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REPORT

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

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Rapporteur: Ms. Gudrun Kugler (Austria)

1. INTRODUCTION

The OSCE PA 2nd General Committee examines topical security threats related to the environment, economy, science, and technology, as well as exploring opportunities for co-operation within these and related fields. Most of these themes are front page in many OSCE participating States and clearly instrumental to longer-term peace, stability, and sustainable development in the region. Accordingly, most of the work of the OSCE PA General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment is strongly oriented toward the future. The last year has highlighted the profound interdependence of all people and nations with our home, planet Earth. In light of this, the ethical dimension of political action, including on the topics addressed by this Committee, has become more apparent.

Regrettably, today Europe faces war again – even though it has become widely apparent that war knows no winners, but only losers. Without peace and freedom in the European region, fair and sustainable socio-economic growth for our countries is unattainable, thereby further exacerbating an already precarious security situation.

With this in mind, we vigorously condemn the Russian military invasion of Ukraine, which has dramatic human, economic, and environmental consequences, and represents a major setback to the goals of our committee. In this regard, food security is a pressing issue for the OSCE region, and beyond, as Ukraine acts as a crucial supplier of agricultural goods for many countries, with broader unpredictable security implications. The security situation around the Ukrainian nuclear power plants is also particularly alarming and should be dealt with as a matter of priority, for instance through the establishment of “safe-zones.” Finally, assisting millions of displaced individuals will significantly burden several participating States' budgets at a critical juncture, likely deflecting critical public resources originally intended to meet other needs.

All OSCE participating States should, therefore, consider effective and well-coordinated actions in the economic and environmental spheres aimed at restoring international peace and security in Ukraine, which should be strictly limited in time and designed in such a way as to bear the minimum impact on civilian populations. OSCE participating States should also stand ready to support Ukraine to rebuild its country, its economy, and its infrastructures once peace and security have been restored.

With the signing of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, our participating States underlined the link between security and sustainable development. The OSCE's comprehensive approach to security lies in the recognition that wars and instability may arise not only from political and military threats, but also from economic tensions, environmental degradation, and social instability.

At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly changed our region. Therefore, this Committee is called to use this opportunity to ensure that we emerge for the better and promote tangible action in all areas and at all levels for the sake of longer-term peace and stability. But answers cannot be found merely at a national level – co-operation in the region is key to promote a balanced recovery and enhance environmental security. How we will deal with the challenges that are in the focus of the OSCE PA 2nd Committee is largely a political decision. As members of parliaments, we are in the driver's seat: It is our role to advocate for change, work with our governments, co-operate, and enhance the dialogue in the region.

In bringing a distinct parliamentary contribution to this field, we strive to complement ongoing OSCE efforts. Notably, the OSCE PA has actively co-operated with both the 2021 and 2022 OSCE Chairmanships and the Executive Structures of the Organization to extend the reach of its actions. In line with the Polish Chairmanship's priorities for 2022, we endorse this year's Economic and Environmental Forum focused on promoting security and stability in the OSCE area through sustainable economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Moreover, we particularly appreciate the continued focus of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Committee on environmental security and look forward to actively contributing to its debates. The adoption of landmark Decision 3/21 on Strengthening Co-operation to Address the Challenges caused by Climate Change at the last OSCE Ministerial Council in Stockholm denotes how critical these issues are for our future. The OSCE PA also welcomes the 2022 Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities' Work Plan and the assistance offered to participating States in implementing economic and environmental commitments contributing to security and stability in the OSCE region.

To date, we have exploited our planet, showing little mercy. Now we receive the bill for it. Will we manage to live in harmony with each other and, perhaps even more importantly, with the planet which graciously hosts us? Will we find ways to effectively deal with the many critical security challenges related to the environment and economy? How can we best leverage science and technology to underpin our common security, rather than jeopardize it? These are just some of the critical questions we urgently need to address.

2. ECONOMIC SECURITY

2.1 Sustainable Economic Recovery

The socio-economic crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic has been characterized by an unprecedented level of stimulus packages, an unprecedented level of enhanced co-operation between all stakeholders, and an unprecedented speed of increasing digital skills across all layers of society. However, the disruptive effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on growth and development is still evident. Against this background, promoting security and stability in the OSCE area through sustainable economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic remains key.

Strengthening economic resilience requires greater global co-operation, including at regional level, giving organizations such as the OSCE a prominent role to play in promoting sustainable growth, inclusive labor markets, and equality between women and men. The Stockholm Ministerial Council Decision on Climate Change provides a blueprint for including much-needed climate change considerations in current COVID-19 recovery efforts and strengthening co-operation to minimize its impact.

Notably, balanced policies and effective public-private partnerships will be critical to support the most affected economic sectors, while also promoting innovative forms of businesses. Sound investments will be instrumental to achieving a long-term resilient and sustainable recovery. Ultimately, increasing investment and fostering innovation remain at the center of long-term economic growth, and go hand-in-hand with the challenges of green and digital transformation.

To this end, the key to sustainable economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic lies in strengthening bilateral, regional, and global co-operation by, *inter alia*, accelerating the deployment of green technologies, leveraging technology to enhance economic change and interconnectedness, and supporting human capital development.

In the spirit of shared responsibility - rather than shortsighted selfness - we must work together towards building more fair, green, and sustainable economic models, leaving no one behind in the process.

2.2 Demographic Challenges

It is a remarkable accomplishment and a distinctive trait of overall stability and prosperity that people in the OSCE region live increasingly longer and healthier lives. This has been achieved through an efficient articulation of policies that strengthen public health and social inclusion, and prodigious technological and scientific breakthroughs in various fields. In order to ensure the sustainability of such an achievement, intergenerational exchange, initiatives against loneliness in old age, and health programmes, including accessible telemedicine, as well as comprehensive hospice and palliative care supply, are increasingly important to secure health and quality of life in old age for everyone. I welcome the efforts of our Special Representative on Elderly Issues, Ms. Paola Taverna (Italy), in this complex context.

Unfortunately, stagnant birth rates and high emigration trends have led several areas in the OSCE region to experience alarming decreases in the overall population. Demographic change affects both economic prosperity and the future performance of social security systems. The self-reinforcing population decline in some areas as a result of declining birth rates and migratory movements is becoming an increasing challenge for infrastructure, regions, and communities.

In many participating States, the mortality rate has exceeded the birth rate: the proportion of people older than 80 years in the EU has almost doubled in the last 20 years, life expectancy continues to rise, and the average age has increased from 38.4 to 44 years since 2001.¹ Migration policies, aimed at compensating for this deficit,

¹ Cf. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/digpub/demography/bloc-1c.html?lang=en>

have proven inadequate to meet the challenge and are also associated with several problems: from the challenges in integration efforts to “brain drain” from the countries of origin.

It is therefore of vital interest for economic security and stability in the OSCE region not only to monitor such demographic changes, but also to promote a multi-level dialogue aimed at identifying possible causes, likely consequences, and plausible sustainable strategies for remedial action. In order to ensure generational sustainability and structural solidarity, we should prevent further declines in birth rates, including by empowering young people and adequately supporting all those who want to have children.

The introduction of various family supportive measures, including tax benefits, could be a possible means to achieve this. Furthermore, increasing the long-term efficiency of the health and social systems will be a vital factor and should include making care professions more appealing. In regions where “depopulation” is more prominent, a special focus should be on attracting people to live in those areas through, *inter alia*, investments in the necessary infrastructure, digitalization, smart working, intergenerational housing, telemedicine, and improved quality of life.

Regrettably, these demographic changes do not always receive the attention deserved. Parliamentary working groups, as well as government departments, should therefore focus on the challenges posed by current demographic trends and develop adequate responses with the aim to promote stability and prosperity across the region.

2.3 Economic Interdependence

On the one hand, the deepening of international economic connectivity and globalization in the last thirty years was fueled by the opening of international trade and the leveraging of computing and electronic communications. China has played a predominant role in this context, greatly benefiting from the process, and progressively expanding its production, communication, and distribution networks. China has also been investing consistently in foreign ports, transportation facilities, and mining assets, especially in developing countries.

While many participating States have strict rules barring state aid and requiring that national export-credit agencies lend at market rates, Chinese companies are not bound by these requirements. This allows for distorting competition, for example by price dumping.

Moreover, purchasing Chinese products can contribute to the exploitation of ethnic and religious minorities in and around China through coercive systems and forced labor schemes, as witnessed in the example of Uighurs.²

The participating States should, therefore, reconsider their spectrum-auction policies, sales of their infrastructure and companies, supply of energy, purchases of key communications and safety technology, and debt management with the view to

²<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/jul/23/virtually-entire-fashion-industry-complicit-in-uighur-forced-labour-say-rights-groups-china>

safeguarding their economic security, including with regard to China. More specifically, it is critical that healthy economic interdependence does not translate into excessive political dependence to external players, with a loss of significant portions of States' sovereignty.

On the other hand, the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine have further strained economic relations in parts of the OSCE region, with multiple supply, distribution and consumption shocks hampering global trade and connectivity, significantly eroding trust among some participating States. The strong set of economic sanctions imposed by many OSCE participating States following the military aggression in Ukraine have further strained economic relations in the OSCE region and are impacting negatively on citizens.

While all governments are called upon to respect international law, trade rules and understandings, OSCE participating States must be vigilant and tailor their economic policies and investments to the needs and priorities of the region. To this end, enhanced co-operation and adequate diversification of supply chains remain key to ensuring regional stability. While economic sanctions can be effective instruments of political persuasion, especially at times of gross violations of international law and unacceptable loss of life, they must be limited in time and designed in a way that bears the minimum impact on civilian populations.

2.4 Migration Management

“Of all things in the world, people are the most precious. It is the people that propel social progress, create social wealth, develop science and technology and, through their hard work, continuously transform the human environment,” we read in the Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment. In a globalized world, the well-being of one depends on the well-being of another. Hence, it is critical to promote socio-economic development within and beyond the OSCE region, particularly in Africa.

Enhanced co-operation on economic and environmental affairs with third countries is therefore key to enhance regional stability and prevent uncontrolled migratory flows, and their resultant destabilizing effects on European security. Preventing “brain drain” and promoting functioning local economies is critical in this context.

Economic co-operation must be conditioned by the actual enforcement of the rule of law, a functioning administration, and the empowerment of individuals, which will strengthen democratization and boost education and job opportunities. In particular, women's special role in development must be recognized: Economic empowerment of women and girls is a form of participation and a step towards equality of opportunities.

More economically developed, free and just societies, with sufficient job opportunities for all, including those belonging to national minorities, will make citizens feel safer and more secure at home, rather than seeking their fortune abroad.

It appears critical to study migration flows within the context of labor and development, as well as in the increasingly relevant context of climate and pollution. For instance,

economic development, life aid in the countries of origin, and strong responses to the climate crisis hold the key in working against push factors.

At the same time, OSCE participating States shall enhance border security, dismantle human smuggling networks preying on desperate migrants and promote effective, sustainable, and human-rights compliant migration management, including through coordination between countries, exchange of best practices, and support from relevant international organizations to meet the challenges of migration. Whenever appropriate, opportunities for legal migration should be duly expanded to fill not only highly qualified, but also lesser-skilled positions.

To maximize the positive impact of migration on the socio-economic development of countries of origin and destination, and of the migrants themselves, the OSCE/OCEEA promotes the implementation of international and OSCE commitments in the area of migration governance, including the 2009 Ministerial Council Decision on migration management and the 2016 Ministerial Council Decision on the OSCE's role in the governance of large movements of migrants and refugees.

As living standards significantly differ in the OSCE region, steps should be taken to tackle existing inequalities and enhance living standards and opportunities across the whole region.

As such, widespread economic development in the OSCE region and beyond will promote citizens' security and enhance geopolitical stability.

2.5 Combatting Human Trafficking in a Globalized Economy

On the occasion of the 2022 OSCE PA Winter Meeting, the 2nd Committee held a special debate on Human Trafficking in a Globalized Economy. Trafficking is a complex crime and combating it on the ground requires specific skills and tools. For this reason, the establishment of specialized anti-trafficking units, strengthened multi-agency co-operation, and joint investigation teams to tackle complex cross-border criminal networks have been identified as best practices to fight traffickers and support victims.

Nowadays, the intersection of technology and trafficking is one of the defining topics of the global conversation on efforts to end human trafficking. Countries' anti-trafficking frameworks need to be updated to reflect the predominant role that the misuse of technology plays in human trafficking, as victims are increasingly recruited and exploited online, often in the sex market. This is true both for national policies and practices, but also with respect to international co-operation, for example in cases where the victim, the perpetrator, the user of services, and the server are from different countries.

Appallingly, the use of forced labour is increasingly prevalent in the production of goods and services regularly procured by our Governments. Indiscriminate purchasing can inadvertently fuel human trafficking and forced labour, undermining fair economic competition, incentivizing human rights violations, and financing criminal groups. As supply chain regulations will increase in the future, all participating States must adapt

their national policies so that their enterprises will continue to engage ethically in the global market.

One of the most effective ways to disrupt and prevent human trafficking for forced labour is to eliminate the market for goods or services produced by trafficked people through informed and ethical purchasing. To operationalize this concept, parliaments across the OSCE region have increasingly been adopting laws to prevent human trafficking in supply chains. By strategically taking action on supply chains, States leverage the power of “demand” to combat trafficking and break the business model of trafficking. Such legislative instruments can be broadly categorized into four groups: import bans, reporting laws, disclosure laws, and due diligence laws.

International Organizations – including the OSCE – also have an important role to play in combatting human trafficking, through standard-setting, technical assistance programs, and ensuring their own supply chains are not contributing to human trafficking. To this end, the work of Mr. Valiant Richey, OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking, in Human Beings, and Mr. Christopher H. Smith, OSCE PA Special Representative on Human Trafficking Issues, has been pioneering in promoting policies to prevent human trafficking by discouraging the demand that fosters trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation³ and in the procurement of goods and services.

2.6 Combating Corruption

Corruption has become increasingly systemic and affects all countries in the world. Taking different shapes and forms, it destroys political, economic, and social systems. To this extent, anti-corruption is a cross-cutting issue, not a stand-alone policy.

Lack of transparency in the work of public entities and widely perceived corruption in public offices continue to hamper citizens’ trust in democratic institutions and processes. In this context, open data initiatives are critical in ensuring free and unhindered access to information on public contracts and tenders. Moreover, experience shows that insofar as the ultimate beneficial owner of private companies interfacing with public institutions or funds is unknown, the door to corruption, money laundering and terrorist financing remains open. Thus, sound ultimate beneficial ownership laws should be developed and duly implemented throughout the OSCE region.

In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has also presented an enormous challenge to transparent, responsible, and effective governance, and the rule of law. Where the pandemic response has lagged, corruption has often been a major contributing factor. In a nutshell, States should undertake a holistic, multi-stakeholder approach, including by providing for greater involvement of civil society groups, investigating how public resources are being deployed, and pressing for accountability.

Interparliamentary fora such as the OSCE PA should continue to promote policy convergence on anti-corruption, money laundering, and terrorist financing, and work

³ Occasional Paper of the [Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings](https://www.osce.org/cthb/489388), 10 June 2021, <https://www.osce.org/cthb/489388>

hard to strengthen political will for the steady implementation of good governance commitments at the national level. The OSCE PA Conference on “Combating Corruption, Defending Democracy: The Role of National Parliaments,” hosted by the Parliament of Cyprus in Nicosia on 27-28 May 2022, represents a case in point.

Such increased parliamentary engagement has been duly reflected in the 2020 OSCE Ministerial Council Decision on Preventing and Combating Corruption Through Digitalization and Increased Transparency. In this context, parliaments should proactively engage in safeguarding the independence of key anti-corruption national stakeholders, such as the Judiciary, Prosecution Service, Ombudsmen, Auditors-General and Anti-Corruption Agencies from political or other interferences. For instance, relevant appointments should require parliamentary consent, and Parliaments should ensure that their mandates and resources are fit for purpose.

Furthermore, journalists act as a watchdog over shortcomings in the public governance system by uncovering and publicly exposing malpractices, as well as by fighting impunity. To ensure their effective role in fighting corruption, journalists must be free and independent, and the media environment needs to be pluralistic, safe, and protected from undue influence.

International organizations, such as the OSCE, also represent a privileged platform for sharing best practices, developing co-ordinated responses, and promoting strategic partnerships among key actors in this field, including parliaments, governments, civil society, the business community, media and youth. To this end, the work of OSCE PA Special Representative on Fighting Corruption, Ms. Irene Charalambides, and OSCE Special Representative on Combating Corruption, Professor Anita Ramasastry, to bring political momentum and expertise to the good governance work of the Organization has been remarkable.

3. ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY

3.1 Sustainable Development

Bridging economic and environmental considerations to global security, the implementation of the UN Agenda 2030 is key to strengthen multilateralism and promote lasting peace. As the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are deeply intertwined, action in one area will affect outcomes in others. Hence, it is imperative to duly balance social, economic, and environmental sustainability in building our shared future.

In this regard, I welcome the efforts of our Vice-President Askar Shakirov (Kazakhstan) who, since his appointment as the OSCE PA’s Special Representative on Sustainable Development Goals in August 2021, has been working to promote the Assembly’s engagement on issues related to achieving the UN’s SDGs and Agenda 2030, often in partnership with our 2nd Committee.

In fact, the 2030 Agenda provides a strategic framework also for the efforts of the OSCE PA General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment. Resonating with the focus of our work, SDGs advocate for leaving no

one behind while reconciling global economic progress with social justice and the conservation of our environment. For instance, we looked closely at the interrelation between Goals n. 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), n. 8 (Economic Growth) and n. 15 (Life on Land) during our May 2021 Parliamentary Web Dialogue “*Framing the Environmental Security – Public Health Nexus: Science Informs Policymaking*”.

Similarly, recognizing the critical role that energy plays in fueling our development and shaping our security, we have recently held an interesting policy debate on “*The Clean Energy Revolution and its Implications for the OSCE Region*”. The event allowed us to put into greater focus Goals n. 7 (Affordable & Clean Energy), n. 9 (Industry & Innovation) and n. 12 (Responsible Production & Consumption), thereby consolidating our impression that a systematic shift is inevitable, and it will affect both our policies and behaviors.

Finally, building on SDG n. 13 (Climate Action), n. 11 (Sustainable Cities & Communities) and n. 17 (Partnerships), we have exhorted OSCE Governments to address the climate crisis resolutely, coherently, and cooperatively, in line with the letter and spirit of the Paris Agreement. This was accomplished through a very timely and detailed *Parliamentary Plea for Resolute Climate Action*, issued on the occasion of COP26 last November, by the leaders of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly’s Economic and Environmental Committee, together with the President’s envoys on Arctic issues and Sustainable Development Goals.

To this end, as parliamentarians, we shall continue to act as strong agents of change both at the national and international levels. At the national level, we need to monitor the sound implementation of SDGs by our governments and ask for their accountability in this field. At the international level, we must engage within the OSCE PA and beyond to share lessons learned and catalyze co-operative efforts for their timely implementation.

3.2 Climate Change

We realize that the vision of comprehensive security is not possible without addressing the climate and environmental crisis. Ultimately, there can be no politico-military, economic and environmental, or human security without climate security. The latest report of the United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)⁴ rightly underlines that the threat that climate change poses to human well-being and the health of the planet is “unequivocal” and that “human and natural systems will face additional severe risks”, including some that are “irreversible”.

Thus, we must urgently redirect our co-operative efforts towards shaping a truly sustainable, carbon-neutral, development model in which environmental, economic, social, and public health factors are duly factored in and given equal attention.

To achieve this goal - clearly entailing profound economic, social, and cultural transformations in the coming decades - we will need strong political leadership, a common vision, and a shared sense of responsibility. We will need to utilize the best

⁴ <https://report.ipcc.ch/ar6wg2/>

available science and accelerate innovation for an effective, long-term global response to climate change, a response that promotes economic growth and counters poverty.

In October last year, Chair Pere Joan Pons represented the OSCE PA at the Pre-COP26 Parliamentary meeting in Rome, where he, *inter alia*, reiterated the climate - public health - security nexus and stressed the key role of parliamentarians in monitoring the implementation of climate-related commitments.

Against this backdrop, our 5 November 2021 [Parliamentary Plea for Resolute Climate Action](#) urged OSCE governments to commit to “progressively ambitious emission reduction targets in line with capping temperature increases at 1.5 degrees.”⁵ Remarkably, our call has been immediately echoed by the OSCE participating States, as they adopted the landmark Ministerial Decision on “Strengthening Co-operation to Address the Challenges caused by Climate Change”, which includes a strong and much-appreciated reference to the solid work of the OSCE PA and its parliamentarians in this field.

Accordingly, concerted efforts are urgently needed to mitigate and adapt to climate change, including through increased international collaboration, transfer of know-how, technological development, a strong scientific approach, and financial support. We must address the climate crisis resolutely, coherently, and co-operatively – in line with the letter and spirit of the Paris Agreement⁶.

As parliamentarians, we shall act as national guardians of the Paris commitments on behalf of our citizens, thereby ensuring that these commitments are rigorously being met by governments, including through:

- *MITIGATION – Securing global net-zero carbon emissions by mid-century and keeping 1.5 degrees within reach.*
- *ADAPTATION - Protecting communities and natural habitats.*
- *FINANCE - Mobilizing funds for adaptation and mitigation measures.*

A combination of approaches in addressing sectors that emit most GHG⁷ and improving overall transparency and public participation can move us closer to our mid-century objectives. Most mitigation measures are associated with clear co-benefits, including, but not limited to, new business opportunities, better environmental compliance, health benefits through better local air and water quality, better work conditions, and reduced waste⁸. While implementing diversified national mitigation measures, it will be critical to duly assess their ultimate environmental footprint and prevent potential short- and long-term shocks to our economies, labor markets, and

⁵www.oscepa.org/en/documents/officers-of-the-assembly/4288-parliamentary-plea-for-resolute-climate-action-8-november-2021/file

⁶ A milestone in global climate action was reached in October 2021: Turkey has ratified the Paris agreement, thereby being the last OSCE participating State to do so.

⁷ According to the recent [IPCC report](#), the various sectors' global emissions are the following: Electricity and heat production - 25 %; Agriculture and other land use - 24 %; Buildings - 6.4 %; Industry - 21 %; Transport - 14 %; Other energy (non-electricity or heat production related) - 9.6 %.

⁸ [IPCC, 2014: Technical Summary. In: Climate Change 2014: Mitigation of Climate Change. Contribution of Working Group III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, p. 85](#)

social relations, effectively leaving no citizen behind. New forms of poverty, such as energy poverty, must be avoided, and affordability, availability, and energy security must be guaranteed.

Moreover, adaptation planning and implementation are learning processes that require investment in knowledge and research, stakeholder engagement, and mixed approaches at all levels.⁹ While recognizing the differentiated impacts of climate change on different regions and individuals, supporting a community-based approach focused on local communities' priorities, needs, knowledge, and capacities appears critical to empower people to plan for and cope with the impacts of climate change.

To achieve the mid-century goals that all OSCE participating States have committed themselves to, it is also pivotal to scale up the level of financial flows from the public, private and not-for-profit sectors towards sustainable development priorities. For example, well-regulated "green finance" should channel private investments towards those economic initiatives that better manage environmental and social risks, while ensuring positive returns for the investors (win-win situation).

Climate change is a global problem that cannot be addressed without international co-operation and co-ordination among local, national, and international stakeholders and policymakers. Representing over one billion citizens, our 323 parliamentarians can spur change and enhance security at all levels. As bridges between citizens and their institutions, parliamentarians play a critical role in addressing the crisis, including by adopting relevant legislation, mobilizing adequate resources, promoting public participation, creating cross-regional responses, and ensuring that international commitments are consistently being met in the interest of all individuals.

In moving ahead, it is therefore critical to duly synergize our efforts towards:

- *drastic reductions in emissions of greenhouse gasses,*
- *cutting back on depletable forms of energy,*
- *development of effective adaptation strategies,*
- *creating a strong technology-science-policy interface,*
- *mobilization of the necessary financial resources, and*
- *international collaboration across the board.*

Clearly, most developed countries and the largest emitters shall lead by example in this field. We must not forget that developing nations are the most severely affected and, at the same time, the least responsible for climate change. While no population should be denied the benefits of economic growth and industrialization, all countries should co-operate in the implementation of the agreed commitments in line with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities in light of different national circumstances.

3.3 Clean Energy Transition

Building on the General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment 2021 Report and the 5 November Parliamentary Plea for Resolute

⁹ [IPCC, 2014: Adaptation Planning and Implementation. In: Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, p. 871](#)

Climate Action, the Assembly held the Parliamentary Web Dialogue “The Clean Energy Revolution and its Implications for the OSCE region” on 4 February 2022. Ultimately, the web dialogue confirmed the centrality of decarbonized energy policies for European security and reinforced the Assembly’s determination to engage in this domain, which bridges economic and environmental security aspects. With the green transition just starting - and all its unpredictable cultural, economic, social, and security repercussions - our vigilance and common efforts will be critical to ensure that upcoming reforms and investments meet, first and foremost, the needs of the people.

As scientists tell us and world leaders have committed to, to keep the goal of limiting temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius within reach, half of global emissions must be cut by the end of this decade.¹⁰ Since over 70% of human-caused greenhouse gas emissions stem from the energy sector, “greening” the latter holds the key to addressing both climate change and environmental degradation.¹¹ Accordingly, by the end of the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow, 151 countries submitted new climate plans to slash their emissions by 2030. To fully meet the Glasgow Agreement, clean energy investments need to triple by 2030.

Moreover, the global energy market has proved increasingly unstable lately, as illustrated by the high volatility of prices. Today, Europe finds itself at the heart of an “energy storm” prompted by, *inter alia*, a combination of supply bottlenecks, limited storage capabilities, the rebounding of the economy after the COVID-19 crisis, and the economic consequences of the war in Ukraine.

Accordingly, the transition to clean energy sources bears the potential to alleviate energy dependency on foreign producers and, by diversifying sources and making them more broadly accessible and affordable, minimize related geopolitical tensions. Enhancing and diversifying energy supplies towards cleaner energy sources is, therefore, crucial for guaranteeing stable and affordable development opportunities for all human needs throughout the region.

Hence, the energy transition is urgent and represents one of the most important topics of our time. Intended as the global energy sector’s shift from fossil-based systems of energy production and consumption (including oil, natural gas, and coal) to cleaner energy sources (such as renewables and low-carbon hydrogen), it implies gradual changes, structural ruptures, as well as systemic shifts.

As for the industrial and digital “revolutions”, science and technology play a central role in the energy transition. The energy transition should leverage the latest scientific findings and technological developments aimed at, *inter alia*, improving energy efficiency, reducing energy costs, developing and making economically viable new sources of clean energy, and capturing existing emissions.

The role of private businesses and citizens’ cooperatives in advancing the clean energy transition is also critical. Incentivizing private initiatives and mobilizing private capital is crucial to meet existing transition targets. Moreover, wide public support for the energy transition is key to the process. In so far as possible, “energy democracy”

¹⁰ IPCC, 2018: Summary for Policymakers. In: Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C

¹¹ Net-Zero by 2050: A Roadmap for the Global Energy Sector, IEA, May 2021.

should be promoted through social, participatory, and democratic parameters: The involvement of civil society and the business sector in consultation and decision-making, at both local and national levels, is imperative to ensure transparency and broader ownership.

If managed properly, the transition could provide remarkable opportunities for States' economies. Good governance, economic diversification, social dialogue, social protection, availability of transition funds, as well as skills development, are important aspects of an equitable energy transition. Finally, reducing dangerous emissions will slow down environmental degradation and pollution, which are negatively impacting public health and, consequently, the State's finances.

Citizens' needs and considerations should be put at the core of the energy transition effort. It is necessary to further ensure the fairness of the transition towards a climate-neutral economy, thereby leaving no one behind. The socio-economic impact of the transition should be alleviated through financial mechanisms and suitable policies.

Parliaments must be in the driver's seat when it comes to the energy transition, as they can influence/make significant political decisions. Both the speed and depth of the energy transition will be shaped by their decisions. Against this background, Parliaments have the critical role of taking into account citizens' considerations in the process, as well as ensuring their support, inclusivity, and representation. For instance, they should ensure that costs and benefits are distributed evenly throughout society and that no one is left behind.

3.4 Environmental Protection and Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

Compelling correlations between environmental degradation and global security have consistently emerged over the decades. Environmental challenges affect individuals and countries in many ways, even when they do not lead to direct conflict. Effects are wide-ranging and, besides the environment itself, they concern public health, economy, development, infrastructure, and others.

Therefore, a more holistic and interdisciplinary approach to environmental security should be advocated for, whereby the protection of the environment becomes the precondition to effectively address both the public health and climate crisis.

The world is facing several major environmental crises including climate change, biodiversity loss, unsustainable use of natural resources, and pollution. These come with many human and animal health risks in the form of infections and non-communicable diseases, water scarcity, and food safety problems. For instance, the relationship between altered environmental conditions and human health is particularly complex: drivers of global environmental change (e.g., land-use change, resource scarcity, or climate change) can directly pose health risks, or impair ecosystem services that subsequently influence public health.

The appalling, and widely documented, impact of pollution on human health has been proficiently exposed in the 2021 Report. Notably, of all environmental factors that lead to disease and shorten life expectancy, air pollution is the most predominant. Statistically, loss of life expectancy in global terms is ten times larger due to air

pollution than due to any kind of violence (including armed conflicts or domestic violence). Overall, it is estimated that air pollution kills approximately seven million people every year, but recent figures are even more worrisome.

Micro- and nano-plastic particles have been found in recent years in all parts of the world and in various organisms. Shockingly, the human body consumes on average up to 5 grams of these particles per week. Although the health implications of such exposure have not been explored so far, renowned researchers from the Netherlands recently concluded that 'multidisciplinary research efforts, involving scientists from environmental and medical sectors as well as polymer scientists, are needed to tackle this potential health hazard.'¹² To this end, micro- and nano-plastic particles must be explored as a public health concern, and research efforts must be strengthened in this direction.

Clearly, environmental, social, and economic development also depends on the sustainable management of our planet's natural resources, and the promotion of sustainable consumption and production patterns. As such, OSCE participating States should increase their efforts in the protection of the environment and sustainable use of natural resources, including soils, water, and forests, and in the conservation of ecosystems and biodiversity through, *inter alia*, stringent regulatory frameworks.

One striking example is the Arctic region. Polar ice caps are melting as global warming causes climate change. As a result, access to natural resources leads to new economic opportunities. This, in turn, leads to further environmental concerns regarding the exploitation of natural resources in areas with very fragile ecosystems. Global climate efforts must, therefore, counteract these developments to prevent further erosion of the polar ice cap and combat the acidification of the sea to protect natural habitats and fisheries. I welcome the efforts of our Special Representative on Arctic Issues, Ms. Bryndis Haraldsdottir (Iceland) in this critical context.

In this regard, co-operation and co-ordination among all stakeholders and at all levels is key, including through the implementation of international agreements. The Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution (Barcelona Convention)¹³ represents a case in point. I commend the OSCE PA for officially joining the United Nations Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development of the Barcelona Convention as of 01 January 2022. Acting as a forum for sharing experience and peer learning, the Commission¹⁴ assists Contracting Parties in

¹² Vethaak D and Legler J, Science 2021, Gruber E et al, Journal Exposure & Health 2022.

¹³ The Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution (Barcelona Convention) was adopted on 16 February 1976 in Barcelona and entered into force in 1978. The Barcelona Convention was amended in 1995 and renamed as the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean. The amendments to the Barcelona Convention entered into force in 2004.

¹⁴ The Commission is unique in its composition and includes not only government representatives but also local authorities, socio-economic actors, non-governmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations, the scientific community, and parliamentarians. All MCSD members participate in its deliberations on an equal footing. The MCSD notably coordinates the preparation of the Mediterranean Strategy on Sustainable Development (MSSD), as a strategic framework document for all stakeholders and partners to translate the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at regional, sub-regional, national and local levels.

protecting the environment and promoting sustainable development policies in the Mediterranean region, which is integral to the OSCE region.

It is also critical to promote a multi-stakeholder approach, including dialogue between public and private sectors, civil society, and the scientific world, in the protection of the environment, considering that damage to the environment - such as the unsustainable use of natural resources, climate change and biodiversity loss - is best avoided through preventive measures.

To this end, good public and corporate governance in the sphere of the environment can help to ensure a more sustainable and balanced socio-economic development.

Parliaments should therefore promote good environmental governance, including through the development of relevant legislation and the strengthening of international co-operation by exchanging experiences and lessons learned to enhance the protection of the environment and the sustainable use of natural resources.

4. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Science and technology are potent allies in the change we seek to achieve. A strong science-policy interface is therefore key, including for better informing our policy decisions in tackling climate change, promoting sustainable development, protecting the environment, and safeguarding citizens' health.

However, the potential misuse of new technologies, which have become so critical in our modern lives - such as Artificial Intelligence - also carries along some security challenges.

4.1 Artificial Intelligence

New technologies, and in particular Artificial Intelligence (AI), have profoundly changed our lives. They offer countless opportunities in the OSCE area, but, at the same time, they pose new challenges regarding human rights, democracy, and the resilience of infrastructures. Such challenges need to be tackled co-operatively, as new technologies are hardly affected by national borders.

Narrow artificial intelligence¹⁵ in which algorithms perform specific tasks, is a helpful tool to aid people's lives in a myriad of areas, from text translation to successful advertisement placement. General artificial intelligence, such as humanoid robots, would seem, in contrast, rather hyped ideas than realistic prospects. Nonetheless, robotics will change, and has already significantly changed, the labor market as well as our care systems.

Where drones take over border patrols, where protection from terrorist threats, food/water security and energy supply are entrusted to centralized AIs, we may face

¹⁵ Narrow artificial intelligence (narrow AI) is a specific type of artificial intelligence in which a learning algorithm is designed to perform a single task, and any knowledge gained from performing that task will not automatically be applied to other tasks. Unlike general artificial intelligence, which seeks to mimic complex thought processes, narrow AI is designed to successfully complete a single task without human assistance.

some dangers. Marginal statistical errors may not be dramatic in many day-to-day AI applications, but systems of critical nature require the highest precision and reliability. Technology should never replace human experience and human decision-making, especially in critical areas, such as defense, health, and critical infrastructures.

As a matter of fact, an excessively fast digitization process without adequate back-up systems can make our societies more vulnerable to sporadic system failures and targeted cyber-attacks. If faced with a major blackout or security attack, our supply chains, logistics systems, commerce- and payment systems could be significantly crippled, or even shut down. To ensure greater resilience, OSCE participating States should secure the existence of functioning, analogous alternative economic processes and backup plans for critical supply chains and infrastructure services. We should also continue to support science and research efforts to optimize AI, better tailoring it to human needs.

When AI analyses data, fairness and non-discrimination must be upheld, and the absence of bias secured. Whenever used, AI must be transparent, tested and certified prior to getting market access. Additionally, systematic machine-profiling of people should be regarded as an infringement of personal rights and freedoms concerning the job market, insurance policies, and many other services essential to citizen well-being. Automation and profiling are furthermore susceptible to abuse. Parliaments should legislate mandatory labeling for processes in which a person is dealing with AI and not with a human being.¹⁶

I welcome the work of the new OSCE PA Special Representative on Digital Agenda, Mr. Radu-Mihai Mihail (Romania) in the context of digitalization in the regard.

4.2 Communication in a Digitalized World

Modern communication platforms empowered by technological innovation and digitalization have contributed greatly to the increase of citizens' participation in public discourse and have granted unlimited access to resources and information for everyone. This is a benefit to democratization, co-operation, and the empowerment of citizens, allowing for easy communication amongst people around the globe. At the same time, the misuse of individualized algorithms prioritizing certain content in the user's news feed has increased the spread of disinformation, is prone to mass manipulation, and could lead to polarization and civil unrest. This poses a very serious threat to security in the OSCE region.

OSCE participating States should therefore define goals and create legal frameworks for social media platforms to combat manipulation and disinformation while, at the same time, protecting the freedom of expression from censorship and state propaganda. I welcome the work of the OSCE PA Special Rapporteur on Disinformation, Fake News and Propaganda, Mr. Oscar Mina (San Marino) in this area.

Parliamentarians' focus should be on strengthening media pluralism and information literacy among citizens, enabling them to distinguish fake news from facts and discern verified sources. Given their relevance and impact in modern societies, the activities

¹⁶ cf. EU AI Act

of social media platforms must be regulated through clear, transparent, and impartial rules aimed at preventing disinformation, radicalization, and mass manipulation, also for economic purposes, with a strong commitment to the protection of free speech.

The UN Joint Declaration on Freedom of Expression and “Fake News”, Disinformation and Propaganda¹⁷ warns against the “outsourcing of public functions, like protection of freedom of expression, to unaccountable private actors”¹⁸ and suggests companies should make “high-level policy commitments to respect the human rights of their users”¹⁹ and adopt measures which guarantee “transparency, meaningful accountability and a commitment to remedy in order to protect the ability of individuals to use online platforms as forums for free expression, access to information and engagement in public life.”²⁰

Legal obligations on companies to restrict content should not be put under vague or complex criteria, such as broadly worded restrictive laws on “extremism” or “offensive” speech, “false news” and “propaganda”. In all attempts to combat disinformation, we must remember that freedom of speech is a fundamental human right.

In particular, the protection of children and youth from disinformation through individualized preferential algorithms, as well as emotional or psychological dependency through instant gratification, needs to be a priority. The linkage between the economy, technology and education of future generations becomes a cross-sectoral, cross-regional security concern, which requires a strong commitment of governments and parliaments across the OSCE region.

¹⁷ *UN Joint Declaration on Freedom of Expression and “Fake News”, Disinformation and Propaganda as well as the Report (A/HRC/38/35) by former UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, David Kaye.*

¹⁸ Para. 1

¹⁹ Para. 11 (b)

²⁰ Para. 64