



The Secretary General

To:
OSCE PA Bureau Members

Copenhagen, 3 March 2022

Dear Bureau Members, dear friends,

The ongoing war in Ukraine constitutes an immense challenge for the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and for the OSCE. The magnitude of the events, particularly affecting civilians and civilian infrastructure, has triggered mass displacement, human suffering and an overwhelming feeling of desolation and uncertainty, which will be felt by many generations to come. The very DNA of our Organisation is undergoing a lethal attack unwinding decades of confidence- and security-building efforts and initiatives, as well as eroding the foundations of our collective security architecture. As we strive to grasp the severity of the situation and the uncertainty that comes with it, let me wholeheartedly thank each and every one of you for your genuine contributions in addressing developments on the ground in line with our principles and commitments, and with a profound sense of solidarity for the victims of this conflict. Your leadership is needed now more than ever.

In these days, we are all asking ourselves the same question: *What more can we do as a Parliamentary Assembly?* This is the most fundamental question since I assumed my functions as Secretary General, and I know that many of you are waiting for my answers. Many of our Members are also sending me suggestions, proposals, open calls, and friends in Ukraine are also asking for concrete help.

Let me reassure you that all your messages are being heard. It is in this spirit that we have intensified our cooperation with the Permanent Council, the OSCE Secretariat and the OSCE Institutions, as well as consulted with international parliamentary partners. Thanks to your guidance and contributions we were also able step up our public messaging. Simultaneously, in line with my primary *duty of care* responsibility as Secretary General, I have been trying to ensure the well-being of the International Secretariat staff - exploring ways to provide assistance to the Ukrainian colleagues and their families at home who are under life threat, as well as supporting Russian colleagues, who are affected by the events too.

I come now to what the OSCE PA can *do more* in this situation. While adhering to our mandate, laid out by Rule 2 of the OSCE PA Rules of Procedures, which includes a role in *conflict prevention and resolution*, we also need to align our activities to a certain number of key guiding lines. These include,

inter-alia, the United Nations General Assembly Resolution adopted on 2 March 2022 which urges the OSCE to support the de-escalation of the current situation and also support the efforts of the United Nations, including the UN Crisis Coordinator for Ukraine. This is of utmost importance as the OSCE is a regional organization under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. Other general guiding principles should include our essential role as platform for dialogue, the distinct parliamentary added values we can provide, the complementarity and cooperation with the OSCE executive structures.

However, we should also be realistic of what we can concretely achieve, in line with our mandate and within existing resources. At this stage of the conflict, parliamentary diplomacy options are somehow limited. It is also an extremely delicate moment, in which any action, even if driven by the most noble intent, can risk derailing other processes or be wrongly perceived. Moreover, even in light of a conflict and an unjustifiable aggression which runs counter to the most basic norms of international law, we must remember what the essence of the OSCE is: (S)ecurity and (C)o-operation, through dialogue and diplomacy.

With this in mind, I am convinced that we must continue to use all possible tools at our disposal – even if limited - to lend our contribution and make your voices well heard. We have a moral duty to do this. As we did after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, we can readapt our activities with flexibility and good will, re-defining our regular business in order to be better placed to respond to the current tragic conflict.

I therefore propose the following actions and activities in follow-up to what we have already undertaken:

- ✓ To **maintain open our channels of dialogue with delegations of the parties involved in the conflict**, and we stand ready to offer our **platform for dialogue** in any moment. We will also support all mediation efforts, including through the OSCE toolbox.
- ✓ To continue to be present with **strong and targeted public messaging**. In this regard, in addition to press releases which will follow developments on the ground and appropriate reactions at OSCE meetings, we can continue to address different aspects of the conflict and its broader consequences from a multi-angle perspective.
- ✓ To hold very soon an **extraordinary online meeting of the Standing Committee or Plenary Session** to further debate the rapidly evolving developments. We could issue recommendations to governments, including in the form of a resolution that may be endorsed by delegations. In this framework, we could also hear from Ukrainian stakeholders as well as key humanitarian actors on the ground.
- ✓ As already done during the most severe phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, we can help to **channel requests for humanitarian aid**, and facilitate contacts between donors and recipients.
- ✓ Focus on different angles of this conflict from **multiple perspectives and formats**, including through the work of our committees and special representatives.
- ✓ **Field visits** could be organized whenever the situation allows, in close coordination with authorities, for instance of bordering states. However, this needs to be planned in a way to provide an added value and not interfere with other efforts, especially those aimed at delivering humanitarian relief.

- ✓ To organize **separate meetings with OSCE PA delegations of third countries** which are seriously affected by the conflict, including but not limited to bordering participating States. We will also coordinate with **partner parliamentary organizations** as well as the **United Nations**, responding to the call of the UNGA resolution of 2 March calling on the work of the OSCE.
- ✓ Invite all PA Members to be at the forefront of debates in their respective **national Parliaments** with a clear OSCE PA hat, and to use their considerable political leverages to push for more humanitarian and economic assistance to Ukraine as well as to support mediation efforts between the parties, including by promoting the OSCE's role. The Secretariat can also collect such efforts and promote them in a coordinated way through its media channels.
- ✓ To consider the usefulness of establishing **a taskforce / advisory group** on this topic.

I am looking forward to your inputs, your leadership and your support in these very difficult times.

Yours sincerely,



Roberto Montella
Secretary General