

**Autumn Meeting of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly  
3-4 November 2021**

**Report of the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly  
Margareta Cederfelt**

Dear Members,

It was with deep gratitude that I have been presiding over the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly since our July 2021 Remote Session. Chairing an international assembly of over 300 parliamentarians represents a great challenge, even more so in these unusual times. Despite improvements in the global COVID-19 situation and a diminution of its impact on our core activities, this Autumn Meeting is taking place entirely online. While we all long to meet in-person again as soon as possible, hopefully on the occasion of the 2022 Winter Meeting, such meetings offer continuous opportunities to strengthen the position of our Parliamentary Assembly as **the venue for open discussions**.

Since my election, I have strived to focus on a **key set of priorities** while fully exploiting the reactivity of our organization to address **new challenges**.

The sudden Taliban capture of Kabul in August has brought **developments in Afghanistan** to the top of the international political agenda. As the international community adapts to this new reality, I found it crucially important that our Assembly engage fully with Afghanistan's neighbouring participating States to hear their perspectives, understand their concerns, and determine how the OSCE PA can offer its support. In August, online conversations with the Delegations of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan complemented exchanges with the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat, the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan, and the OSCE Programme Office in Dushanbe to best determine how to **safeguard regional stability**. Together with Vice-President Pia Kauma, our Special Representative on Central Asia, we paid official visits to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan at the end of October to further encourage international co-operation and strong OSCE engagement as essential tools to address the multiple security challenges emanating from Afghanistan.

Our Parliamentary Assembly must also continue to support our organization's key work to **resolve existing conflicts** in the OSCE area. In exchanges with speakers of the parliaments of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, and Ukraine, I have underlined the added value of parliamentary engagement in the conflict cycle, in complement to the mediation activities undertaken by the OSCE executive structures.

As President, I want our Assembly to carry on defending the work of the OSCE in all three dimensions and to fully embrace our duty to hold our governments to account, in particular

when it comes to **democratic principles and human rights**. I remain deeply concerned by their continued violations in Belarus, the shrinking space for civil society within the OSCE, as illustrated by the impossibility to hold the 2021 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, along with attempts to undermine OSCE election observation.

Many of you were planning on taking part in our election observation mission (EOM) for the parliamentary elections in the Russian Federation in September. I deeply regret that together with our partners from the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, we were not able to provide Russian citizens with a transparent and authoritative assessment of their elections, as we have consistently done since 1993. Despite our best efforts to seek a solution, including by complying with health-related requirements for our observers as we have done for every EOM deployed during the COVID-19 pandemic, the cancellation of our mission was unavoidable to protect our ability to independently determine the number of observers necessary to observe effectively and credibly, in line with the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation we have agreed to.

To adequately support my priorities, I have carried on with the longstanding efforts by previous PA Presidents and by the International Secretariat to **reinforce synergies** with other OSCE structures.

The circumstances have made it so that the first half of my presidential term coincides with the second half of the Swedish Chair of the OSCE, thus providing a unique opportunity to regularly exchange with the Chairperson-in-Office, Ann Linde. In early October, I took part in the OSCE Chair's visit to Bosnia-Herzegovina, an exercise which **strengthened co-operation between the executive and parliamentary dimensions of the OSCE** and which I hope can be reiterated in the future. Early in my term, in September, I addressed the OSCE Permanent Council to further highlight areas of co-operation within the OSCE, including the Women, Peace, and Security agenda, which has been a top priority of Sweden's Chairpersonship.

As part of my trips to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, I visited the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan (PCUz), the OSCE Programme Office in Dushanbe (POiD), and the Border Management Staff College (BMSC), where I expressed our collective support for the excellent work carried out by OSCE Field Operations. In Tajikistan, for instance, I visited a Women's Resource Center, which is part of a nationwide network of focal points established by the OSCE POiD offering community-based vocational training and counselling for survivors of domestic violence. These exchanges were a vibrant reminder of the very **concrete impact** the OSCE has on the lives of many citizens in our region, and the need to safeguard this key aspect of our organization.

In this context, I am troubled by the closure of the OSCE Observer Mission at the Russian Checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk and continued impediments to the work of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) in Ukraine. The **SMM's freedom of movement** must be unconditionally respected so the Mission can continue deliver impartial and transparent monitoring and reporting on the security situation in eastern Ukraine.

Within the PA itself, I have taken a number of decisions to reinforce my political priorities. As a longstanding Member of the Bureau, I felt it necessary to **empower our Assembly leaders**. I have therefore assigned a specific portfolio to our Vice-Presidents and our President Emeritus, through appointments as Chair of Ad Hoc Committees or as Special Representatives. In naming new Special Representatives, I have also created entirely **new portfolios** – on the Sustainable Development Goals, on Youth Engagement, and on Elderly Issues – which, combined with previously existing assignments, should further enable our Parliamentary Assembly to provide input to all debates of relevance to the OSCE.

Promoting inclusive debates and decision-making also requires that we do more to **support female and young leaders** in our Assembly. I will therefore continue to ensure equal representation whenever possible, such as in appointments for the leadership of our election observation missions and to our Ad Hoc Committees.

Evidently, a large part of our collective success relies on the **active engagement of all OSCE PA delegations** and strong political support from the national parliaments. I am grateful for your vigorous participation in all our meetings, as again demonstrated during this Autumn Meeting, and our activities in the field, in particular election observation. I have already been able to thank several of our Delegations for their contributions during visits to Warsaw, Athens, Tashkent, and Dushanbe.

Yet, to fully exploit the potential of the PA and the OSCE, there is more to be done. In our capitals, we need to redouble efforts to **increase the political attention given to the OSCE**. To do so, we should continue to engage in parliamentary debates about the work of our organization and we must carry on questioning our governments about the implementation of their commitments. These are messages that I have passed on to the leadership of our national parliaments at the 13th Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament and the 5th World Conference of Speakers of Parliament organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the Parliament of Austria in Vienna on 6-8 September, as well as during the European Conference of Presidents of Parliament held by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and the Hellenic Parliament in Athens on 21-22 October. Our Bureau's continued support for the Call for Action Initiative is also essential in that respect.

Finally, in the light of the upheavals of the past year and a half, let me express my gratitude for the excellent assistance provided by the International Secretariat to support my activities as President and the wide array of projects carried out by Members to promote comprehensive security in the OSCE region.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Cederfelt', written in a cursive style.

Margareta Cederfelt