



**OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President
Christine Muttonen (MP, Austria)**

26th Annual Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Concluding remarks | Minsk, 9 July 2017

Fellow parliamentarians, dear colleagues,

On behalf of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, I would like to extend our deepest gratitude to the Belarusian Parliament for the excellent organization of this Annual Session. Let us all give them a warm round of applause.

And thank you, dear colleagues, for being here in Minsk and for actively participating in all of our debates.

I think we have had a very fruitful meeting. Not only have we reached agreement on some of the most difficult issues of the day – and are issuing a very strong political document today – but we have also worked towards restoring the spirit of co-operation that we need so badly.

If there is one thing that stands out from our meetings over the past several days, it is a sense of urgency among our parliamentarians for effective action in addressing our challenges.

What is needed now is for us to return to our capitals and put our recommendations into action, hold our governments accountable, push them to live up to their commitments. As parliamentarians, we serve as the most direct link between our governments, international organizations like the OSCE, and our people.

In the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, we represent one billion people from Vancouver to Vladivostok. It is one-seventh of the world's population. As elected officials, this means that our collective voice, represented in the Minsk Declaration today, has a democratic legitimacy that is unrivalled and undeniable.

And let me personally add: the OSCE needs us more than maybe ever. This is why I want to express my gratitude to those colleagues from our Assembly who stand ready to take the responsibility for the OSCE as a whole.

The challenges we face are too big to face alone. We need international co-operation to address them effectively, if we ever hope to create a world that we can feel good about passing on to our children and grandchildren.

We can do it, but only if we work together.

I, for one, am encouraged by the spirit of co-operation that we have all felt here in Minsk. Of course, we might have differences and may fundamentally disagree on many important issues. But these differences, I think, are small in comparison to the things that we agree on: the need for comprehensive security, for enhancing trust to ensure peace and prosperity in the OSCE region.

I am especially pleased by the important work of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration, which has really stepped up to face the challenges posed by the refugee and migrant situation.

As you know, we have also agreed here in Minsk to a new ad hoc committee to exchange on the terrorist threat. I hope that this committee lives up to the challenge and contributes in a real way to making us more safe and secure.

Dear colleagues,

As I head into my second year as President of the Assembly, I would like to thank you for the confidence and the support you have given to me. And I look forward to continuing our good co-operation. It is an honour to serve you and our Assembly for another year.

Thank you very much.

Going forward, I will continue the work that I have pursued since being elected in Tbilisi last year. In particular, I will continue pushing governments to find solutions to our enduring challenges. This means working for an effective OSCE – including by filling the vacant positions that currently exist in the Organization – and increasing the involvement of the parliamentarians in OSCE, because we are the part that really functions. Thank you for that.

I will also continue to build bridges by promoting fora for dialogue within the OSCE area as well as external co-operation with countries on the periphery of the OSCE, and with other parliamentary assemblies and international organizations.

Concluding, let me just say thank you once again to our Belarusian hosts and to all who have contributed to our 26th Annual Session.

A special thank you goes out the staff behind the scenes handling the practical aspects of making this a successful meeting, the volunteers who have been so helpful, our friends in the International Secretariat, and of course, the interpreters who have done such an excellent job.

Thank you very much and I look forward to seeing you again in Andorra in the autumn. The 26th session of the OSCE's Parliamentary Assembly is closed.