

In Ministerial Council speech, PA President Kauma urges action to address challenges



Pia Kauma addresses the 30th Ministerial Council in Skopje, 30 November 2023

Speaking at the opening of the OSCE Ministerial Council in Skopje on 30 November, OSCE PA President Pia Kauma (Finland) highlighted the profound impact of Russia's full-scale invasion and ongoing war against Ukraine on the entire region and emphasized the need to address a multitude of challenges across the OSCE.

"As we attempt to navigate this unknown landscape, we must acknowledge the multifaceted nature of the crises at hand," Kauma stated. She underscored the fragility of peace in the Western Balkans, the importance of stability for regional development in the South Caucasus, the unique challenges faced by Central Asia, and the heightened tensions in the Middle East.

President Kauma expressed gratitude for North Macedonia's commitment to finding solutions and commended the country for its role as the host of a field operation for the past 31 years. She recognized North Macedonia's successful diplomacy with its neighbours and its contribution to building an inclusive, multiethnic society.

Highlighting the unprecedented challenges faced by the OSCE, President Kauma noted that, for the first time in its 30-year history, the PA added a fourth chapter to the final Decla-



Group photo of OSCE PA Bureau members in Skopje, 29 November 2023

ration of the Annual Session in Vancouver last July. This chapter addressed the institutional crises within the organization, signalling the gravity of the situation and the need for effective responses to geopolitical complexities.

To address the ongoing crisis in Ukraine, President Kauma announced the establishment of a Parliamentary Support Team for Ukraine, demonstrating the Assembly's commitment to supporting the country through all possible means.

President Kauma stressed the importance of the OSCE in the face of uncertainty, acknowledging the obstacles faced, such as the blocking of the budget's adoption, agreeing on sustainable leadership for the organization in the future, and additional limitations on field operations. She emphasized the need for tangible solutions to meet the expectations of constituents.

Kauma affirmed that the mission of the OSCE goes beyond crisis management and extends to shaping a future where the principles of the Helsinki Final Act are not just words on paper but serve as the cornerstone of a stable, peaceful, and just world. She noted that with the 2024 and 2025 OSCE Chairpersonships agreed to, it is important to use the momentum to advance concrete work in fostering dialogue, building trust, and establishing security.

Op-ed published for 16 Days of Activism campaign

As part of the global 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign, OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues Hedy Fry (Canada) has published an article featuring the Assembly's work in this area. In particular, she pointed out that parliamentarians have the power and duty to continue fighting against gender-based violence, and highlighted the resolution adopted at the 30th OSCE PA Annual Session in Vancouver, which focused on the gendered consequences of wars. To read the op-ed, please click here: <https://bit.ly/3t2bGdg>

OSCE parliamentarians meet with ministers and ambassadors in Skopje

While attending the Ministerial Council in Skopje, OSCE PA President Pia Kauma, Secretary General Roberto Montella and members of the Bureau met with various foreign ministers and diplomats for discussions on OSCE-related issues and the need for strong multilateral engagement.

President Kauma and SG Montella met the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan as a follow-up to her recent visit to the South Caucasus. Discussions with Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov and Armenia's Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan focused on prospects for the peace process between the two countries, as well as other regional issues. In a meeting with incoming OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Foreign Minister of Malta Ian Borg, Kauma and Montella discussed challenges facing the organization and Malta's priorities. Other discussions were held with representatives of Ukraine, the United States, Italy, Romania, and a number of other countries.

OSCE PA Special Representative on Fighting Corruption Irene Charalambides was welcomed at an event on the margins of the Ministerial Council by OSCE CiO Special Representative Anita Ramasastry for the signing of the Joint Statement on



Pia Kauma and Antony Blinken, Skopje, 30 November 2023

Fighting Corruption by the five foreign ministers of the Western Balkan countries.

On the eve of the Ministerial Council, the OSCE PA Bureau convened in Skopje to discuss the future of the organization and the Assembly's priorities for the upcoming year. Bureau members engaged in discussions about the impact of the war in Ukraine, the role of parliamentarians in this difficult time for the organization, and challenges associated with prioritizing and budgeting for OSCE PA activities.