



Interparliamentary Relations Office House of Commons · London · SW1A 0AA

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Dear Colleague

REFORM & RENEWAL OF THE OSCE PA

When the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly meets in Vienna in February, Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine will have been prosecuted for 12 months. Over that period 32,000 civilians and approximately 13,000 Ukrainian military have been killed. The killing, war crimes and atrocities continue.

As I stated in my public comments in Birmingham and Warsaw, *"Ukraine isn't NATO's border, it's not the EU's border, but it is freedom's border"*, meaning all OSCE member States should play their part in ensuring Ukraine is victorious.

Let us remember, Russia's aggression is not limited to Ukraine; threats have been made against Sweden, Finland, Romania, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Moldova, France, the United Kingdom and many other OSCE countries. Many of these threats have come from individual Russian MPs – not just Putin. The Duma and Kremlin are working hand-in-hand in authorising the brutal killing of Ukrainian men, women and children.

The OSCE PA has debated Ukraine, issued strongly worded statements and showed important signs of solidarity but, to date, has failed to agree any significant political isolation on Russia. This was most evident at the Autumn Meeting in Warsaw and whilst Ukraine will again be debated in Vienna in February, Russia's membership of the Parliamentary Assembly continues. Our Austrian hosts should refuse visas to members of the Duma – a Duma complicit in Putin's aggression. Visas were refused by Poland and the United Kingdom before recent meetings of the Assembly.

As a result of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's previous 'inability' to politically isolate Russia, the Assembly's international reputation has been badly bruised. This cannot continue to be repeated.

Nevertheless, and as I stated in Warsaw, the Assembly's inability to suspend Russia will invariably *"shake and potentially fracture the Assembly, but it does not need to break the Assembly"*, but only if changes are made to the rules and procedures of the organisation, which has held the Assembly hostage for far too long.

Since we gathered in Warsaw, I have spoken with colleagues from numerous countries and political groups and a 'common view' has now emerged that the Assembly needs 'Reform and Renewal' and that 'business as usual' is no longer tenable and could damage the Assembly's reputation further.

It is very clear the 'Consensus Minus One' voting rule is no longer fit for purpose. I believe any change to this procedure can still be achieved without compromising the spirit of the Assembly.

That is why I am writing to you today to set out my **'Reform & Renewal' proposal** - a proposal that has both precedent and practice in other large international organisations.

My proposal is fair, balanced and transparent and delivers opportunity for 'Reform and Renewal' of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly whilst safeguarding many other helpful rules and procedures.

Voting by Two Thirds (2/3) Majority:

Other organisations faced with similar dilemmas posed by inflexible or outdated rules and procedures have taken action to establish new ways of working when the diplomatic and political reality demanded.



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The United Nations General Assembly is a case in point. In the 1950s, in the face of Russian (then Soviet) vetoes in the Security Council, the Assembly decided to end an embarrassing political and diplomatic merry-go-round and take action to halt a cycle of procrastination and 'indecision'.

Therefore, I propose the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly should consider taking inspiration from this international precedent.

Proposal:

In case a small minority in the Standing Committee blocks important decisions that are necessary for Assembly functioning or are necessary to improve our work, the Plenary should assert its voice. I propose the Plenary's clear statement – by a minimum of two thirds, that action must be taken on a particular question, could be grounds for the Standing Committee to subsequently apply a two-thirds majority vote instead of the usual consensus-minus-one. As is the case in many of our parliaments, a minimum three months' time period should be required between these two votes, which will safeguard against any ill-considered actions.

My proposal is outside of the Assembly's Rules as they are currently written, but it is in line with the Standing Committee's authority as the Assembly's executive decision-making body, but respectful of the Plenary as the Assembly's full voice.

I believe the 2/3 majority proposal will strengthen, protect, and enhance the Assembly's international reputation, whilst ensuring the Parliamentary Assembly's inclusive philosophy of dialogue, security, stability, and international cooperation is safeguarded.

If you agree with my **'Reform & Renewal' proposals**, or want to share your own thoughts on how to further strengthen the OSCE PA, then please email me at: mark.pritchard.mp@parliament.uk or call me on +44 7775 711555

The Parliamentary Assembly's future is a positive future, but only if we are all prepared to 'Reform and Renew'.

Best wishes,

Vice President – OSCE PA