



**Message from OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella
on the beginning of his second term in Office**

Copenhagen, 23 December 2020

Dear Members of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, dear Friends,

As you know, on 31 December 2020 my first mandate as Secretary General will come to an end, and on 1 January 2021 the second five-year term will start, following last year's re-election by the Standing Committee during the 2019 Luxembourg Annual Session. I am grateful for the trust given to me and I am as committed and dedicated as ever to continue working hard for our Assembly, the values it upholds and the objectives it aims at reaching.

I would now like to take stock of where we are at the end of my first mandate. Since 2016, our region – the whole northern hemisphere from Vancouver to Vladivostok – witnessed a number of important developments which directly affected the work of the OSCE and our Parliamentary Assembly. With no presumption of listing them in order of importance, I will mention just a few of them: the rapid deterioration of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, the increased tensions in South Caucasus leading to this year's conflict, the migration and refugee crisis, the crisis of Europe, Brexit, and rising nationalism all over the continent, the rise and fall of ISIS and the related phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters and the gradual shift from large-scale to lone wolves terrorist attacks, a failed coup d'état in Turkey, an undermined public trust in some key democratic systems such as the US, political unrest in many participating States, including now Belarus, major setbacks on universally accepted human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout the whole OSCE area. More in general, and also as a consequence of the above, a growing polarization of east-west relations alongside shrinking trust and a notable degree of international cooperation fatigue, seriously undermining multilateralism worldwide. And now, in addition, one of the biggest crises of the century: the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is radically changing our way of operating and, to a certain extent, of living.

All of these major events, together with many others, contributed to shape our work as we kept being flexible and adapted our action to what is happening in the world around us. We do not have a blueprint of what to do in all these cases. We have always tried to react promptly trying to ask ourselves some fundamental questions such as "*how should we react?*", "*how can we contribute?*", in each of these challenging circumstances "*where is the specific added value of parliamentarians and of the Parliamentary Assembly representing more than 1 billion people?*"

These questions bring me to directly address my work inside the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and in this regard, I wish to recall the document I presented last year to the Bureau, named "*Triple A: Assessment, Adaptation, Advancement – an Organization on the move*", which sums up very well the reforms I tried to implement over the past five years. On the political side, I wish to underline two key issues: the successful efforts towards establishing what is now an excellent cooperation with the OSCE Government Representatives in Vienna and the Organization's executive structures, with regular coordination at all levels on programmatic activities, positions and statements, truly providing a distinct parliamentary added value in the framework of the wider "OSCE family" product; and the adaptation of our

work to better enable Parliamentarians to provide a concrete contribution, I think for instance to the ad hoc committees, special representatives, and several targeted activities based on key parliamentary assets such as national oversight. All in all, we made the Parliamentary Assembly a politically lively and dynamic body, always engaged.

On the administrative side, I wish to underline all the efforts aimed at increasing efficiency, transparency and accountability, including throughout the new staff rules, new financial rules and regulations, the reform process for more comprehensive and clear rules of procedure, a more stringent code of conduct for EOMs, a whole new and modern media strategy, and the launch of the Junior Professional Officers programme.

Moreover, I wish to pay a word on our *OSCE Call for Action* initiative, which we launched this year acknowledging the challenges the governmental side of the organization is facing and trying to mobilize our parliamentary delegations to bring back the political attention and thrust that the OSCE needs as it begins the journey towards its 50th anniversary - *Helsinki +50* - in 2025.

I will leave the whole chapter on how we readapted the work of the Assembly in 2020, to maintain it relevant amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, to a detailed report I will prepare for the OSCE PA Winter Meeting in February.

The potential of the OSCE PA is vast. As you know, my mantra to define its political role is “not to the right, not to the left, nor to the center, but ABOVE”. In Italian we would say “*in ALTO!*”, while the French use this very good expression: “*au dessous de la melee*”. In fact, the Assembly has the right assets to reject the daily political tittle-tattle - victim of the national electoral cycles - and think strategically to the long term. We face so many global challenges for which international parliamentary cooperation is crucial: just think about, for instance, climate change – what we should call the climate crisis – and, naturally, the current global pandemic. We need to realize, and I will never get tired of repeating this, that the answers to all these challenges can only come from more international cooperation. The world is too much interconnected today to go about with unilateral plans. We need to sit together, despite all the differences we may have, and find common solutions. Multilateralism needs to be reinforced, and this is my call to each one of you, in your own countries: invest in it. With our humble work, we stand here to facilitate this and support you. If there is any lesson we have learnt in this 2020 *annus horribilis*, it is that the “*selfish recipe*” does not work for the benefit of all. Only cooperation, mutual respect and honest dialogue can make the difference.

Finally, I need to spend a special word of appreciation for the remarkable dedication and engagement of the OSCE PA Staff. We have a great team of highly experienced professionals and young colleagues, both motivated, dynamic, competent, passionate and committed to serve the high causes we are all privileged to work for.

In conclusion, dear Friends, let me thank you once again for your continued support, your friendship and commitment to the OSCE values. I wish you all a beautiful holiday period and a happy 2021 full of health, happiness and success. I look forward to seeing you all in person soon again.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Roberto Montella". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Roberto Montella, Secretary General