

The President

To: Members of the OSCE PA Standing Committee

5 March 2024

Distinguished Members,
Dear Colleagues,
Dear Friends,

It is with great appreciation that I wish to thank you for your active participation in our recent Winter Meeting. Your valuable input contributed to the collective success of the event.

As you have witnessed, the debates in both Plenaries and in the three Committees proved overall excellent and have enabled constructive exchanges on current key priorities, both within and beyond the OSCE region. Personally, I was reassured to witness undisputed convergence on retaining Russia's war against Ukraine high on the Assembly's agenda, while also preserving active engagement in South-East Europe, the South Caucasus, Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Our discussions also reiterated concerns about developments in the Middle East.

Regarding the debates in the three Committees, they served to highlight emerging priorities, such as, inter-alia, the potential implications from increased reliance on Artificial Intelligence, environmental issues as well as the appalling situation with political dissidents and prisoners. All these important topics, confirm that we should preserve, if not strengthen, our Assembly's toolbox including through the ad hoc committees and the Special Representatives, who have constantly proven effective.

Overall, I think that our discussions have effectively served the purpose of (1) strengthening cooperation with the Executive Branch, (2) raising general awareness on our Assembly's work and on broader OSCE efforts and (3) contributing to shaping national and multilateral policies, most importantly through the unique prism of the OSCE. As you are aware, the Winter Meeting was originally established to strengthen our engagement with the OSCE's executive branch and to ensure that we can effectively contribute to the development of the institutional structures of the OSCE, as mandated by our Rules. I am confident that we have achieved this objective on this occasion.

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Equally important and helpful were, in my view, the discussions in the Standing Committee which, among other topics, enabled a helpful and constructive exchange with regards to the financial situation of the Assembly. Rest assured that I have taken careful note of all your comments. I have full confidence that, with genuine support from all of us, Secretary General Montella will identify a solution that the Treasurer can present and that meets the Assembly's needs while also reconciling your views and expectations. I will work closely with the Treasurer, the Secretary General and all of you in the runup to the adoption of the Budget in Bucharest.

As we move forward, please allow me to share, herewith below, a set of guiding principles which I believe could prove helpful in managing the financial challenges in the short to medium terms, not least aggravated by the budgetary void caused by the Russian Federation's decision not to comply with its financial obligations for two consecutive years.

- **Seek further efficiencies.** As the Treasurer and I have underlined at the Winter Meeting, we are very pleased that the extraordinary Integrated-Financial-Professional-Business-Audit has delivered a very positive outcome. This is good news indeed. From the reporting of the Secretary General, we can confirm that the search for efficiencies is embedded in the DNA of the International Secretariat as regular working methodology. The findings of the recent Integrated-Financial-Professional-Business-Audit, and those of subsequent audits, can be instructive. But to enable further efficiencies, greater **prioritization by us, parliamentarians, of thematic and regional dossiers** in which the Assembly is expected to accomplish a tangible contribution during the timeframe 2024-2026 may be necessary.
- **Introduce more effective contingency and strategic planning.** Complement prioritization efforts by introducing a two-year strategic plan for 2024-2026, as the basis for the new budget cycle (1 October 2024 – 30 September 2025). Strategic planning should be guided by the already initiated brainstorming among Bureau Members, and informed by planning in other OSCE offices, including Chairmanships and the Secretariat. Better contingency and strategic planning will aid **continuity and predictability.** In

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turn, this will also enable the International Secretariat to adapt and serve our Assembly with greater consistency.

- Empower the **Secretary General to increase fundraising activities** and explore **voluntary contributions from Member Parliaments**. As some members stated during the Standing Committee, voluntary contributions can make a strong impact on our ability to deliver more activities without resulting in mandatory proportional increases in the Budget. **Staff secondments** and other in-kind contributions are an important example of participating States' support. We must all be willing to pay our due share in full, on time and without preconditions, but **we should explore and appreciate those with additional capacity and readiness to contribute**.
- **Preserve election observation** as a flagship activity of the Assembly, in line with the credibility that EOMs and the relevant methodology have acquired over the years thanks to your commitment and dedication in aiming for democratic election processes and upholding cooperation with our partners in election observation.
- **Support the Secretary General in his prerogative of managing efficiently the International Secretariat**, considering responsibilities of **duty of care towards Staff**. We, as Members of the Assembly, should target our discussions on ensuring that the Secretariat has the appropriate tools to best support our work.

Confident that we can use the current situation as an opportunity to best prepare our Assembly to tackle the foreseeable future, allow me to thank you for granting careful consideration to the aforementioned principles and for supporting a consensual approach to budgetary matters.

Yours sincerely,



Pia Kauma