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PA President Riccardo Migliori referred to in his speech during the  
925<sup>th</sup> Permanent Council  
on October 11, 2012



**President Riccardo Migliori**  
*Remarks to Permanent Council of the OSCE*  
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*Remarks for distribution.*

*Chairman, Excellencies,*

Thank you for the invitation to speak here this morning.

I hope my presence here today serves as a reminder that the Parliamentary Assembly believes in the full potential of the OSCE. As we declared during our Annual Session in July “the OSCE’s comprehensive approach to security remains a key concept for successfully addressing the security challenges of the twenty-first century”.

In short, today I will address how we can help you in your work, and how co-operatively we can strengthen the OSCE as a whole.

This co-operation is critical to how the OSCE observes elections, decides on policy, and increases its visibility and capacity for the future.

I’ll begin with elections. I have a hunch you may have heard what I said on this topic in Warsaw. Some of you were in the room when I said it.

Here, as there, I don’t intend to bore you with bureaucracy or tire you with tedium. These issues are major and strike at the heart of our Organization. I wasn’t elected to sit on my hands and watch the OSCE flounder, so hear me out.

We should all be proud that the OSCE is the gold standard of election observation; that all your counterparts in embassies across this region wait to comment on an election until we deliver our assessment.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has, ever since the first Russian Duma elections in 1993, led OSCE election observation, completing more than two hundred election observation missions with the participation of thousands of parliamentarians – well before you created and financed institutionalized governmental structures for this purpose.

Parliamentarians’ expert political judgment as practitioners of politics and elections, and the transparency with which they act, are critical to the credibility of our observation work.

Parliamentarians also add great visibility because of their link with the media in their respective countries.

This autumn alone we have established six election observation missions and provided the OSCE with experienced political leadership and a team of experts from the International Secretariat for each one.

Our pre-visits have laid the groundwork for successful missions in Serbia, Georgia, and Belarus, where our efforts helped to secure the recent release of two political prisoners. Our human rights committee chair Matteo Mecacci and Vice-President Tonino Picula represented the OSCE most effectively in these countries, and we should all be proud of how they handled these difficult and sensitive missions.

Let me repeat what I said at the HDIM: I consider our co-operation with the ODIHR an added value for OSCE election observation activities.

Of course, this co-operation must be based on an honest implementation of the 1997 Co-operation Agreement. Ambassador Nothelle has kept you informed about the problems that we have been facing. I will therefore continue to insist on an orthodox implementation of the Co-operation Agreement and strongly count on your support in our efforts to fully implement Ministerial Decision 19-06.

The Parliamentary Assembly has adhered to this agreement in letter and spirit for fifteen years. The ODIHR has not.

And we are very frustrated by the reluctance of the Permanent Council to recognize this.

As diplomats, you are expected to carry out your instructions from your government. If you did not do so, what would be the consequences? Think about that, and consider what should the consequences be when the ODIHR fails – *consistently* – to follow the mandate of the OSCE Chairmanship and the Ministerial Council.

The Chairmanship, for the good of the whole OSCE, should insist on timely information sharing within the OSCE family and respect for the role of each Special Co-ordinator appointed to speak for the OSCE, before a lack of co-operation tarnishes the good name of our Organization in the field of election observation.

Elections may be visible moments for the OSCE, but they are just that: moments.

The backbone of the OSCE is the field missions and the programmes they undertake, which emanate from the policy decisions you take in this room.

As parliamentarians, directly elected by the people, enjoying the highest possible democratic legitimacy, we have a unique responsibility to foster public debate and build public support for the OSCE. We appreciate those of you who have seen the PA as an asset in this regard.

Exchanges between the OSCE PA and PC committees also showcase our continuing co-operation.

But it is time for Vienna to more fully embrace policy input provided by the elected representatives of the one billion strong OSCE electorate.

This means opening up this body to function with the same transparency and accountability that we all expect from our own governments.

We need NGOs to know they are welcome here at the Permanent Council, that input from civil society is not relegated to two weeks in Warsaw but year-round at the governing seat of the OSCE.

That's why we voted at our Annual Session in Monaco to request that the Permanent Council hold regular public meetings with civil society representatives on human rights abuses. We need the NGOs, as much as we need free and independent media, because they point out our weaknesses and advocate for the rights of citizens in their countries.

I fear that what is taking place in this room more often than not amounts to a beauty contest between blocs of participating States. Dialogue is replaced with monologue. Actions with accusations. And a multitude of formal and informal working groups and seminars have installed a bureaucratic routine that suffocates what we need most – frank and open discussions to solve our common security problems.

Today, I call on all of you to rededicate yourselves to making your time here what you hoped it would be when you started – not what it has been for so many ambassadors who came before you.

Make it interesting. Make it matter, because it does.

The negotiations you hold in Vienna and soon in the Dublin Ministerial Council must answer the question: as we approach 40 years after Helsinki, can we do better than put reshuffled diplomatic formulas on Ministerial Council paper?

I know we can, and in line with tradition, our Special Representative Ambassador Nothelle has briefed you on the recommendations we adopted at our Annual Session this year, which I hope you will see fit to include in the final document. I will not take the time to go into all the details, but I will simply mention a few examples:

In the military dimension, the PA urges OSCE participating States to fully implement and continue to update the Vienna Document 2011, restart the negotiations on the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe, and intensify efforts for peaceful and viable solutions to unresolved conflicts.

In the economic and environmental dimension, the PA recommends that the OSCE offer itself as a leading international organization to foster economic co-operation.

In the human dimension, on top of the call for special, open PC meetings on human rights violations, the PA calls on all the OSCE participating States to apply more frequently and effectively its existing procedures in cases of clear, gross and uncorrected violations of OSCE commitments.

As I said three weeks ago in Warsaw: In an age of austerity and a time of damaged trust in international organizations and governments, we need to refocus on our strengths. One of them is that this organization is not only inter-governmental; it does contain a parliamentary dimension based on the Charter of Paris, which needs to be recognized and utilized and strengthened in the best interests of all. The Parliamentary Assembly will continue to make recommendations and to find ways to strengthen our organization, as it has done in the past.

We also have to make responsible use of taxpayer's money. Our taxpayers spend a lot of money hoping that you will help make the Northern Hemisphere a safer place. As members of national parliaments who are forced to make substantial cuts in our national budgets, we realize the constraints that the financial crisis has caused. In these difficult times, the OSCE PA tries to set an example: we have a lean budget and we have operated within that budget for 20 years in a row, keeping it frozen for the last four. We have a small but efficient staff, and we have subjected our finances to independent, outside, professional auditing.

Last week, Secretary General Zannier briefed the Assembly on his vision for next year's OSCE budget. I am deeply concerned that it appears to take needed resources away from the field missions to invest more in the secretariat. Our Assembly has consistently called for protecting the budgets of the field, and I hope you will find creative ways to fund new projects that leaves those missions whole.

We have heard this summer from the deputy Foreign Minister of Libya his long list of areas in which his country needs our support – and they were all related to core OSCE activities. This type of engagement is critical to raising the visibility of the OSCE in a region where we are needed most and in places where stability today is vital to our whole region's security tomorrow. Let us not miss this opportunity.

On these matters I've listed today, the Parliamentary Assembly will continue to make every effort to strengthen the OSCE and to work with you in this common endeavor. I look forward to hearing from you on these recommendations.