

## PA Bureau meets online and decides modalities for Annual Session



Secretary General Roberto Montella said that discussions in the Secretariat and with Assembly leadership in recent weeks have focused on two clear principles: that an Annual Session must take place this year and there must be elections of officers. In response to comments during the meeting that there should be opportunities during the virtual Annual Session for political input from OSCE PA members and substantive debate, Montella emphasized that there will be opportunities for urgency items that deal with timely issues on the OSCE agenda. He added that although there would be no way to amend reports presented by committee rapporteurs, there would nevertheless be extensive political debates and opportunities for input from Assembly members.

Treasurer Peter Juel-Jensen (Denmark) reported to the Bureau on the financial health of the Assembly and noted the proposal for the upcoming fiscal year would be proposed to the Standing Committee for its approval. In the discussion, members raised issues including the crisis in and around Ukraine, with a specific focus on the escalation of tensions with the Russian Federation. Other topics that came up in the discussion included the situation in the South Caucasus and security issues facing Cyprus.

The Bureau also heard from Chairs of Ad Hoc Committees and Special Representatives, who reported on their recent activities and areas of responsibility.

The OSCE PA's Bureau met virtually Monday for debates on current international political issues and discussions on how to ensure the continuity and quality of the Assembly's work during the COVID-19 pandemic. Chairing the meeting, OSCE PA President Peter Lord Bowness (United Kingdom) announced that the OSCE PA's 29th Annual Session, which had been scheduled to take place in Bucharest, and the 19th Autumn Meeting, which was scheduled to take place in Dublin, could not be held in-person due to the pandemic.

It was decided by the Bureau that a scaled down Annual Session would take place online, consisting of meetings of the Standing Committee, the three general committees, and one plenary session. The agenda of this virtual session, to take place the first week of July, will be limited to reports, topical debates, election of officers, administrative issues, and questions of urgency.

## OSCE PA to observe Albanian parliamentary elections

Some 65 observers from the OSCE PA are deploying to Albania for the 25 April parliamentary elections. OSCE PA Vice-President Azay Guliyev (Azerbaijan) will serve as Special Co-ordinator of the short-term OSCE observer mission, and Reinhold Lopatka (Austria) will lead the OSCE PA observer delegation.

## PA members address evolving nature of terrorist threats at international conference

Some 40 OSCE parliamentarians, including several members of the OSCE PA's Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism (CCT), participated in a high-level online international parliamentary conference on 15 April focused on terrorism trends in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The event, entitled "Global Challenges and Threats in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Terrorism and Violent Extremism," explored how to prevent violent extremism, boost international action in the field of countering terrorism and support victims of terrorism. It was co-organized by the OSCE PA, the IPA-CIS, PAM, PACE, and the UNOCT, and followed similar events organized in 2017 and 2019.

CCT Chair Reinhold Lopatka (Austria) addressed the

opening plenary and a joint session with PAM featured remarks by OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella and CCT Vice-Chair Aude Bono-Vandorme (France). Teresa Jiménez-Becerril (Spain) spoke about promoting and protecting the rights of victims of terrorism and addressing their needs. Addressing the closing session, Nikolai Ryzhak (Russian Federation) reiterated the OSCE PA's strong commitment to promoting targeted actions against terrorism and violent extremism.

Discussions during the conference focused on legal mechanisms of international co-operation in countering terrorism, the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the importance of bringing terrorists to justice, especially those stranded in conflict-affected areas. More than 200 participants took part.

## Navalny's Chief of Staff provides PA update on hunger-striking prisoner

Following up on an online meeting last month, OSCE PA President Peter Lord Bowness, several other OSCE parliamentarians and SG Roberto Montella met virtually on 16 April with Leonid Volkov, Chief of Staff of jailed Russian opposition figure Alexei Navalny. Volkov informed the PA members of the latest developments in

Navalny's situation, noting that his hunger strike has been going on since 31 March and his condition is deteriorating. Volkov asked for international attention to remain on this situation and for pressure to be placed on Moscow to ensure that the Russian Federation complies with international obligations.