



STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE
PRESIDENT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad
to the Permanent Council
Vienna, 17 January 2019

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Mr. Chair,

I join others in welcoming the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE, Mr. George Tsereteli of Georgia, back to the Permanent Council and thank him for his address today.

In his last address to the Permanent Council in October, and at the Ministerial Council in Milan in December, President Tsereteli sketched a disturbing, but realistic picture of developments in our region. Today, he has used several examples to suggest that the situation has not improved. Unfortunately, the President is right: The cease-fire in Ukraine is violated as much as ever. Not all of our region is democratic, and, even where it is, there are indications of backsliding. Persistent gender inequality is a continuing obstacle to security and stability. There is, regrettably, still ample reason for concern.

However, The President is also right that the OSCE has a number of tools to help address our challenges and shortcomings. The field operations and the institutions come first to mind. We appreciate that the Parliamentary Assembly is drawing on the recognised expertise of ODIHR to continue improving its election observation

practices. Like the President, we regret that the OSCE is either missing, or unable to deliver the appropriate level of co-operation, in states that both desire and would benefit from a strengthened presence. To that end, we join his call for an adequately resourced organisation.

We agree that scarce resources, misperceptions, lack of trust, and a diminished sense of purpose for multilateralism are serious obstacles to be tackled when defining a long-term strategy for this organisation. Above all, the seemingly growing, illusory belief that a state can serve its national interests entirely on its own, has particular destructive force. A strategy for this organisation can only succeed if mutually elaborated and endorsed by the participating States.

Tensions in the OSCE region remain on the rise. Conflicts remain unsolved. States face inward, away from international collaboration. These challenges are not solved by repeated calls to reduce tension, to rebuild trust, and for dialogue, but by hard, diligent work, that untangles the political needs and sensitivities of states. Such work must be state-led and state driven international co-operation. The OSCE is one arena.

Parliamentarians can contribute. In dialogue with their constituencies, governments and fellow parliamentarians, they contribute significantly to furthering understanding and support for multilateral solutions to national and international challenges.

As foreign policy and international commitment begin at home, the members of the Parliamentary Assembly have important work in their home countries. When engaging in national debate on the benefits of multilateralism and the international order, the OSCE being one element, they contribute to maintaining co-operation and rules-based relations among states. We continue to appreciate and support their valuable efforts to this end.

Thank you