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REPORT

**FOR THE GENERAL COMMITTEE ON
POLITICAL AFFAIRS AND SECURITY**

Advancing Sustainable Development to Promote Security: The Role of Parliaments

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Introduction

We live in a world – and this is true for the OSCE area – that is increasingly divided between regions that enjoy security and prosperity while others are stuck in a seemingly endless cycle of conflict and poverty. This must be addressed, as high levels of violence and insecurity have a detrimental impact on a country’s development, not just economically but socially, culturally and politically. The two thus go hand in hand: we cannot enjoy lasting peace without sustainable development, and there cannot be sustainable development without peace.

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the General Assembly in 2015, outlines 17 Sustainable Development Goals as a “plan of action for people, planet and prosperity” and is committed to fostering peaceful, just, and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. Sustainable Development Goal 16 on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development aims to promote effective, accountable, and transparent institutions at all levels and ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making at all levels. This is where we as parliamentarians can be most effective in advancing sustainable development to promote security.

This report touches on six themes. First, the importance of multilateral responses to emerging security challenges to advance security will be discussed. Second, I will highlight the challenge of protracted conflicts in the OSCE region and the existing tools and mechanisms in place to promote secure, lasting resolutions. A closer look at how parliaments and parliamentarians can contribute to promoting sustainable development to advance security is also required before the report goes into specific examples in the areas of counterterrorism, youth, and gender.

Multilateralism

Achieving sustainable security in the OSCE region is a difficult task, especially in the context of the current unstable nature of international relations. Multilateralism and a commitment to improving and adapting current international organizations and agreements contribute to building the stability needed to promote lasting security. It is timely that the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Slovak Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajcak, has committed to improved multilateralism as a priority, as there currently seems to be a marked distrust in international institutions. Two more recent developments in international relations highlight this need.

The unprecedented situation of a Member State leaving the European Union (EU) is a source of tension and instability in the OSCE region.

Aside from the potential impact of Brexit on trade and political relations, Brexit also has possible security ramifications on the island of Ireland. A no-deal Brexit or the imposition of a ‘hard’ border on the island of Ireland as a result of the United Kingdom’s departure from the EU may have significant implications in terms of unraveling the hard-won peace on the island of Ireland, and this is particularly worrying.

The membership of both Ireland and the United Kingdom in the EU supported the integrity of the Good Friday Agreement, which brought peace following decades of violent conflict. The Good Friday Agreement is just over 20 years old, and as an international peace treaty signed by Ireland and the United Kingdom, must be protected.

Under the Good Friday Agreement, citizens in Northern Ireland have the right to choose to identify as Irish, as British or both. Membership of the EU greatly facilitated this, and indeed contributed significantly to the maintenance of peace on the island of Ireland.

The potential implications of Brexit represent an issue which may have long-lasting effects on security and need to be considered carefully. Although the EU and the OSCE are very different multilateral institutions, the OSCE could become more significant as a platform for dialogue around security and border issues following the exit of the United Kingdom from the EU.

The deterioration in relations between the United States and the Russian Federation is deeply regrettable. The collapse of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty is likely to contribute to greater tensions and a possible escalation of the development and deployment of nuclear weapons. The INF Treaty was the foundation for the denuclearization of most of Europe, as well as an important confidence-building measure. Abandoning an effective institution such as the INF instead of working to achieve compliance from all sides undermines security in the post-Cold War international order and exacerbates the threat of a nuclear exchange, which we must recall is something that must never be allowed to come to pass. With their unparalleled destructive capacity and dire humanitarian implications, nuclear weapons – whether strategic or tactical – must never be used.

In situations like these, a commitment to strengthening our institutions, long-term constructive dialogue, and preparation for all eventualities are necessary in order to advance the goal of improving security for all our citizens.

Protracted Conflicts

Conflicts in the OSCE area continue to pose a serious obstacle to peace, security and sustainable development. The settlement of the protracted conflicts is one of the main preconditions for establishing sustainable peace and development in the OSCE area. While there have been some steps forward in the Transdniestrian Settlement Process, the lack of substantive progress in the resolution of the conflicts in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia of Georgia, Donetsk and Luhansk regions as well as the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol of Ukraine, the Nagorno-Karabakh region and seven surrounding districts (Lachin, Kalbajar, Aghdam, Fuzuli, Jabrayil, Gubadli and Zangilan) of Azerbaijan, remain a cause for concern.

The basis for the resolution of the above-mentioned conflicts is formed by the UN Security Council and General Assembly Resolutions, in particular UN Security Council Resolution 1808 (2008) regarding conflict in Georgia, Resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993) regarding conflict in Azerbaijan, Resolution 2202 (2015) regarding conflict in Ukraine; Resolution 70/265 on status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia (2016); Resolution 68/262 on territorial integrity of Ukraine (2014), Resolution 73/194 on Problem of the militarization of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine, as

well as parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov (2018), Resolution 73/263 on Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine (2018), Resolution 62/243 on the situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan (2008), Resolution 72/282 on Complete and unconditional withdrawal of foreign military forces from the territory of the Republic of Moldova (2018).

In relation to the conflict between the Russian Federation and Georgia, the Geneva International Discussions (GIDs) were established following the 2008 conflict in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia. The GIDs aim to implement the principle of the non-use of force, how to best meet the needs and ensure the rights of conflict-affected communities and the issue of internally displaced persons. Parliamentary diplomacy should enhance confidence-building between both sides and create an atmosphere of co-operation and mutual trust to support the work of the GIDs.

In recent years, the OSCE PA has adopted a number of resolutions on the protracted conflicts in the OSCE area, in particular Resolution on The Situation in Georgia (2012), Resolution on Ten Years after the August 2008 War in Georgia (2018), Resolution on Ukraine (2012), Resolution on Violations of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol (2015), Resolution on Restoration of the Sovereignty and Territorial Integrity of Ukraine (2017), Resolution on Ongoing Violations of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol (2018), Resolution on the Republic of Moldova (2016), Report of the OSCE fact-finding mission to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan (2005), Resolution on Adherence to the Helsinki Principles in Inter-State relations across the OSCE Area (2015).

In those resolutions, the OSCE PA reaffirmed full respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and inviolability of internationally recognized borders of affected participating States as a framework for the resolution of the conflicts.

The OSCE PA supports continuing to work with the parties to the conflicts on confidence-building measures, particularly in the humanitarian field, synchronizing them with the political processes, such as exchanging of prisoners of war and hostages, which is prohibited by the relevant provisions of the 1949 Geneva Conventions on the basis of the “all-for-all” principle.

The Role of Parliaments

The role of parliaments is crucial in advancing sustainable development to promote security. There are many ways in which parliaments can be used to foster peace and dialogue: implementing legislation, reviewing the work of governments, and engaging with citizens to raise public awareness.

The OSCE PA’s Berlin Declaration sets out recommendations for the role of parliaments in strengthening institutions for security. Paragraph 45 encourages parliaments to actively support the “structured dialogue” process by discussing current and future challenges and risks to security in the OSCE area. Parliaments are both platforms for and facilitators of dialogue which establishes and strengthens channels of negotiation, especially in times of crisis. Parliaments also have an oversight role which needs to be harnessed to advance security. Paragraph 46 recommends that parliaments establish and strengthen parliamentary bodies for monitoring security and intelligence services’ activities in order to ensure effective democratic accountability. Parliaments can also be effective in preventing conflict and enhancing long-

term security by taking an active role in mediation. Mediation and dialogue are widely recognized as cost-effective ways of preventing, managing, and resolving conflicts.

Furthermore, the role of parliaments in ratifying treaties is an important tool in advancing security. This power varies among the participating States, with some parliaments given a formal role in the ratification of international treaties and some increasingly assuming an informal role in actually negotiating treaties, which enhances democratic oversight of international policy and decision-making. However, the suspension of or unilateral withdrawal from international treaties can also lie with the executive, limiting the scope of parliaments' influence.

But whether they have a formal role or not, as a direct link between multilateral parliamentary bodies and individuals, parliamentarians can raise public awareness of wider issues and help set national agendas. The connection between a member of parliament and their constituents ensures that governments remain accountable to their citizens. The transparency of the democratic process and the role of parliaments therefore can contribute to just and fair institutions and a security architecture that is inclusive, multilateral and people-centered.

Counterterrorism

Counterterrorism continues to dominate international security agendas and comprehensive, multilateral responses to terrorism are needed to respond and adapt to emerging threats. The OSCE promotes a co-operative and co-ordinated approach to countering terrorism and violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism at all levels, including co-ordination among national authorities, co-operation among states, co-operation with relevant international and regional organizations and, where appropriate, establishment of public-private partnerships between state authorities, the private sector, civil society and the media.

One such emerging challenge posed to our region is the phenomenon of returning foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) from conflict zones, especially as the war against the so-called Islamic State begins to wind down. The United Nations recognizes that the flow of FTFs constitutes an “international threat to peace and security” and encourages multilateral responses and a fully comprehensive approach to take appropriate security measures, ensure the deradicalization of FTFs, and promote a safe reintegration into society.

One way in which parliaments are effective in furthering security in this regard is through the exchange of best practices. The OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism (CCT) conducted a visit to Paris in February 2019 to discuss the French experience with terrorism and the policy implications of minors returning from foreign conflict zones. This was a prime example of exchanging best practices for policy-making and highlighted the exceptional challenges involved with preventing radicalization and effective deradicalization through a comprehensive approach of law enforcement, security measures and inclusive education and specialized social services.

It is common to regard the phenomenon of FTFs as either a problem for the country of origin or for the state in which the radicalization took place, but it is evident that these are problems that affect our entire region. International challenges require international responses.

Youth

The 2019 OSCE Chairmanship has set “providing for a safer future” as one of its main priorities. The inclusion of youth in the peace and security agenda of the OSCE dates back to its foundations in the Helsinki Final Act and has been strengthened through many subsequent commitments. There are examples from other parliamentary assemblies and international organizations that our Assembly can take heed of. The IPU’s Forum of Young Parliamentarians, the Youth Atlantic Treaty Association and the European Youth Parliament bring young people together to discuss current topics in a parliamentary setting and boost the participation of young people in the work of parliaments.

Prioritizing youth and engaging with young people across the OSCE region is essential to ensure inclusivity and longevity in terms of peace and stability. Promoting the representation of minorities and achieving gender equality within our institutions is also necessary to prevent discrimination and exclusion. This strengthens the connection between our populations and our organization and fosters increased levels of dialogue between people and institutions which represent them.

Gender

Achieving a sustainable peace and a secure world is also inextricably linked to women’s participation and influence in decision-making. As Special Representative on Gender Issues, Hedy Fry mentioned at the Winter Meeting in Vienna in February that when women participate in peace processes, the resulting agreement is 35 per cent more likely to last at least 15 years. Active involvement of women in decision-making and institution building has undeniably had a positive impact on conflict resolution and security, which all contributes to just institutions and a sustainable peace.

Conclusion

With the precarious state of global security at a turning point and through our Parliamentary Assembly and the OSCE as a whole, we need to recommit to a lasting, sustainable and fair peace for all countries in our region. Parliaments play a vital role in advancing sustainable development and security. Through the various tools at our disposal – including our ability to provide oversight, to ratify treaties and approve budgets, and of course, to adopt relevant legislation – we parliamentarians have great power to set agendas and ensure compliance with our OSCE commitments in the political and security sphere.

What is needed, as always, is the political will to advance this agenda. At the Luxembourg Annual Session, let us recommit to that political will in the spirit of détente and dialogue that produced the 1975 Helsinki Final Act and which can serve as the basis for effective international co-operation, security and sustainable development.