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## **REPORT**

**FOR THE GENERAL COMMITTEE ON  
ECONOMIC AFFAIRS, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY  
AND ENVIRONMENT**

***Implementing OSCE Commitments:  
The Role of Parliaments***

**RAPPORTEUR**  
**Ms. Sofio Katsarava**  
**Georgia**

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# **REPORT FOR THE GENERAL COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC AFFAIRS, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT**

**Rapporteur: Ms. Sofio Katsarava (Georgia)**

## **Introduction**

The Italian OSCE Chairmanship has outlined its priorities in the economic and environmental dimension as the development of human capital, promotion of good governance models, the prevention of and fight against corruption, and the optimization of digital economy. These are useful areas of attention for the international community that are both focused and achievable.

As we know, the second dimension encompasses a multitude of complex, inter-linked issues that can't be thoroughly included in a brief report. For this reason, this report will focus on the most urgent and relevant challenges that resonate with OSCE participating States: promotion of good governance and reducing corruption, environmental good governance, climate change, sustainable energy and energy efficiency, environmental migration, and internal displacement.

## **Promotion of Good Governance and Reducing Corruption**

Promotion of good governance and reducing corruption are at the heart of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and at the core of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) currently chaired by Georgia. The main goals of OGP should have a higher priority in the national agendas of OSCE participating States.

One of the main goals of the OGP is to advance transparency and the fight against corruption, which is in line with OSCE PA recommendations. In its 2017 Minsk Declaration, for example, the PA called on participating States to "enhance the level of co-operation among law enforcement agencies and other relevant institutions in combating corruption, money laundering, the production and trafficking of narcotics, the financing of terrorism and other financial crime".

Anti-corruption reforms should stay at the top of the OSCE agenda. Corruption and organized crime distort good governance and negatively impact the management of public funds and competitive markets. Figures and statistics better illustrate the harm that corruption causes to development and its impact on economic growth. According to World Bank estimates, businesses and individuals pay an estimated \$1.5 trillion in bribes each year, which is about two per cent of the global GDP. Having a comprehensive legal framework is not enough. What is required is the effective implementation of anti-corruption provisions. Actions of establishing institutional mechanisms for anti-corruption policy co-ordination and monitoring in the OSCE area should be encouraged through increased partnerships as part of the overarching goal to enhance functional democracy by upholding principles of transparency, accountability, and the rule of law.

Over the previous year, several meetings and decisions have set further milestones in the process of the fight against corruption and the promotion of good governance in the OSCE area and beyond. Among them is the SDG 16+ Forum on Peaceful, Just and Inclusive societies held in Tbilisi, Georgia from 31 October to 2 November 2017.

Representatives from 25 countries gathered for the international forum and discussed best policies and practices in the achievement of the SDGs to ensure a free civil society, free media, social cohesion, and the observance of the rule of law.

### **Environmental Good Governance**

Environmental good governance can contribute to sustainable development, prosperity, stability and security, and foster a favorable business and investment climate. There is now a growing consensus that good governance has a strong effect on environmental actions and outcomes, as well as being of fundamental importance for poverty reduction and sustainable development.

### **Climate Change**

Climate change has pushed the Earth into uncharted territory. Rising sea levels, melting Arctic ice and record high temperatures are just some of the signs that call for action and enhanced co-operation among governments and other actors. The Paris Agreement entered into force on 4 November 2017, and with 174 parties having ratified the Agreement so far, the era of implementation has begun.

The remaining signatory parties should accelerate the ratification process and live up to the commitments made under the agreement, as the OSCE PA has previously stated. The UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, in his address at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP23) on 6-17 November 2017 in Bonn, focused on a roadmap to tackle climate change, which was divided into five action areas: reducing emissions, adaptation, finance, partnerships and leadership. It was encouraging to see participation at COP23 by a coalition of more than 2,500 mayors, governors and others from across the United States who on 11 November released the “America’s Pledge” report, outlining the scope of non-federal climate action in the U.S. following the Trump administration’s decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement.

This conference further clarified the enabling frameworks that will make the agreement fully operational and the support needed for all nations to achieve their climate change goals. COP23 was another opportunity for countries to demonstrate their collective ambition through taking concrete, clear, and universally binding decisions. In this respect, it is important to recall the recommendations of the Minsk Declaration which also called on participating States to consider options for implementing a carbon tax or fee on heavily polluting industries.

### **Clean, Renewable and Sustainable Energy and Energy Efficiency**

The OSCE area includes many of the world’s largest energy producers, consumers, and transit countries among its participating States. For this reason, the Organization must continue to streamline and prioritize activities in the areas of energy security, sustainable energy, water management, and hazardous waste management.

The theme and findings of the OSCE 25th Economic and Environmental Forum, “Greening the Economy and Building Partnerships for Security in the OSCE Region,” represent a clear commitment to keep discussing these topics, and aim at finding long-term strategies to deal

with these fundamental aspects of our everyday lives. Among other issues, the Forum focused on supporting resource efficiency, renewable energy, and energy security.

### **Environmental Migration and Internal Displacement**

Natural disasters, accelerated by climate change, have led to a significant increase in environmental migration. Statistics suggest that the risk of human beings displaced through sudden natural disasters is 60 per cent higher today than it was 40 years ago.

Today, we are witnessing a record high level of human mobility. More people than ever before migrate to a country other than the one in which they were born. In 2016, when the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants was adopted by the UN General Assembly, there were roughly 65 million forcibly displaced persons, including over 21 million refugees, three million asylum seekers, and over 40 million internally displaced persons. These statistics should raise the alarm and call for immediate action by OSCE participating States.

The global focus on environmental migration should not divert our attention from displacement as a result of man-made conflicts and violence. The refugee and migrant issues somewhat overshadow the magnitude of potential problems that internal displacement may generate. According to IDMC's 2017 Global Report on Internal Displacement, there are twice as many IDPs as refugees in the world. The world underestimates the danger these figures pose, as current IDPs may any day become refugees, asylum seekers, or international migrants, thereby adding to the already large movements of migrants and refugees that reach the OSCE area. Therefore, it is high time to shift our attention to addressing the root causes of forcible displacement.

Overall, the OSCE must continue to encourage partnerships between governments and other relevant actors in assisting participating States to promote effective migration management, including through the exchange of best practices that prioritizes legal migration.

### **Environmental Impacts of Conflicts**

The evolution of warfare methods is leading to unprecedented levels of destruction of the environment, which seriously affects the resilience of countries and societies. Conflicts negatively impact natural resources in many ways, including but not limited to: the disruption of the operations of water supply and disposal systems that result in the discharge of pollutants into freshwater sources, the damaging of infrastructures like powerlines, water pipes and water pumping stations, pollution of the environment by heavy metals released by explosives and bombs, and the disruption of waste management operations.

The OSCE has historically worked to assess the impact on the environment of conflicts in the OSCE area in line with the principle of comprehensive security, of which the environmental dimension is a fundamental component. To this purpose, in 2006 and 2008, joint OSCE-United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) missions were deployed respectively in Nagorno-Karabakh and Georgia to assess the damage produced by war. A number of assessments have also been carried out in Ukraine, mainly focusing on access to water in conflict-affected areas.

In December 2017, the OSCE published a report entitled "Environmental Assessment and Recovery Priorities for Eastern Ukraine" that compiles information and formulates

recommendations on the environmental recovery of the country, particularly focusing on the Donbas region.

In addition, there is an urgent need to establish a system of ecological monitoring in compliance with the OSCE principle of comprehensive security in the territories of Ukraine and Georgia that are currently under foreign occupation.

### **Digitalization and New Technological Order**

In a changing world, science is assuming an increasingly significant role. Not only with studies on climate and the environment, but also in other fields such as digital economy, biotechnologies, etc. The global economy is undergoing a substantial digital transformation, and the importance of data and the relevance of internet quietly influences our everyday lives.

Science is a fundamental component of security, especially when it comes to building resilience, disaster threat reduction, water sanitation, counter-terrorism, economic and governmental digitalization and much more. However, the new technological order also carries new issues and challenges, but legislative frameworks don't always respond to change at the same pace with which science evolves. Therefore, a modernization of national and international legislation and legislative flexibility should be encouraged to adapt to an ever-changing world order.

In particular, legislative attention to the impact of science and technology on the environment should be considered.

### **Conclusion**

An increased engagement of national legislative branches in discussing a way forward to address the above issues is vital to the progress of substantial discussions in the second dimension. National Parliaments not only have a unique role in finding solutions through legislation, but also by boosting the level of implementation of international and domestic commitments.

The ultimate goal of promoting international co-operation on economic and environmental issues is strengthening security and stability in the OSCE region. The Parliamentary Assembly must stand ready to work with governments in deepening partnership to enhance essential co-operation in addressing second dimension issues on the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's agenda.