the region, including opportunities for enhanced parliamentary dialogue and further inter-parliamentary co-operation among the Central Asian states and Mongolia, as well as with Eastern Asia.

From 2008 to 2016, the OSCE PA had a **Special Representative on Afghanistan**, whose mandate was to report on the security and humanitarian situation in

Afghanistan; explore the ways in which the OSCE and the PA can enhance their contribution to the stabilization of the situation in the country; and sustain the development of dialogue with MPs from Afghanistan.

The OSCE PA **Ad Hoc Committees on Countering Terrorism and on Migration** are another potential instrument for preventive diplomacy as well as a forum for further engagement by MPs from Central and Eastern Asia and for parliamentary exchange on issues of common concern. While there are currently no members from the region in the two Committees, field visits and membership are being considered.

Election Observation

The OSCE PA regularly sends teams of parliamentarians to observe elections in different countries. These missions contribute to democracy in the country being observed and enable parliamentarians from other countries to learn about different approaches. A number of MPs from Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) have participated in election observation missions.

I have also personally led such missions in other countries including last presidential election in Kirgizstan. It is an enriching experience and encourages us parliamentarians to think about some of the fundamental elements of democracy.

Special Debates at OSCE PA Meetings

Special debates are usually organized at the **Winter Meetings** held every year in February in Vienna. Several special debates on the region and particularly on Afghanistan have been held for the last eight years.

While there is currently no dedicated forum on Central Asia, the OSCE PA **Autumn Meetings** such as the one held in Ulaanbaatar, in Mongolia in 2015 and the upcoming meeting in Bishkek in October 2018 provide the opportunity to highlight

issues of concern to the region and but which also have relevance for the rest of the participating States and serve to identify areas for enhanced regional co-operation.

Dear Ladies and Gentleman,

Let me say a few words about the OSCE and OSCE PA engagement with Afghanistan specifically. In 2003, Afghanistan became an Asian Partner for Co-operation of the OSCE and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

In 2007, acknowledging the impact of the situation in Afghanistan on security in the OSCE area, and underscoring the importance of long-term security and stability in Afghanistan for the OSCE region, in particular for Central Asia, the OSCE decided to strengthen its engagement with Afghanistan. Responding to a request from the Afghan Government, the OSCE agreed to provide assistance in the fields of border security, police training and combating drug trafficking.

Furthermore, in 2011, the OSCE agreed to widen its engagement with Afghanistan, from the politico-military dimension to also include the economic, environmental and the human dimension. OSCE participating States also underlined the importance of regional co-operation between Afghanistan and OSCE member States in Central Asia, and of the essential role of these Central Asian countries in helping to promote long-term security and stability in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan has participated in a number of statutory meetings of the OSCE PA, starting in 2009 at the 18th OSCE PA Annual Session in Vilnius. It has also sent delegations from both chambers of the Afghan parliament, including female MPs, to the 2015 Autumn Meeting in Ulaan Baatar, and the Winter Meetings in Vienna in February 2016 and 2017.

Resolutions

In **2012 at the Annual Session in Monaco**, the Parliamentary Assembly adopted a resolution calling for OSCE participating States to increase their contributions toward OSCE activities related to border security, civil policing training, and combating illegal forms of trafficking in Afghanistan.

The **2014 Baku Declaration** included a *Resolution on the OSCE's Further Engagement with Afghanistan*, which proposed a number of specific actions in the areas of combating terrorism and transnational crime. It also called upon the OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation to increase their contributions in all three dimensions of the OSCE as well as in cross-dimensional issues, to serve the well-being, peace and prosperity of the Afghan people, and for the promotion of OSCE values, standards and commitments.

In conclusion, let me re-assure all of you that the entire OSCE family stands ready to continue its support in promoting greater co-operation and integration among the countries of Central Asia and Afghanistan which have common geography and history, as well as strong cultural ties and enormous economic potential for mutually beneficial joint projects toward achieving the goals of peace, sustainable development, stability and security.

Thank you Mr. President.