

REPORT

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly 17th Winter Meeting Vienna, Austria



22-23 February 2018

REPORT ON THE 2018 WINTER MEETING OF THE OSCE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

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Summary



The OSCE PA Winter Meeting is held every February at the OSCE's headquarters in Vienna.

Since February 2002, the OSCE PA has held an annual Winter Meeting at the Hofburg Congress Centre in Vienna. The second largest event in the OSCE PA calendar, the Winter Meeting provides an opportunity for the three General Committees to hold discussions on timely issues and to be briefed by high-level OSCE officials.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly gathered for its 17th Winter Meeting on 22-23 February in the Hofburg Congress Center in Vienna. Some 240 parliamentarians from 53 countries participated in the Winter Meeting, which consisted of meetings of the Assembly's Standing Committee and the General Committees, and included two joint sessions of the General Committees.

In the first joint session, parliamentarians heard speeches by OSCE PA President George Tsereteli, Italy's Undersecretary of State of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation Vincenzo Amendola, and OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger.

President Tsereteli focused his opening remarks on the potential for reviving the spirit of détente and dialogue that led to the founding of the OSCE in 1975. In his remarks, Undersecretary Amendola, representing the Italian Chairmanship of the OSCE, said that the main challenge for the Organization remains finding a solution to the crisis in and around Ukraine, and that Italy also confirms its commitment to finding a solution to all protracted conflicts – in Transdniestria, Georgia and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Secretary General Greminger said that the OSCE is needed more than ever to help countries rebuild trust and foster co-operation, and shared his intentions and views on making the OSCE "fit for purpose."

In the closing joint session, members heard reports from OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues Hedy Fry (Canada), Chair of

the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration Filippo Lombardi (Switzerland), and Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism Makis Voridis (Greece).

Also reporting to the joint session was the Chair of the Sub-Committee on the Rules of Procedure, Peter Bowness (United Kingdom), who discussed ideas for refining Assembly activities. Abid Qayyum Raja, Vice-President of

the Norwegian Parliament, shared Norway's experience in countering violent extremism.

The Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions held a debate on "Upholding democracy in an age of 'fake news'"

while the Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment held a debate on the theme, "Climate crisis: Developing long-term strategies to tackle climate change and its global consequences."

The Committee on Political Affairs and Security debated "Arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation: Challenges and opportunities for the OSCE area," which was introduced by Dr. Lassina Zerbo, the Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation.

Committee rapporteurs also presented to the General Committees their preliminary ideas for reports and draft resolutions to be prepared for the 27th Annual Session, being held in Berlin on 7-11 July.

On the margins of the Winter Meeting, the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration and the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism met to discuss ongoing and upcoming work.

"With the OSCE's founding spirit of co-operation and threat reduction in mind, we can look at the critical and complex challenges that we face today as potential areas for partnership and collaboration."

OSCE PA President George Tsereteli

Opening Joint Session of the General Committees



In his opening address, OSCE PA President George Tsereteli (Georgia) noted the unique opportunity provided by the Winter Meeting to exchange views between parliamentarians and representatives of the OSCE's executive structures. He welcomed the priorities of the Italian OSCE Chairmanship – such as the resolution of protracted conflicts, counter-terrorism and migration – and noted that they overlap considerably with the PA's agenda.

Regretting that the level of dialogue and trust within the OSCE area has reached a low point, the President pointed out that this could be seen as a historic opportunity to revive the OSCE. "After all, let us remember that this organization was founded in a Cold War climate of tension and mistrust," he said. "If it wasn't for those tensions and a common desire of our governments to reduce the threat of war, this organization probably would not exist." In that spirit of co-operation, he said, the complex challenges that we face today can be seen as potential areas for partnership and collaboration.

Vincenzo Amendola, Under Secretary of State of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation of Italy, representing the Italian OSCE Chairmanship

Vincenzo Amendola stressed the importance of parliamentary diplomacy in advancing all dimensions of the OSCE. He thanked the PA for its work in this domain and commended the OSCE for finding the political will to agree to a unified budget to ensure the continuity of OSCE activities. The Under Secretary stated that Ukraine remains at the top of the OSCE's agenda, highlighting the key role of the SMM and the Minsk Agreements and reiterating the



Chairmanship's support for the Trilateral Contact Group. He also expressed support for the 5+2 format for the Transdniestria settlement negotiations, and the Minsk Group working on Nagorno-Karabakh.

In this respect, Amendola mentioned that the agreements reached under Ambassador Andrzej Kasprzyk are a positive step forward in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. He encouraged strengthened co-operation with the Partners for Co-operation to further connect Europe with Africa and Asia and commended the work of the PA's Ad Hoc Committee on Migration, as well as the OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities.

Amb. Thomas Greminger, Secretary General of the OSCE

Secretary General Greminger emphasized his intention to strengthen the OSCE, adapting it to the needs of participating States. He stated that in light of the current political climate and financial situation, the organization requires reform in three main areas: inclusive dialogue and joint action; establishing a unifying agenda; and leveraging partnerships. Greminger expressed desire to deepen co-operation with the PA and to better engage parliamentarians.

Following a review of the Secretariat, the SG plans to allocate resources according to the priorities of participating States and optimize the work of field operations. Underlining his objective to enhance the extrabudgetary and secondment system and to introduce a multi-year planning process and biennial budgeting, he urged parliamentarians "to include specific references to the OSCE in government work plans, to hold hearings on OSCE-related issues, and to generate support for its work."

Opening Joint Session of the General Committees



Thomas Greminger

Statements

Ivan Brajovic, Speaker of the Parliament of Montenegro, regretted that there is continuing lack of adherence to the principles of the Helsinki Final Act. He pointed out that Montenegro's next election cycle will be held under reformed electoral legislation, which he said demonstrates the country's commitment to democratic principles.

Hakim Benchamach, Speaker of the House of Council of the Kingdom of Morocco, commended his country's fruitful co-operation with the OSCE and stressed the country's commitment to this partnership. Noting that Morocco has been fully engaged in dealing with terrorism as well as migration-related issues, he stressed the need to address the threat of organized crime and terrorism, the root causes of migration and revive Mediterranean co-operation. Lastly, he invited the PA to hold its 2019 Autumn Meeting in Morocco.

Richard Hudson (United States) elaborated on the crisis in and around Ukraine and asked Greminger for an update on how to ensure that SMM monitors can do their job safely and effectively. Sofio Katsarava (Georgia) stated that resolution of protracted conflicts is one of Georgia's top priorities. Artur Gerasymov (Ukraine) stressed the need for a UN mission to Ukraine while Hermine Naghdalyan (Armenia) asked about the steps the OSCE

Secretariat can undertake to assist Armenia in the implementation of OSCE commitments.

Former PA President Ilkka Kanerva (Finland) welcomed reform guidelines of the SG and commended the co-operation between governments and parliaments. He also expressed support for the idea of a peacekeeping operation in Ukraine. Francesco Sorbara (Canada) stressed the importance of strengthening a gender perspective and commended Italy for its work in this domain as well as on migration. He asked the Chairmanship how the OSCE can ensure that migrants fully utilize their economic potential once they arrive in the country of destination. Costel Neculai Dunava (Romania) stressed that the resolution on the Moldova conflict is on the top of their agenda.

Director Paul Bekkers referred to the crisis in and around Ukraine as the top priority stressing that to ensure the safe and efficient work of the SMM a security plan has been designed. He explained that the Secretariat developed a plan for assisting the people in Armenia within five weeks after the closure of the OSCE mission. He assured Finland that there are contacts with the UN, but the SG relies on the political level of the Chairmanship and others.

Vincenzo Amendola stressed that the crisis in and around Ukraine is at the top of the Chairmanship's agenda. He explained that in regard to a possible UN peacekeeping operation, it is a decision to be made by the UN Security Council. He reiterated the Chairmanship's full commitment to the resolution of protracted conflicts. He also noted that that the CiO will report to the Security Council at the upcoming UN meeting, and explained that the UN is promoting the Global Compact of Migration, addressing the economic aspects of migration.

Migration & terrorism ad hoc committees meet in Vienna

The OSCE PA's Ad Hoc Committee on Migration and its Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism (CCT) met on the margins of the Winter Meeting. Chaired by Makis Voridis (Greece), the CCT met on 22 Feb. and reviewed activities implemented since the committee was established last year and discussed upcoming work. The migration committee met on 23 Feb. and appointed Nahima Lanjri (Belgium) as its chair. She succeeds Filippo Lombardi (Switzerland).



Nahima Lanjri, George Tsereteli and Filippo Lombardi





General Committee on Political Affairs and Security



Chair Filippo Lombardi (Switzerland) opened the session of the Committee on Political Affairs and Security on 23 February. He underlined that after years of relative dormancy since the end of the Cold War, the OSCE has been revived with the crisis in and around Ukraine and has demonstrated its value in preventing escalation and providing formats of dialogue and negotiation. On this note, he pointed to the “blocked” security situation facing the OSCE region today and emphasized the Parliamentary Assembly’s duty to contribute to the OSCE’s tools in overcoming the current stalemate.

Kristian Vigenin, Rapporteur of the First Committee

Speaking on behalf of Rapporteur Kristian Vigenin, Lombardi outlined his preliminary report, which addressed central OSCE commitments, their implementation, and the role of parliaments in that process. Lombardi noted the importance of the full and complete implementation of the organization’s principles, especially given political realities facing the OSCE.

Vigenin’s report focused on confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) at the disposal of the OSCE, such as the Vienna Document, which contains comprehensive provisions for the exchange of military information. Speaking on behalf of the Rapporteur, Lombardi furthermore addressed various other commitments made in the first dimension of the OSCE’s work by participating States, specifically the OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), the Conventional Forces Treaty (CFE), and the

Treaty on Open Skies. The final commitment addressed was the Politico-Military Code of Conduct, which regulates the democratic control of armed forces, and for which the OSCE has a number of tools to ensure implementation and oversight.

Lombardi went on to outline the central means of implementation available to the OSCE that help promote implementation of commitments made by participating States.

Maria Victoria Gonzalez Roman, Chairperson of the Security Committee of the OSCE Permanent Council, Permanent Representative of Spain to the OSCE

Amb. Gonzalez Roman emphasized illicit trafficking as one of the most serious threats to security and stability in the OSCE region today. The ambassador noted that combatting trafficking and its links with terrorism and organized crime would constitute an overarching topic in the agenda of the Security Committee in 2018. She said that weapons, drugs, cultural heritage and human beings are all subject to the risk of trafficking, and these cross-border phenomena are closely linked to organized crime and terrorism.

Amb. Gonzalez Roman furthermore highlighted the role of women in the security sector. She noted that this was a high priority of the Italian Chairmanship and one that would be discussed by the committee and which would permeate its debates throughout the year. Finally, she noted that cybersecurity will be addressed by the Security Committee in form of a meeting devoted to “Confidence-building in the cyber arena.”

Radomir Bohac, Chairperson of the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation, Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the OSCE

Amb. Bohac briefed parliamentarians on the priorities of the Forum for Security Co-operation under its current Slovak Chairmanship. One of these has been raising awareness on the endeavors of other organizations that work in parallel to the OSCE. In this context the FSC

General Committee on Political Affairs and Security

has organized security dialogues introducing the contributions of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO), as well as by NATO and the United Nations Development Programme, for example in countering threats arising from the illicit spread of small arms and light weapons.

Amb. Bohac further emphasized the importance of continuing the FSC's support of the Structured Dialogue as a means of ensuring reliability and transparency of military information, by providing a platform for constructive engagement of participating States. Another activity of the FSC under the Slovak Chairmanship has been to reinvigorate the Vienna Document.

While the ambassador noted that agreements on any Vienna Document proposals were unlikely in the near future, he stressed that a dialogue can be promoted at a technical level on carefully selected CSBMs, which can contribute to reducing tensions and lowering risks of military escalation.

Lamberto Zannier, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM)

Amb. Zannier spoke of the work of the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) and his mandate of preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution. He argued that most of the protracted conflicts of the OSCE area revolve around situations of minorities who have not yet integrated in the context of politicized processes. He continued to say that conflicts involving national minorities are one of the key challenges confronting our society today.

His remarks focused on the HCNM's development of a set of guidelines on sustainable integration of minorities into society, which are applied by the HCNM. These are updated according to new challenges facing the HCNM, to be more effectively applied to the challenges that minorities face today. In this context, he underlined that certain issues were not present when the office of the HCNM was created in 1993, such as the risk of lack of integration leading to marginalization of certain groups within society, which can lead to radicalization and terrorism.

The HCNM stressed that avoiding segregation in education and promoting



Lamberto Zannier reports to the First Committee.

inclusivity contributes effectively to promoting the integration of minorities. Before closing, Amb. Zannier announced the launch of the HCNM's new Guidelines on the Use of Minority Languages in Broadcast Media.

Debate: Arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation: challenges and opportunities for the OSCE area

The debate was opened by Lassina Zerbo, Executive Secretary of the CTBTO, who emphasized the immediacy of the current threat of nuclear escalation, and the worldwide decline in trust in nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. In this context, Dr. Zerbo emphasized the pressure that key nuclear disarmament and arms control treaties are under today, among these the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which is a unique and powerful multilateral instrument that has solidified the norm against nuclear testing and has increased transparency.

Dr. Zerbo emphasized the important role of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly as an organization with strong potential to support the work of the CTBTO. He underlined that as a facilitator with direct links to civil society, the OSCE PA can be seen as a force multiplier and partner to the CTBTO.

Dr. Zerbo concluded by emphasizing the gravity of the current situation, saying: "Never before has the situation of mankind reached such a touch-and-go point. Let us work tirelessly to tackle these most serious challenges. We can make the world a safer and better place, starting by banning nuclear tests once and for all."





General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment

Committee Vice-Chair Artur Gerasymov (Ukraine) opened the meeting and presented the agenda. Presentations were delivered by Rapporteur Sophio Katsarava (Georgia) who shared ideas and intentions regarding her report to be considered at the 27th Annual Session in Berlin, Ambassador Kairat Sarybay, Chair of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Committee, and Vuk Zugic, Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities.

Sofio Katsarava, Rapporteur of the Second Committee

The rapporteur said that promotion of good governance and reducing corruption are at the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals as well as the Open Government Partnership (OGP), currently chaired by Georgia. Katsarava expressed her intention to put the OGP higher on the agenda of OSCE participating States. Since the definition of open governance is expanding, it should be strengthened to provide people with the opportunity to influence the governmental decisions that affect their daily lives. On this, Katsarava presented a roadmap based on three goals: strengthening e-governance and citizens' engagement; advancing transparency and the fight against corruption; and generating innovation in public service delivery.

Recalling the OSCE PA's 2017 Minsk Declaration, Katsarava once again underlined the importance of institutional co-operation in the fight against corruption and financial crimes as well as considering options on implementing a carbon fee for heavily polluting industries.

On climate change, Katsarava noted that the era of implementing the Paris Agreement has begun. The OSCE, she pointed out, includes many of the world's largest energy producers, consumer and transit countries that must continue to prioritize activities in the field of energy security, sustainable energy, water management and hazardous waste management.

Exacerbated by climate change, natural disasters have led to a concerning increase of environmental migration, she noted. Displacement because of natural disasters is 60 per cent more probable today than it was 40 years



Rapporteur Sofio Katsarava presents her report.

ago, she said. The growing number of forcibly displaced persons should thus raise the alarm and call for immediate action by participating States, she said, noting that it's time for governments to address the root causes of these phenomena and promote legal migration. The rapporteur concluded by emphasizing the importance of increasing the involvement of legislative branches in discussing the way forward to addressing these issues.

Kairat Sarybay, Chair of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Committee

Ambassador Sarybay welcomed the outcome of the last Ministerial Council which adopted a declaration on promoting economic participation and co-operation, demonstrating the potential of discussion in the second dimension. Amb. Sarybay affirmed that the second dimension has the role of bridge builder, a tool to foster prosperity and security in the region, and reinvigorating it would produce a tangible impact in strengthening co-operation among OSCE countries. The ambassador also called for enhancing inclusive dialogue on the Italian Chairmanship's priorities, which has expressed the intention to involve more delegations in EEC meetings.

Presenting an outline of EEC activities for 2018, Amb. Sarybay introduced the main areas on which the committee will focus this year: transport development, circle economy, regional and sub-regional integration, smart cities and environmental risks. To better highlight the project in the second dimension, the ambassador suggested increasing the interac-

General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment



Artur Gerasymov chairs the Second Committee meeting.

tion with field operations and to encourage an inclusive and multi-stakeholder approach to boost co-operation.

Vuk Zugic, Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities

Ambassador Zugic presented the work of the office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, which organizes its activities following the priorities of the Chairmanship and developments in international politics. In this respect, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has a fundamental role, and many activities implemented in the past match with its goals.

Amb. Zugic stressed the importance for the OSCE of the PA working co-operatively with OSCE executive structures, the field operations and Mediterranean Partners.

The ambassador then presented the thematic priorities for 2018, chosen following a demand-driven approach based on requests of assistance received by participating States. In the economic area the priorities are enhancing connectivity; implementing projects and supporting capacity-building in preventing and combating corruption; sharing of expertise in combating money laundering and financing of terrorism; and sharing best practices on migration governance. In the environmental area, the priorities are to support long-term environmental policy processes by promoting good water governance and trans-boundary water co-operation in particular in the South Caucasus, Eastern Europe and Central Asia; enhancing disaster risk reduction; contribut-

ing to policy debate and fostering co-operative responses to climate change and related security risks. On energy security, activities will be aimed at strengthening the resilience of non-nuclear critical energy networks, increasing energy efficiency and sharing renewable energy.

Debate: “Climate crisis: Developing long-term strategies to tackle climate change and its global consequences”

Gerasymov opened the debate recalling the Minsk Declaration, which calls for the acknowledgement of the urgency of addressing climate change and its consequences, and urges calling all participating States to ratify the Paris Agreement.

Amb. Zugic discussed the World Economic Forum’s Global Risk Report, which listed climate change among the top five risks to the world. The ambassador underlined the importance of climate diplomacy as a good entry point for contributing to conflict prevention, broadening relations among countries and improving neighbourhood policies.

Issues discussed during the debate included the role of agriculture and deforestation in aggravating global warming due to the high emissions of greenhouse gasses caused by composts and fires. In this area, responsible agricultural strategies must be encouraged, including through more investments needed to reduce emissions in the atmosphere. Another risk that was noted is desertification, which severely affects the energy demand of some countries.

Human-induced climate change is jeopardizing economic growth and requires both mid-range and long-term plans, with holistic approaches to mainstream climate change governance in all aspects of legislation and policy-making, it was pointed out. Climate change was cited as one of the root causes of migration, with the new category of environmental refugees that are not covered by the 1951 Refugee Convention which should, thus, be adapted or paired with a new specific convention.





General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions



Ignacio Sanchez Amor chairs the Third Committee.

Opening the meeting of the Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions on 22 February, Chair Ignacio Sanchez Amor (Spain) described some of his main areas of concern regarding human rights in the OSCE region. He stressed the importance for all OSCE countries to respect their democratic commitments, pointing out that human rights challenges exist in all participating States.

The Chair highlighted the continued humanitarian challenge posed by the refugee and migrant crisis, and warned against the development of populist trends among governments. He stressed the number of human rights issues that have arisen since the coup attempt in Turkey in July 2016, and thanked his Turkish colleagues for their continued willingness to maintain open dialogue with the PA.

Kyriakos Hadjiyianni, Rapporteur of the Third Committee

Kyriakos Hadjiyianni (Cyprus) outlined ideas for his report and draft resolution to be considered at the 27th Annual Session in Berlin. The rapporteur indicated that he would focus on the ways in which OSCE participating States can address the continued deterioration of the human rights situation throughout the OSCE area. He outlined the need for the OSCE to strengthen its monitoring activities, aiming at promoting the rule of law and human rights. He called for youth and children to be a strategic priority of OSCE advocacy activities and highlighted that still too many children are deprived of access to education in the OSCE region. The rapporteur also stressed the need for the OSCE to define a long-term strategy on tolerance, to

counter the growing manifestations of racism and xenophobia, and to promote understanding and co-operation as the fundamentals of stable inclusive democracies. The rapporteur also shared his concerns over the human rights situation in Ukraine, in Turkey, and in the Western Balkans where tensions grow more polarized and aggressive nationalistic voices are gaining prominence.

Finally, the rapporteur stated that the basis of world order is democracy, the rule of law, and fundamental rights and freedoms. He called on the members of the Assembly to press their governments to implement all of the resolutions adopted by the PA and to uphold the common principles and values of the OSCE.

Sian MacLeod, Chair of the Human Dimension Committee of the Permanent Council and Head of the United Kingdom Delegation to the OSCE

Ambassador MacLeod described her plans for the year, noting that her intention was to continue the discussion of emerging challenges. She pointed out that it has been several years since the OSCE was able to agree on new human dimension commitments. During the December Vienna Ministerial Council no new agreements were made on human dimension commitments, however Amb. MacLeod welcomed the energetic discussions and negotiations that were held. Regarding media freedom, she welcomed the discussion of the risks female journalists face, including online, as well as media literacy and the right to information and freedom of expression.

Amb. MacLeod praised the proposal made by the OSCE's 2017 Austrian Chairmanship for the monitoring of the freedom of peaceful assembly. She praised the proposal of the Austrian Chairmanship aimed at overcoming disagreement on how intolerance and discrimination on grounds of religion can be best addressed. She expressed regret that this proposal was opposed by some delegations. Amb. MacLeod welcomed the adoption by the Ministerial Council of a cross-dimensional agreement on strengthening efforts to prevent trafficking

General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions

in human beings. She regretted the failure of the Ministerial Council to adopt a cross-dimensional text aimed at tackling violence against women and expressed her determination to work with all OSCE executive structures and field missions, to promote gender equality throughout the organization and the OSCE region.

Ingibjorg Solrun Gísladóttir, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Director Gísladóttir emphasized the value of co-operation between ODIHR and the Parliamentary Assembly on activities including election observation, and also stressed the importance of the human dimension to the work of the OSCE as a whole. Gísladóttir went on to mention several other areas where co-operation between the OSCE PA and ODIHR could be expanded, such as the enhancement of the participation of women in political life. She noted that it was the 15th anniversary of the action plan aimed at improving the situation of Roma and Sinti populations within the OSCE region. She called for more efforts to be made, and further co-operation to be explored, for example regarding the inclusion of Roma women in politics.

Harlem Desir, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

Harlem Desir pointed out that since his appointment as OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media in July 2017, he had intervened more than 130 times with OSCE participating States, with many cases related to the safety and freedom of journalists. The Representative on Freedom of the Media stressed that the OSCE is the only security organization that has enshrined freedom of the media as a component of security. He stressed the gravity of the issue of the safety of journalists, calling for particular attention to be paid to the situation of female journalists. He highlighted that censorship was not the answer to the problem



Kyriakos Hadjiyianni presents his report.

of fake news and recalled that the role of parliamentarians in the definition of legislation was central. Desir finished his remarks noting that strong co-operation between civil society, politicians, institutions, and international organizations in the areas of freedom of expression and of the media is necessary to build strong societies and democracy in general.

Debate: Upholding democracy in an age of 'fake news'

The debate was introduced by Prof. Bradley Wiggins, Head of the Media Communications Department of the Webster Vienna Private University. Prof. Wiggins highlighted that the main challenge when addressing the issue of "fake news" was to avoid bias and maintain critical thinking at all times. He called for a workable definition of fake news in order to effectively tackle the issue, noting that fake news in general is not a new issue. What makes it seem new, he said, is the immediacy provided by mobile technologies and social media.

The debate that followed featured a range of opinions on the issue of fake news. There was general agreement on the point that the OSCE PA must stand for the freedom of the media. Delegates highlighted the need to promote media literacy and to build the population's resilience to misinformation. Delegates called for the adoption of a comprehensive approach of the issue, and to balance the need for protection with the need to uphold human rights and freedom of information. Delegates also pointed out that public broadcasters must play a central role in countering fake news and political propaganda.





Closing Joint Session of the General Committees

President Tsereteli opened the session, provided a brief overview of the agenda, and welcomed former President Christine Muttonen. In her remarks, Muttonen thanked Tsereteli and noted the personal significance of her time in the Assembly. She emphasized that the OSCE PA can serve as a bridge-builder if it appreciates the similarities and differences between OSCE countries. She called for new momentum in all bodies of the OSCE and solidarity among participating States.

Anna Birchall, Deputy Prime Minister of Romania, noted that although her time at the OSCE PA has been short, it was fruitful. She thanked Tsereteli and Muttonen for their support and called on the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism to continue its good work. She noted with pride that the Romanian Parliament has agreed to hold the OSCE PA Annual Session in July of 2021.

Peter Bowness, Chair of the Sub-Committee on Rules of Procedure and Working Practices

Peter Bowness (United Kingdom) presented his paper, which focused on areas of improvement within OSCE PA working procedures. He urged that more attention be paid to the work of Ad Hoc Committees and Special Representatives. He expressed his view that parliamentarians lack sufficient time for substantial debates at PA meetings and encouraged the PA to make its activities more relevant and improve the quality of debates.

Hedy Fry, OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues

Hedy Fry (Canada) welcomed the 2016 Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the OSCE 2004 Action Plan on the Promotion of Gender Equality, as well as the efforts to mainstream gender within the OSCE. She noted, however, that there has been a steady decline in the role of women in leadership positions at the OSCE. She also regretted the limited number of women being seconded by OSCE participating States to work in field operations. Fry expressed concern over the failure of the OSCE 2017 Ministerial Council to adopt two draft decisions on gender equality. She stressed



Hedy Fry delivers her report.

the important role that women play in sustainable peace within and among nations and called for enhanced participation of women throughout the conflict cycle.

In the debate, members noted that the role of parliamentarians is central in sending a strong message against domestic violence and discussed the effectiveness of gender quotas in parliament. Women's involvement in international politics has been improving, it was noted, while members stressed that special attention should be given to the protection of women belonging to vulnerable groups. Members also noted that follow-up measures to the Resolution on "Promoting Gender Inclusive and Responsive Mediation" adopted in Minsk in 2017 should be pursued within the PA. They called for more attention to women in post-conflict situations and encouraged the male members of the Assembly to take more active part in the discussions.

Fry called on parliamentarians to work with their governments to foster the secondment of women for OSCE positions and emphasized the intersectionality of the issues of gender equality which are linked to questions of religion, gender, and security.

Filippo Lombardi, Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration

Filippo Lombardi (Switzerland) noted that an overview of recent activities in the Committee can be found in the report. He explained that the main priorities of the Committee are the need to: (1) agree on common procedures for asylum seekers, returnees, so-called safe countries and third country nationals; (2) address the conditions of the migration crisis of 2015;

Closing Joint Session of the General Committees



Makis Vouridis opens the debate on counter-terrorism on 23 February 2018.

(3) refocus international efforts on migration issues; (4) design safe, legal routes for migrants; as well as (5) adopt an OSCE PA resolution on migration.

In the discussion parliamentarians noted the record number of migrants and emphasized that it is not only a security and economic issue, but also a human rights issue. Members urged the adoption of measures to ensure the safety of minors. It was also noted that refugee and migrant issues should not overshadow the issue of internally displaced persons, which is equally important.

Lombardi agreed that more attention on IDPs is required. He stressed that migration has both positive and negative effects, underlining that human trafficking has become the most lucrative business for organized crime.

Makis Vouridis, Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism

Makis Vouridis (Greece) provided an overview of the structure and mandate of the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism (CCT), underlining that it is focused on creating a better understanding of current trends and fostering strategic partnerships with key counter-terrorism stakeholders. He discussed activities such as the official visits to Morocco, Belgium, and OSCE and UNODC offices in Vienna. Vouridis highlighted the need to work closer on a number of issues, such as co-ordination of efforts and information-sharing, ensuring balance between counter-terrorism measures and human rights obligations; integration and de-radicalization; return of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs); and cyber threats. He further outlined the Committee's upcoming activities and mentioned that

its members intend to propose a resolution on VERLT for consideration of the PA at its Annual Session in Berlin.

Abid Qayyum Raja, Vice-President of the Parliament of Norway

Abid Qayyum Raja (Norway) delivered an address focusing on the issues of terrorist attacks in Europe as well as the phenomena of foreign terrorist fighters. He noted that more than 170 attacks took place in Europe in the last three years and talked about the ways to reduce the risk and counter recruitment of terrorists, as well as the re-integration of FTFs. Raja stressed that a negative public attitude towards Muslims leads to marginalization and radicalization, emphasizing the need to engage moderate Muslims in preventive activities as well as to foster integration and inclusion.

Following the keynote addresses, members took the floor to discuss the recent CCT visit to Belgium, noting that it helped exchange best practices on response and preventive mechanisms. The need to continue working on such important issues as financing of terrorism, FTFs and returnees.

Other topics included data-sharing and promoting co-operation between the US and the EU. Members stressed the importance of fulfilling human rights obligations while implementing counter-terrorism policies and effectively countering online propaganda.

Chair Vouridis stressed that counter-terrorism efforts at the national level are of utmost importance and underlined the need for governmental agencies to establish regular information-sharing channels. He further called on OSCE participating States to focus on addressing the root causes of radicalization.

Standing Committee Meeting



The Standing Committee consists of the OSCE PA's Heads of National Delegations and members of the Bureau. Meeting three times a year – at the Winter Meeting, Annual Session and Autumn Meeting – the Standing Committee guides the work of the Assembly, approves its budget and elects the Secretary General.

President Tsereteli opened the OSCE PA Standing Committee meeting on 22 February by welcoming the new heads of delegation and presenting his report.

The President mentioned his recent address to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe's Standing Committee, in which he highlighted the role of the OSCE in addressing the transformation of Europe and called for continuing dialogue between the OSCE and the Council of Europe to strengthen international co-operation, in particular to address migration and counter-terrorism issues.

A priority of his presidency, Tsereteli said, is to ensure that the OSCE is fully equipped to address current threats such as terrorism, cybersecurity, growing political and social tensions, erosion of democratic standards, radicalization, and organized crime. At the same time, the OSCE must continue upholding the principles of the Helsinki Final Act and promote common values. The same concepts were reiterated in a presentation delivered at the OSCE Permanent Council, President Tsereteli said.

Another priority of the President is redoubling OSCE efforts in conflict resolution, especially related to conflicts in Ukraine and Georgia, as well as the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Tsereteli stressed this issue during his visit to the United States, in which underlined the importance of co-operation with the UN in these activities as well as in countering terrorism and migration. Tsereteli emphasized the importance of increasing the participation of women in the work for peace and security.

Concluding, the President reported on his meetings with the Italian Chair-in-Office, the Representative for Freedom of the Media and the OSCE Secretary General, urging strong co-operation between OSCE Institutions.

The meeting continued with a debate on current political issues, in which MPs discussed

topics such as the crisis in and around Ukraine and the Minsk Agreements, the spread of nationalism, human rights protection, territorial integrity, protracted conflicts, migration and "fake news."

The Standing Committee further discussed recent OSCE PA activities both on election observation missions and on the activities of the Special Representatives. On this, presentations were delivered by SR on Mediation Ilkka Kanerva (Finland); SR on Mediterranean Affairs Pascal Allizard (France), and SR for Eastern Europe Kent Harstedt (Sweden). SR for the South Caucasus Kristian Vigenin (Bulgaria) presented his final report before stepping down from his post.

Treasurer Doris Barnett (Germany) provided an update on the PA budget and noted that the auditor's report offered a positive assessment of the Assembly's financial management. She also discussed the value of working co-operatively with other international organizations.

OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella presented his report welcoming the enhancing of the PA's relations with the governmental side. Following a results-oriented approach the efficiency of the whole OSCE structure must be strengthened, he said. Montella stated that the parliamentary dimension is the democratic backbone of the organization and parliamentarians have the unique possibility of being critical and solicit concrete actions.

Montella further acknowledged that the work of the OSCE can be seen concretely in the field operations, which work in direct contact with local populations that enjoy the benefits of OSCE presence.

Concluding, the Secretary General welcomed the co-operation with ODIHR and other parliamentary assemblies in election observation missions and called for maintaining and strengthening the credibility of OSCE.







**GENERAL PROGRAMME OF THE 17th WINTER MEETING
OF THE OSCE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY**
Vienna, 22 –23 February 2018

Thursday, 22 February 2018

- 09.00 – 11.45 **Standing Committee Meeting** (*Ratsaal, 5th floor*)
- 12.00 – 13.15 **Joint Session of the three General Committees:** (*Neuer Saal, 2nd floor*)
- 13.15 – 15.15 Lunch Break
- 15.15 – 18.00 **General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions**
(*Neuer Saal, 2nd floor*)
- 15.15 – 18.00 **General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment** (*Ratsaal, 5th
floor*)

Friday, 23 February 2018

- 09.00 – 11.45 **General Committee on Political Affairs and Security** (*Neuer Saal, 2nd floor*)
- 11.45 – 13.30 Lunch Break
- 13.30 – 16.30 **Joint Session of the three General Committees:** (*Neuer Saal, 2nd floor*)

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Secretary General
Roberto Montella

The OSCE PA International Secretariat provides administrative support for the Assembly in its various activities. The Secretariat organizes the meetings of the Assembly and provides support for election observation projects, special missions and Presidential activities. Its work is carried out in co-operation with other OSCE Institutions and international parliamentary organizations. The Secretariat, which is hosted by the Danish Parliament, is headed by Secretary General Roberto Montella, and has a permanent staff of 19, including four staff members at the Liaison Office in Vienna.



Deputy Secretary
General
Gustavo Pallares



Deputy Secretary
General
Semyon Dzakhayev



Special
Representative
Andreas Nothelle



Chief of the
Executive Office
Andreas Baker



Head of Document
Services
Dana Bjerregaard



Liaison Officer and
Advisor
Marco Bonabello



Deputy Director of the
Vienna Liaison Office
Marc Carillet



Programme Officer
Farimah Daftary



Executive Assistant
Anna Di Domenico



Executive Assistant to
the Vienna Liaison Office
Tim Knoblaue



Head of Confer-
ence Services
Odile Lelarge



Senior Advisor
(consultant)
Kurt Lerras



Chief Political
Advisor
Francesco Pagani



Head of Communi-
cations and Press
Nat Parry



Chief ICT
Stephen Paul



Presidential Advisor
Loic Poulain



Head of Administration
for Election Observation
Iryna Sabashuk



Chief of Administra-
tion and Finance
Marieta Samac



Bringing together 323 parliamentarians from across the 57-nation OSCE region, the OSCE PA provides a forum for parliamentary dialogue, leads election observation missions, and strengthens international co-operation to uphold commitments on political, security, economic, environmental and human rights issues.

Recognized as a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, the OSCE is a primary instrument for early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation in its area. The Parliamentary Assembly, originally established by the 1990 Paris Summit to promote greater involvement in the OSCE by national parliaments, is the oldest continuing OSCE Institution.

The basic objectives of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly are:

- To assess the implementation of OSCE objectives by participating States;
- To discuss subjects addressed during meetings of the Ministerial Council and the summits of Heads of State or Government;
- To develop and promote mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflicts;
- To support the strengthening and consolidation of democratic institutions in OSCE participating States;
- To contribute to the development of OSCE institutional structures and of relations between existing OSCE Institutions.

To pursue these objectives, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly employs a variety of means:

- A Final Declaration and a number of resolutions and recommendations are adopted each year at the Annual Session in July;
- Committee work addresses important contemporary international issues;
- Programmes and seminars are designed to develop and strengthen democracy including an extensive election observation programme;
- Special parliamentary missions are deployed to areas of latent or active crisis.



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

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