

Annual Session closes with elections and adoption of Birmingham Declaration



The OSCE PA met for its 29th Annual Session on 2-6 July in Birmingham, United Kingdom.

The OSCE PA adopted the Birmingham Declaration today and elected its leadership for the coming year. Margareta Cederfelt was re-elected President along with Vice-Presidents and Committee Officers. Irene Charalambides (Cyprus), Rt. Hon. Mark Pritchard (United Kingdom), Pere Joan Pons (Spain) and Michael Georg Link (Germany) were elected Vice-Presidents. The election results were announced at today's closing plenary session of the 29th Annual Session, which also included addresses by the Lord Speaker McFall of Alcluith and OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella, as well as the adoption of the Birmingham Declaration.

Yesterday, the OSCE PA's general committees elected leadership for the coming year. In the First Committee, Richard Hudson (United States) was re-elected Chair, Costel Neculai Dunava (Romania) Vice-Chair, and Laurynas Kasciunas (Lithuania) Rapporteur. In the Second Committee, Azay Guliyev (Azerbaijan) was elected Chair, with Artur Gerasymov (Ukraine) and Gudrun Kugler (Austria) re-elected Vice-Chair and Rapporteur, respectively. The Third Committee elected

Nikoloz Samkharadze (Georgia) Chair, Farah Karimi (Netherlands) Vice-Chair, and Johan Buser (Sweden) Rapporteur.

The Birmingham Declaration, adopted with overwhelming support, focuses largely on the Russian war in Ukraine, condemning the invasion as "a gross violation of the fundamentals of international law." Expressing deep regret over the destruction and loss of life in Ukraine, the Declaration also expresses alarm that the war has significantly impacted stability, connectivity, and prosperity across the OSCE region, and urges governments "to consider effective and well-coordinated actions in the economic and environmental spheres aimed at mitigating the impact of the conflict and restoring international peace and security."

The Declaration covers many other important issues, including COVID-19 economic recovery, migration and displacement, the situation in Afghanistan, human trafficking in a globalized economy, cybersecurity and cybercrime, nuclear security and the prohibition of nuclear weapons, pollution and climate change, independence of civil society, freedom of the media and combating disinformation. In addition to the three general committee resolutions, the Assembly adopted ten supplementary items, covering issues such as the Arctic Region, combating violence against women journalists and politicians, ensuring the safety of journalists in conflict zones, the implementation of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, supporting victims of terrorism, accelerating the green energy transition, and promoting effective youth engagement towards inclusive and democratic societies.

Annual Session features speeches by high-level officials



Roberto Montella, Richard Hudson, Zbigniew Rau and Margareta Cederfelt in Birmingham, 4 July 2022

Speakers at the 29th Annual Session denounced the Russian invasion of Ukraine and called to end the war with full respect for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Addressing nearly 250 parliamentarians gathered for the event, high-level OSCE officials and host dignitaries at the opening plenary on 2 July shared their observations from visiting Ukraine and meeting Ukrainian refugees, and urged full investigations and accountability for alleged war crimes and atrocities.

"To our dear friends in the Ukrainian Delegation," said OSCE PA President Margareta Cederfelt, "my message is clear: We stand with you. We will continue to defend your right to live in peace." John Whittingdale, Head of the UK Delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, said: "Now more than ever, co-operation on security is of paramount importance." OSCE Chairman-in-Office and Foreign Minister of Poland Zbigniew Rau told parliamentarians that

"we should reaffirm our unity and work tirelessly to build resilience in the face of the current threat posed by the Russian aggression against Ukraine."

Other speakers at the Annual Session included:

- Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth
- the Lord McFall of Alcluith, Lord Speaker
- OSCE Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid
- OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella

Yesterday, at the plenary session, OSCE parliamentarians heard reports by the Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration Kristian Vigenin (Bulgaria) and Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism Vice-Chair Kamil Aydın (Türkiye). They discussed ongoing work of their committees and upcoming activities.

Numerous side events and meetings of ad hoc committees took place during the Annual Session, covering issues such as migration, counter-terrorism, prevention of war crimes, protests and repression in Russia and Belarus, safety of female journalists, youth in conflict zones, and parliamentary integrity.

The Working Lunch on Gender Issues on Monday featured a discussion on what concrete actions parliamentarians can take to ensure that their countries' post-pandemic recovery are gender-inclusive, sustainable and equitable, discussing challenges and sharing best practices. The Assembly's Sub-Committee on Rules of Procedure and Working Practices also met and decided that a proposal put forward by the Ukrainian Delegation provided an acceptable basis for further work.