

To Heads of Delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Dear Colleagues,

It is with great regret that I will not be with you to attend this important meeting in Malta. In my capacity as Head of the British Parliamentary Delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, I will be in Quebec. I do however wish you and the conference well.

You will be aware that whilst I was President of the OSCE PA I spent a great deal of time and effort working to enhance the relationship with Mediterranean Partner States and their legislatures.

It is with a heavy heart that I write to you prior to the meeting expressing my deep concerns about the future of the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). The organisation is facing very significant threats to its future as result of major attacks upon it by both Russia and the CIS on the one hand and I regret to say our Parliamentary Assembly on the other.

I would be deeply grateful if you could circulate this letter and report to your delegation members. I have been aware of these attacks which have increased in recent months. Not every member of your delegation will be fully aware of the intensity of these attacks which in the case of the Parliamentary Assembly, are being made in our name.

You will however be aware that during our Winter Session in Vienna earlier this year, the Belgian Chairman-in-Office announced a review of election observation and that major decisions will be made at the next Ministerial next month in Brussels.

It is vitally important that every effort should be made to repair the damage that has been done to relations between the Parliamentary Assembly and to ODIHR and to the OSCE. Election observation is of critical importance. Parliamentarians must continue to play an important role in the future as they have done in the past. ODIHR and the PA achieve far more when they work together. Differences where they exist must be resolved.

I would have much preferred not to have been obliged to write such a document but when a meeting took place recently in Vienna with the Permanent Council, what has been happening came out into the open. I hope this document will give our fellow Parliamentarians a better assessment of what is being done in our collective name.

This document is my understanding of the allegations that have been made. I hope that at our Winter Meeting in Vienna, we will have time on the agenda to consider what decisions will have been made at the next Ministerial and where hopefully we can continue to work with ODIHR and contribute along with ODIHR to achieve our common objectives.

Yours Sincerely,

Rt. Hon Bruce George MP