

News from Copenhagen

OSCE parliamentarians debate arms control, fake news and climate crisis



President George Tsereteli chairs the opening joint session of the Winter Meeting in Vienna on 22 Feb. (Photo: Harald Klemm)

The OSCE PA 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 PA's Standing Committee and the General Committees, as well as two joint sessions of the General Committees. In the first joint session, parliamentarians heard speeches by PA President George Tsereteli (Georgia), 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-in-Office of the OSCE, said that the main challenge for the OSCE remains finding a solution to the crisis in and around Ukraine, and that Italy also confirms its commitment to find a solution to all protracted conflicts, in Transnistria, Georgia and Nagorno-Karabakh.

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

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 Annual Session.

In the closing joint session, members heard reports from OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues Hedy Fry (Canada), the Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration, Filippo Lombardi (Switzerland), and the Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism, Makis Voridis (Greece).

Also reporting to the joint session were the Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on the Rules of Procedure, Peter Bowness (United Kingdom), who discussed ideas for refining Assembly activities, and Abid Qayyum Raja, Vice-President of the Norwegian Parliament, who shared Norway's experience in countering violent extremism.

Ad Hoc Committees on Migration and Countering Terrorism meet in Vienna



Nahima Lanjri, George Tsereteli and Filippo Lombardi, 23 Feb. 2018.

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. The migration committee, chaired by Filippo Lombardi

(Switzerland), heard reports on recent visits by committee members to Brussels and Italy. Lombardi stepped down as Committee Chair and was succeeded by Nahima Lanjri

(Belgium). While the Ad Hoc Committee was meeting in Vienna, member Alf Dubs (United Kingdom) participated in the UN's Parliamentary Hearing on migration in New York to serve as input to a United Nations Conference later this year.

The Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism (CCT), meeting for the second time, was chaired by Makis Voridis (Greece). CCT members discussed recent visits to Morocco, to the OSCE and UNODC, and to Belgium. Voridis stressed that the CCT should work to first understand the current terrorism-related trends and build solid partnerships with key partners, and then engage in targeted initiatives and propose innovative policy recommendations based on its findings. CCT members decided to hold the next official meeting on the margins of the Annual Session in Berlin, in July 2018.