

Theme: Security challenges in the OSCE area and the role of Parliamentarians

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Looking around the trans-Atlantic and surrounding region today, it seems there is no end to the number of hotspots occurring.

As the Roman poet Horace once said, “It is your concern when your neighbour’s wall is on fire”. I believe we must take inspiration from this ancient lesson as we address our modern challenges.

At times it is tempting to think that we will be secure behind a wall. We must, however, take into account the interests of other states and populations if we want long-term stability.

Through both of our organizations we strive to create security and stability in our neighbourhood knowing that serious challenges can only be managed successfully through cooperation.

1. The OSCE’s approach

The idea of collective security and responsibility is clearly at the heart of the principles of NATO, but also of the OSCE.

The OSCE’s comprehensive approach to security includes politico-military, economic and environmental, as well as humanitarian aspects.

By addressing this wide range of security-related concerns on an equal level, whether they be human rights and democratization or arms control and confidence-building measures, the OSCE strives for inclusive and long-term security.

Although our two organizations differ, we have a shared desire for security and for the improvement of the lives of our populations.

For that reason I am particularly pleased to be able to speak with you the parliamentarians of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly today to continue our common work to improve the lives of our constituents.

2. The role of parliamentarians in strengthening security and co-operation

As parliamentarians, we are uniquely placed to work and speak on behalf of those we are elected to represent.

We must always keep in mind that it is our citizens who will suffer most if we are unable to find the solutions to the pressing security challenges facing our region.

But in today's world no country can ensure its security on its own. Instead, we must promote dialogue and search for common ground. This is particularly important at the moment, with tense rhetoric increasing. And the critical voices of de-escalation and compromise seemingly more and more absent.

We are expected to deliver security and stability.

We must be this voice of de-escalation.

This is how to effectively address issues such as radicalization, terrorism, the challenge of mass migration and refugee flows, or even climate change.

Unfortunately, we are not there yet.

3. Growing security challenges in the OSCE area

Hand in hand with an increase of tense rhetoric, there is an increased concern about the erosion of existing safeguards against the growing militarization of international politics.

This includes the danger of a new arms race, when we should strive for arms control or even better disarmament.

Long-standing fundamental principles that underpin relations between OSCE countries are clearly being violated.

The occupation, and even annexation of a part of a sovereign state by another, holding non-democratic elections, an attempted military coup and severe human rights abuses are but a few examples of the challenges we continue to face.

I would like to highlight the migration crisis, however, as one area where our collective response could have been much better.

So far, we have not succeeded in fully reconciling the rights of migrants and refugees for safety and humane treatment with the interests of security and stability. I am afraid that we have not lived up to our own high standards and values.

As we seek to improve our response, I hope we can also dedicate increased attention to the underlying causes of migration. Issues like poverty, political repression, violent conflicts, or climate change all require our focus.

4. Ways forward

As you can hear, there are many fires in our neighbourhood that require our collective attention. It is essential that we all acknowledge that a security architecture that doesn't work for *all* of us does not in fact work for *any* of us.

This is why we must exploit every opportunity to maximize the great potential of inter-parliamentary diplomacy. And the shared ability of our organizations to address security challenges.

We have seen the fruits of our cooperation in recent months, such as in our excellent cooperation in observing Georgia's elections.

The OSCE and NATO Assemblies stood side-by-side in making an honest and fair assessment of Georgia's elections;

At a time when trust in existing political institutions and norms is being undermined it is more important than ever that we work together to strengthen democracy.

This is the true cornerstone of collective security.

However, ensuring that elections are free and fair is just one of the ways by which democracy must be safeguarded.

Here in Turkey, only a few months ago, we witnessed an attempted coup that was one of the clearest attacks on democracy in modern times. As a parliamentarian, it was deeply troubling to see the rubble left by bombs dropped on the Turkish parliament.

This attempted coup underlines the critical importance of strengthening democratic institutions so that they can stand up to all anti-democratic attacks.

In this regard, I share concerns raised by my colleagues in the OSCE PA about some of the recent developments here in Turkey, including the arrests of elected members of parliament on grounds which some of us still strive to understand.

It is precisely at difficult times that we must focus on open dialogue and robust engagement by a pluralistic parliament.

On this topic and others, we in the OSCE PA have engaged in a constructive dialogue with the Turkish authorities, asking them to maintain human rights safeguards also during the state of emergency, and I look forward to continued cooperation and discussions on how we can support and uphold democracy for the benefit of the entire Turkish people.

5. Conclusions

Colleagues, as we seek to answer the question of how to ensure the security and prosperity of those we represent, we must remain focused on the principles that are at the heart of our organizations.

Principles are easy to maintain in good times, but are actually needed in hard times such as those we face now.

Principled approaches are needed for long-term stability, a Europe and a world that is more secure.

We can find strong reason for hope and inspiration in the history of our two organizations:

NATO, which was founded in the ashes of the Second World War, the OSCE, which was created at the height of the Cold War.

Both have contributed immensely to security over recent decades.

We must continue this work, and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly – and I, personally, – remain committed to cooperative work and dialogue.

This is how we parliamentarians can help our neighbour with his challenges, and thereby create greater security also for our own family.

Thank you, and I wish you every success.