



OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President George Tsereteli (Georgia)

Opening Session of the 17th Autumn Meeting

of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

3 October 2018

Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

Dear colleagues,

Dear friends,

Welcome to Bishkek!

Let me first introduce our hosts this evening.

We are honoured to have with us today the three highest office-holders in Kyrgyzstan:

His Excellency Mr. Sooronbay Jeenbekov, President of Kyrgyzstan;

His Excellency Mr. Dastanbek Jumabekov, the Toraga of the Jogorku Kenesh, and;

His Excellency Mr. Mukhammedkalyi Abylgaziev, Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan.

We are grateful for the hospitality of the Kyrgyz parliament and the support of your government for hosting us in Bishkek this week.

Your dedication over the past couple years makes it possible today for the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to debate crucial issues for Kyrgyzstan, Central Asia, and the rest of the OSCE region.

Биз Бишкекке келгенибизге абдан кубанып жатабыз. Бизди коноктогонунарга чон рахмат - Biz Bishkekke kelgenibizge abdan koobanym zhatabyz. Bizdi konoktogoononarga tchon rakhmat.

Mr. President,

Mr. Speaker,

Mr. Prime Minister,

Excellencies,

Fellow parliamentarians,

For many of us, this week will be a first visit to Kyrgyzstan. I hope that you make the most of these few days to discover Kyrgyzstan's landscape and its people, and forge a more intimate knowledge of this country's history and traditions.

Some of us – myself included – have already had the pleasure of experiencing Kyrgyzstan's hospitality.

In fact, we observed the presidential election here just last October, marking the ninth time the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly monitored elections in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Throughout those almost two decades of engagement, we have witnessed Kyrgyzstan's achievements in consolidating democratic values.

We are all thankful today for the opportunity given, through this conference, to shine a light on your country's continued efforts to advance reforms.

I am delighted that we will also exchange this week with representatives from our partner international organizations and Heads of OSCE Missions in Central Asia.

This will provide a great opportunity to highlight the value of the OSCE's work on the ground and discuss how our citizens benefit from our Organization in a tangible way.

It will also go to show the importance of good coordination both within the OSCE and with our international partners to successfully tackle the region's challenges.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our Autumn Meeting comes just three months after our Annual Session. It therefore offers a chance to follow up on our work and recall the recommendations we have made.

As we debated in Berlin, the challenges and the threats affecting the OSCE area are regrettably not decreasing. They are actually increasing and calling our Organization to unprecedented responsibility.

War is back in Europe. Protracted conflicts continue to claim lives. Hybrid warfare has become more sophisticated. Nationalism is spreading, and with it an increase in racism and intolerance. Fake news and cyber threats undermine our democratic systems. And the impact of migration flows have not yet been met with a convincing and consensual response.

The size and scope of these new challenges necessitates closer collaboration and constant communication between OSCE countries, OSCE institutions, and our international partners.

This year, our exceptionally good co-operation with the Italian Chairmanship has shown that we the OSCE voice carries more weight when we work together.

Unfortunately, we have seen within the OSCE a deterioration of trust take place to an alarming extent.

Fundamental disagreements have resulted in deadlock in Vienna. The basic functioning of our organization is threatened by disputes on issues such as the agenda for our main annual human rights meeting, just last month. I think we should continue to exchange to find a way out of this impasse.

These disagreements have eroded dialogue and entrenched existing conflicts. It has left unfulfilled the agreements that could bring an end to human suffering in Ukraine, or Georgia, or in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Absence of political will has not only hamstrung our Organization's mediation capabilities. It has also made it more and more difficult for us to address other possible problems that loom on the horizon.

Our citizens, the people we serve, expect and deserve better.

Dear Members,

As OSCE parliamentarians, we have a key role to generate political will in support of the implementation of OSCE commitments.

This also requires our Parliamentary Assembly to undertake internal reforms to increase the efficiency and the visibility of our work.

Together with the International Secretariat and our Bureau, we will continue to find new ways to draw on your expertise and work in a more inclusive manner in order to maximize our impact.

I visited last month both Yerevan and Baku to highlight our Assembly's continued engagement in the South Caucasus and discuss how parliamentary diplomacy can contribute to advancing peace in the region.

Twenty-four years ago, Kyrgyzstan played an active role in delivering the ceasefire agreement in Nagorno-Karabakh.

This week, Kyrgyzstan's rich traditions should remind us of the need for continued dialogue within the OSCE and our Parliamentary Assembly. In a country with a cultural heritage shaped by the Epic of Manas, we are reminded of the virtues of oral expression and creativity.

This should echo our never-ending commitment to dialogue and multilateral diplomacy in our quest for comprehensive security.

Dear friends,

We meet today under the timely theme of “Promoting security dialogue in Central Asia and beyond.”

As the past year has shown, we can find inspiration in the diplomatic breakthroughs that have taken place in the region.

Uzbekistan and Tajikistan signed in August a strategic partnership agreement putting an end to years of tension and mistrust. Recent efforts in this region related to the delineation of borders, reopening of flight connections between neighbours, landmark agreements on water management, and massive cross-border infrastructure projects should serve as an example to us all.

Our parliamentary conference will explore this week challenges relevant for all OSCE countries.

Tomorrow, we will debate how to counter new challenges and threats in border areas through confidence-building and regional co-operation.

We will also hold our annual Mediterranean Forum and consider how to best address migration, trade, and environmental challenges in Central Asia and the Mediterranean. We will hear from delegations who have travelled from Algeria, Israel, and Morocco.

By doing so, we will highlight that the OSCE’s Euro-Asian, Euro-Atlantic, and Mediterranean dimensions are not alternatives to one another. They are complementary to each other. This is also what makes the strength of our Organization.

Finally, I look forward to your contributions in our last session on “strengthening citizens’ engagement in building secure societies,” which will echo the robust participation of parliamentarians at this year’s Human Dimension Implementation Meeting.

It will be a good opportunity to emphasize the importance of youth engagement, increased participation of women, and a vibrant civil society in promoting our collective security.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We have a busy couple of days ahead of us, and I look forward to exchanging with all our partners present this week – Members from OSCE participating States and partner countries, OSCE institutions and field missions, our Kyrgyz hosts, the broader international community, and civil society – to promote security dialogue in Central Asia and all across the OSCE area.

Thanking once more our Kyrgyz hosts, I wish us all success over the next several days.

Let me now give the floor to the President of Kyrgyzstan, Mr. Sooronbay Jeenbekov.