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## **REPORT**

**FOR THE GENERAL COMMITTEE ON  
POLITICAL AFFAIRS AND SECURITY**

***Enhancing Mutual Trust and Co-operation  
for Peace and Prosperity in the OSCE Region***

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# **REPORT FOR THE GENERAL COMMITTEE ON POLITICAL AFFAIRS AND SECURITY**

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## **Introduction**

The OSCE area is undergoing many significant changes, ranging from social and economic advances to emerging security threats and political upheaval. Most of the citizens throughout the OSCE area live in general peace and prosperity, yet, ongoing crises are challenging OSCE values and contributing to rising insecurity. Many throughout the OSCE region are impacted directly by conflicts and violent extremism. The three priorities of the Austrian Chairmanship – defusing existing conflicts, fighting radicalization and violent extremism, and re-establishing trust and confidence – are useful and appropriate guidelines in addressing current threats and challenges.

Now more than ever it is a crucial time to uphold OSCE commitments and further strengthen the OSCE's role as the primary forum for transatlantic and Eurasian dialogue, however, trust between participating States needs to be regained to move the OSCE's agenda forward. The OSCE Ministerial Council last December in Hamburg reached consensus on several key issues but clearly gridlock in the Organization remains. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly should harness its unique abilities to support the OSCE and the participating States in tackling the threats at hand. Inter-parliamentary dialogue will be essential to strengthening dialogue and the political will to bring about a comprehensive diplomatic solution to conflicts.

This report will touch upon six main points: cybersecurity, terrorism, Turkey, women in peacebuilding, the Russian aggression against Ukraine, and protracted conflicts.

## **Cybersecurity**

The OSCE plays an important role in enhancing cybersecurity and Information Communication Technologies (ICT) security. Cybersecurity is becoming an increasingly central facet of the national security strategy of participating States in the OSCE area, which includes cyber warfare, encryption, military cyber capacity, hacking and financial terrorism.

Participating States should make full use of the OSCE toolbox, including the Conflict Prevention Center, the Forum for Security Co-operation and field operations, to work together in reducing the risks of conflict stemming from cyber-attacks. Confidence-building measures (CBMs) are key to making cyberspace more predictable and more manageable, considering that cyber warfare is a serious threat to world peace in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Governments are investing considerable resources in offensive and defensive information communication technologies to guarantee their own safety or to target third States. Disruptive tactics have been on the rise in recent months – ranging from hacking email accounts or servers to spreading disinformation in social media with the goal of influencing an election. The risks are real and, therefore, consultations over potential cyber incidents and dialogue among OSCE participating States are a cornerstone to de-escalate tensions.

Recent hacking attacks conducted against some OSCE participating States – and even the OSCE itself – are disruptive and underline the necessity to act. More effective rules and increased co-operation and dialogue with governments, non-state actors, and other

international organizations can prevent further incidents. The operationalization of pertinent UN guidance by groups of governmental experts on the regional level is a key concern in that regard.

## **Terrorism**

The OSCE and its Partners for Co-operation continue to face an increasing threat to domestic security posed by terrorist attacks, such as mass shootings, suicide bombings, and other mass killing tactics. We strongly condemn such inhuman practices and deplore the loss of life caused by these horrific attacks. The radicalization of primarily young people and their subsequent recruitment to the cause of terrorism is problematic for participating States and needs to be thoroughly addressed. OSCE countries need to counter the financing of radical groups, their recruitment strategies, and the threat posed by returning fighters to Europe with the help of the OSCE anti-terrorism activities.

The fight against terrorism is further complicated by the refugee and migrant crisis. While it is important to not politicize the issue or put the blame of a few individuals on a whole group of people, the matter remains a security issue for the OSCE area. Governments have a duty to protect their citizens and conduct more effective border controls and asylum procedures while upholding OSCE principles. More importantly, however, participating States should focus on resolving the conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa, notably the bloody civil wars in Syria and Libya, which have led to this situation.

We encourage the OSCE participating States to take all necessary measures to support ongoing conflict resolution initiatives, while fully upholding OSCE commitments and to prevent youth from joining extremist groups. Dialogue and prevention are key to achieve this, and parliamentarians should support national and international initiatives countering violent extremism. Toward that end, the “Parliamentary Conference on Combatting International Terrorism”, which was jointly organized by the OSCE PA and the Interparliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States in St Petersburg on 28 March, was an important initiative promoting co-operation and dialogue in the search for common ground.

## **Turkey**

The security situation in Turkey has been highlighted as a concern by a number of participating States. The coup attempt on 15 July 2016, terrorist attacks that have killed many innocent people, and the December 2016 assassination of the Russian Ambassador in Ankara underline the high level of the threat that the country is facing. Turkey is also hosting up to three million refugees – more than any other country in the world. While we condemn last summer’s coup attempt and support efforts to counter violent extremism, Turkey should uphold its OSCE commitments and make use of the OSCE toolbox in the fight against both internal and external threats. The alarmingly high number of journalists and parliamentarians imprisoned in Turkey underlines the need to respect freedom of expression, fundamental rights and human rights in the fight against terrorism.

## **Women in Peacebuilding**

Enhancing women’s political, social, and economic empowerment in armed conflict and disaster settings is a priority for the OSCE’s work in implementing UN Security Council resolution 1325 along with participating States. Achieving long-term stability and security is

an inclusive process that requires greater involvement of women in decision-making as well as conflict mediation and dialogue. The OSCE's role in peacebuilding is an ideal platform to push for gender equality and mainstreaming at all stages of conflict resolution. The OSCE PA can lead the way here and push for more women's participation in parliamentary diplomacy; so far only 27 per cent of delegates are women, and some delegations have no women at all in their ranks. The OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues, Dr. Hedy Fry, is doing exemplary work in the field of gender equality and contributes greatly to the empowerment of women in peacebuilding.

Enhancing the participation of women in conflict resolution and peace-building efforts is important to achieve security and stability. The Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) to Ukraine is working to change the perception of women's roles in Ukraine, which still emphasizes the traditional role of women as caregivers instead of focusing on their contributions to peacebuilding efforts through dialogue. The OSCE must further support efforts in gender mainstreaming. In times of crisis women often see their rights undermined; this trend needs to be reversed, and their participation at all levels of peacebuilding is essential for the peaceful resolution of conflicts not only in the OSCE area, but on an international scale.

At the Tbilisi Annual Session in 2016, OSCE participating States were encouraged to develop and implement gender-responsive policies, programmes, and services to address the specific needs and priorities of women and girl refugees and migrants. An OSCE-wide action plan to better include women in the response to the refugee and migrant crisis is an important step towards peace and security.

### **The Russian Aggression Against Ukraine**

The Austrian Chairmanship's priority of re-establishing trust and confidence is key for the OSCE's crisis and conflict management. The crisis in and around Ukraine, spurred by Russian aggression, can only be resolved through constructive and inclusive dialogue. Participating States should refrain from using unilateral decision-making and violence in order to change the status quo. The Russian Federation's annexation of Crimea and the conflict in the Donbas region have breached the Helsinki Final Act principles and undermine the territorial integrity of Ukraine. In that regard, the OSCE PA has been clear that the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula by the Russian Federation was illegal and illegitimate. The implementation of all the provisions of the Minsk II agreement of 11 February 2015 by all sides remains the key for a comprehensive peace agreement in the Donbas. The withdrawal of heavy weapons and foreign fighters from the contact line, unlimited access for OSCE monitors, and the restoration of Ukrainian control over its eastern border are essential to de-escalate and resolve the crisis. We condemn the recent killing of an American SMM observer and call all parties to allow unhindered and secured access to the observers along the Line of Contact. The Minsk Agreement remains the best path forward for Ukraine and the region, and despite setbacks, the goals set forth in these agreements are still achievable.

## **Protracted Conflicts**

The 2016 April clashes in the territories around Nagorno-Karabakh, which represented the most serious escalation since 1994, and the numerous recent violations of the ceasefire on the Line of Contact are cause for concern. The OSCE, through the work of the Minsk Group and the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on the conflict dealt with by the Minsk Conference, Ambassador Andrzej Kasprzyk, should utilize the full potential of conflict resolution mechanisms, including the Parliamentary Assembly, to stabilize the situation and work towards a comprehensive peace agreement. We regret the lack of progress towards the settlement of the conflict. A return to the negotiation table by all parties is needed to avoid further military confrontation and de-escalate the situation. Participating States should refrain from using unilateral decision-making and violence that would hinder diplomatic negotiations and dialogue initiatives.

We welcome the Ministerial Statement on the negotiations on the Transdniestrian settlement process in the “5+2” format adopted in December 2016 in Hamburg, and we support the results-oriented approach promoted by the international partners under the German Chairmanship in 2016 and continued by the Austrian Chairmanship in 2017. Achieving results in practical areas is key to creating a positive dynamic for broader negotiations while improving the living conditions of the people on both banks of the Dniester/Nistru River. It remains essential to reach a comprehensive, peaceful and sustainable settlement of this conflict based on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova. Parliamentarians have a key role to play in reaching a long-lasting settlement. We encourage the resumption of formal contacts between the legislative bodies on both sides, without preconditions and in good faith, to ensure political support for the solutions identified in the talks.

The OSCE PA needs to strengthen its political involvement to address the consequences of the August 2008 conflict between the Russian Federation and the territory of Georgia. Russia should implement the EU-brokered Six-Point Ceasefire Agreement of 12 August 2008 which ended the conflicts in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia and refrain from using and withdraw its military forces in order to create conditions for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Parliamentary diplomacy should enhance confidence-building between both sides and create an atmosphere of co-operation and mutual trust. However, we reject the holding of parliamentary elections in Abkhazia and the approval of a military deal between South Ossetia and the Russian Federation. Unilateral decisions such as holding Presidential elections in South Ossetia and changing the name of the region, as well as the opening of a Russian Embassy in Abkhazia, undermine the peace process on the territory of Georgia.

## **Conclusion**

The current challenges facing the OSCE area require constructive dialogue and deeper co-operation. Confidence-building measures and mediation among participating States are key to avoid further escalation, be it on cyber security issues, the fight against terrorism, protracted conflicts or the crisis in and around Ukraine. The OSCE therefore needs to effectively utilize all its tools to counter the emerging threats and guarantee an atmosphere of mutual respect, co-operation and trust between participating States. The consensus-based decision-making process of the OSCE has its merits, but has at times been an obstacle to timely action.

The OSCE's action depends entirely on the political will of participating States, but if this prevents the Organization from living up to its commitments in line with the Helsinki Final Act Decalogue, we should engage in a serious discussion about reforms within the OSCE. The lack of legal personality of the OSCE – although considered by some participating States as essential for flexibility and increased legitimacy – has resulted in a serious challenge for the Organization on both an operational and political level. Uncertainties over field presences, diminished liability, and political deadlock are a threat to the future relevance of the OSCE. In the South Caucasus and the Western Balkans, where we have noted with concern a deterioration of the political situation, the work of field missions is more important than ever.

The unique role of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, including through open debate and inter-parliamentary dialogue, will be key to rebuild relationships based on trust and mutual respect between OSCE countries. We as elected parliamentarians, representing the people, need to lead the way and inspire our governments to take the necessary steps to guarantee the effective survival of the OSCE as the main regional security organization in the area spanning Vancouver to Vladivostok.