

## **Report by the OSCE PA Special Representative on Parliamentary Dialogue on Ukraine, Vice-President Dr. Reinhold Lopatka, MP, Austria**

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The war in Ukraine and its tragic consequences in every aspect of life (security, humanitarian, economic, environmental) exceeding the European continent, require us to be even more active in stopping it as soon as possible.

In that sense and as a Member of the Austrian Parliament and Parliamentary Assembly's Vice President I had a privilege to be appointed by the Assembly's President Cederfelt as the Assembly's Special Representative for Parliamentary Dialogue on Ukraine on 12 May 2022. Let me use this opportunity to thank President Cederfelt for her confidence.

I was tasked with a mandate to:

- ⇒ Take necessary initiatives to assist the Russian Federation and Ukraine to engage in parliamentary dialogue, as appropriate.
- ⇒ Co-ordinate closely with the OSCE Chairmanship and executive structures, as well as other international actors, on the promotion of coherent actions on dialogue facilitation between Ukraine and the Russian Federation.
- ⇒ Report to the Standing Committee and raise awareness on developments in Ukraine and provide recommendations for the work of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

My mandate also includes (*inter alia*) contribution to de-escalation of the current situation, exploration of all available avenues to foster dialogue, as appropriate and feasible, support for a peaceful resolution of the war and addressing its direct and indirect impact on all.

In the Birmingham declaration the Parliamentary Assembly welcomed in July 2022 my appointment to contribute to OSCE dialogue-facilitation efforts.

Being aware that it is very hard to call for a dialogue when the bombs are falling, I am also sensitive that stopping the armed conflict and Russia's war against Ukraine requires everyone's intensive engagement and support.

With this in mind, I have been engaged in a series of bilateral meetings with relevant interlocutors and interested parties, not only with the representatives of Ukraine and the Russian Federation, but with the representatives of the OSCE Institutions and executive structures and other relevant international organizations and parliamentarians from different OSCE countries. I am close in contact with the Task Force of the IPU on the peaceful resolution of the war in Ukraine.

Unfortunately, it was immediately clear that the parties to the conflict are not ready to talk about ending the war in any other way than on the battlefield. The parties remain attached to these positions even today, one year since the invasion started.

Therefore, my first task was (and still is) to explain the essence of my mandate – to assist the parliamentary dialogue – which includes both components: talking, but also listening to the other side, in accordance with the ancient rule “*audiatur et altera pars*” (“listen to the other side”). Unfortunately, it seems that my success in this endeavor is very limited.

Let me use this opportunity to recall the UN General Assembly Resolution *On the Aggression Against Ukraine* dated 01 March 2022 which welcomed the continued efforts by the OSCE to support de-escalation of the situation with respect to Ukraine and encouraged continued dialogue. In that sense, implementing the Resolution and discharging my Parliamentary Assembly mandate, last year I had 35 meetings in total, out of which 25 were in person and 10 online.

This year I continued with meetings with relevant partners, including Ukrainian MP's in Strasbourg and the Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the CIS States. Our main topics for discussion included prisoner exchanges, global food security and the safety of nuclear power plants in Ukraine.

Colleagues, before I conclude, let me be clear: I will continue to use even the smallest of opportunities for discussions with interlocutors if they can bring relief and improvement for the affected people on the ground – the ultimate recipients of the OSCE services.

Again, I would like to use this opportunity to thank the PA International Secretariat – both offices in Copenhagen and Vienna, for their continued support I enjoy in my various capacities in the Parliamentary Assembly. Especially Ambassador Miodrag Pančeski gave me a big support. I also thank Ambassador Halaciński, Permanent Representative of Poland to the OSCE and former Chair of the PC, and Ambassador Kinnunen, Special Representative of the OSCE CiO in Ukraine for their kind cooperation. I look forward to the cooperation with the new PC Chair, North Macedonia's Ambassador Igor Djundev.

Concluding and in accordance with my mandate, I look forward to the time when we will be able to offer our contribution to a peaceful solution, with full respect to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine in its internationally recognized borders.

I thank you for your attention.