

## In Doha, Lopatka networks with parliamentary assemblies on counter-terrorism

Representing the OSCE PA at the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism's First Counter-Terrorism Coordination Meeting of Parliamentary Assemblies and a roundtable on the role of parliamentarians in implementing national action plans for preventing terrorism in Central Asia, Austrian parliamentarian Reinhold Lopatka has actively participated this week in events and held a number of bilateral meetings. Lopatka, who serves as OSCE PA Vice-President and as Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism (CCT), has stressed the need for more collaboration among parliamentary assemblies to increase the effectiveness of their counter-terrorism efforts.

Addressing representatives of the Parliamentary Union of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, Arab Parliament, Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union, African Parliamentary Union, Andean Parliament, Asian Parliamentary Assembly, and the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Lopatka said on Monday that the OSCE PA believes that an efficient co-ordination mechanism on counter-terrorism matters is crucial.

"Ultimately," he said, "the goal is the full implementation of the global counter-terrorism framework through targeted parliamentary actions at both international and local levels, thereby greatly expanding the reach of our work." He added that engaging parliaments in global counter-terrorism efforts is essential, including by developing national action plans.

The CCT Chair emphasized the importance of aligning the efforts of parliamentary assemblies and boosting the impact



Reinhold Lopatka addresses roundtable in Doha, 14 December

of their actions. He called for the establishment of a common strategic framework for the counter-terrorism work of parliamentary assemblies, including by offering a new platform to assess the latest regional trends, share lessons learned and consider shared priorities. This would serve to streamline efforts, avoid duplication, and prioritize activities, he said.

Lopatka highlighted the priorities of the OSCE PA's CCT, namely the prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration of FTFs and their families; strengthening border security; fostering prevention efforts and de-radicalization; and supporting victims of terrorism. He also stressed the importance of Afghanistan for the OSCE region.

While in Doha, Lopatka met bilaterally with representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, the IPA-CIS, the African Parliamentary Union, Andean Parliament, and Asian Parliamentary Assembly to discuss future plans, establish contacts and reinforce informal networks. With the UNOCT, Vice-President Lopatka discussed ways to further expand co-operation and build synergy.

## Ad Hoc Committee on Migration discusses situations at EU-Belarus borders and Afghanistan

Chaired by Kristian Vigenin (Bulgaria), the OSCEPA's Ad Hoc Committee on Migration met on Monday to discuss the situation at the European Union's external borders with Belarus and responding to the implications of the situation in Afghanistan for the OSCE region. Briefed by Lithuanian parliamentarian and migration committee member Laurynas Kasciunas on the situation at his country's border with Belarus, along with representatives of the International Organization for Migration, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), and the Vilnius-based Human Rights Monitoring Institute, committee members focused on both humanitarian challenges and political concerns.

Members discussed ways to deal with the crisis on the EU's borders with Belarus, including the need for airlines to cut flights to Minsk and ensure they are not inadvertently participating in an illegal immigration scheme. Another priority is opening

a humanitarian corridor for people trapped in Belarus, with PA interlocutors stressing that there are thousands of people including vulnerable persons stranded in the woods, sleeping rough and enduring subfreezing temperatures. The migrants are generally traumatized and in need of psychological support, they said.

Regarding Afghanistan and the implications for the OSCE region, Luca Pianese, Senior Migration Security Expert at the OSCE Secretariat's External Co-operation Section, explained that an OSCE task force is following the situation and co-ordinating a response with OSCE participating States. Right now, the focus is on mitigating risks at the borders, he said.

In the discussion, committee members raised a variety of concerns, highlighting the politicized use of migrants as a problem for the OSCE region. Members also discussed upcoming committee activities, including possible field visits.

## Young OSCE parliamentarians meet online to establish informal network



In a meeting chaired by OSCE PA Special Representative on Youth Engagement Farah Karimi (The Netherlands) and Roger Padreny (Andorra), young OSCE parliamentarians gathered virtually on Monday to share ideas for developing a platform for discussing youth-related issues within the OSCE PA. Attended by a dozen members of the Parliamentary Assembly under the age of 35, the meeting focused on ideas to create a mechanism for meaningful youth participation and input to the work of the OSCE PA.

Participants expressed their will to establish an informal network of young parliamentarians within the Assembly and to continue working on future endeavors over the next year in promoting youth-related policies within the PA, working in close co-operation with the broader OSCE.