



NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY
ASSEMBLEE PARLEMENTAIRE DE L'OTAN

THE SECRETARY GENERAL
LA SECRÉTAIRE GÉNÉRALE

159 CIR 21 E

15 October 2021

TO SECRETARIES OF DELEGATION FOR DISTRIBUTION TO ALL MEMBERS

Dear Member,

I am profoundly saddened to inform you that Ojārs Ēriks Kalniņš, Head of the Latvian delegation, passed away on Thursday 14 October 2021.

Ojārs was a son of Europe's troubled history and embodied the transatlantic bond through his mixed Latvian-US background. He was born in Munich in 1949 in a displaced persons camp after his parents fled Soviet-occupied Latvia. His family emigrated to the United States, where Ojārs grew up in Chicago – a city he talked about with great affection and which coloured his native English accent.

In parallel to his successful advertising career, Ojārs was active in various Latvian American organizations, raising awareness of the Soviet occupation of the Baltic States and building support in the United States for the continued non-recognition of their annexation.

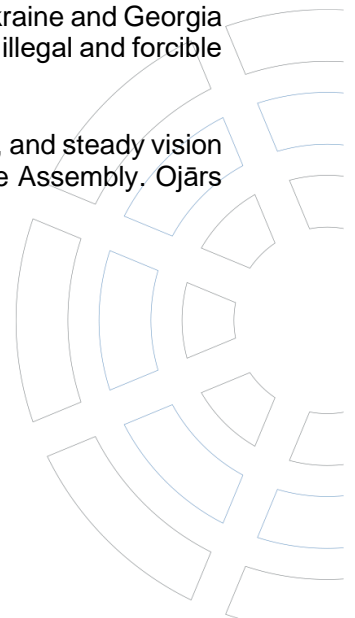
Following the fall of the Berlin wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ojārs served as Latvia's ambassador to the United States and Mexico from 1993 to 2000. In 2000, he was also one of the founders of the Latvian Transatlantic Organization (LATO) – the Latvian chapter of the Atlantic Treaty Association.

Ojārs was one of the most active promoters and architects of Latvia's membership in NATO in 2004.

He was first elected to the *Saeima* in 2010, where he served as Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee until 2018. He joined the NATO PA in 2011 and led the Latvian delegation ever since.

Ojārs was one of the leading members of the Political Committee. He was its Chairman and had just been elected General Rapporteur at the 2021 Annual Session, where many of you will have seen him. He was also a Co-Chair of the Ukraine-NATO Interparliamentary Council and a member of the NATO PA's informal support group for the Crimea Platform. As such, he represented the NATO PA at the Crimea Platform Summit at the end of August. Having experienced the Soviet occupation of Latvia, he was a strong supporter of Ukraine and Georgia as well as a powerful advocate for the continued non-recognition of Russia's illegal and forcible annexation of Crimea.

In the Standing Committee, Ojārs provided a clear-headed, calm, thoughtful, and steady vision as a committed transatlanticist and one of the most respected voices in the Assembly. Ojārs also served on the Assembly's Bureau between 2014 and 2016.





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Ojārs shared some of his insights on politics and life, personal stories, poems and lyrics on his personal website: www.ojarskalnins.com. He was a true gentleman, kind and soft-mannered. He will be sorely missed.

The Assembly is indebted to Ojārs for his outstanding service, commitment and contribution to the transatlantic bond.

Our thoughts are with Ojārs' wife, children, relatives and loved ones.

Messages of condolence can be addressed to: kalnins.inmemoriam@saeima.lv.

Yours sincerely,

Ruxandra Popa

