



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Address of OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President Pia Kauma

As delivered by Ambassador Michael Carpenter
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
February 8, 2024

President Kauma, welcome back to the Permanent Council.

We commend the Parliamentary Assembly and you personally for continuing to hold Russia accountable for both its war of aggression against Ukraine and its repression at home. Since Russia's initial invasion of Ukraine in 2014, the Parliamentary Assembly has adopted several important resolutions condemning Russia's war as "a clear, gross and uncorrected violation of Helsinki principles," and calling for justice and accountability. The United States joins the Parliamentary Assembly in condemning the violence that the Kremlin and its forces have perpetrated in Ukraine since 2014, including targeted killings of civilians, torture, rape, forced transfer and deportation of children, and the destruction of civilian infrastructure and cultural property. All those found to have ordered or committed crimes in Ukraine must be held accountable.

The Assembly's Winter Meeting last year underscored the international isolation that Russia has brought upon itself as a result of its senseless and cruel war. Looking ahead to this year's meeting in two weeks here in Vienna, we look forward to another demonstration of the overwhelming support that Ukraine enjoys among the parliaments of OSCE participating States.

We welcome the PA's unanimous decision last year to establish the Parliamentary Support Team for Ukraine to further enhance its work in defense of Helsinki principles and in the face of Russia's flagrant aggression. Your decision to lead its first field visit to Ukraine earlier this week was a continued demonstration of your personal resolve and that of the broader Assembly in solidarity with Ukraine, and I thank you for that.

We appreciated your engagements in Washington last week with your Congressional counterparts and the Administration to discuss Ukraine and other pressing security matters in the OSCE region. The views exchanged and relationships deepened during such visits exemplify some of the greatest benefits of parliamentary diplomacy. Your participation in a Helsinki Commission hearing in the U.S. Congress highlighted particularly heinous Russian Federation abuses: the unlawful transfer within Russia-occupied parts of Ukraine and deportation of tens of thousands of Ukrainian children and adult civilians, in violation of international humanitarian law. And again, I thank you for participating in that very important hearing with the Helsinki Commission.

Russia continues to forcibly transfer or deport Ukrainian children to Russia or Russia-occupied areas of Ukraine and subjects them to pro-Kremlin and anti-Ukraine indoctrination in an apparent effort to Russify them and erase their Ukrainian identity. This is heinous. This continues, even after the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for President Putin and Russia's Commissioner for so-called Children's Rights Maria Lvova-Belova for the alleged war crimes of unlawful deportation and unlawful transfer of children from occupied areas of Ukraine to Russia. With 45 other OSCE participating States, the United States invoked the Moscow Mechanism last spring on this issue. And as we said then, Russia must return the children of Ukraine to Ukraine, and do so now.

More information has emerged about adult Ukrainian civilians, whom Russian armed forces have detained and, in some cases, deported to Russia. These are civilians with no connection to the Ukrainian military, some of whom have reportedly been tortured or used for forced labor by the Russian military. Others are missing or languish in Russian prisons on spurious charges. This too must stop now.

The United States continues to step up sanctions aimed at stopping Russian aggression. Last December, President Biden signed an Executive Order to expand the United States' ability to target financial institutions located outside of Russia that facilitate transactions involving Russia's military-industrial base. This underscores the need for financial institutions around the world to ensure they are not facilitating activities that support Russia's war effort.

Madam President, lastly, we welcome the Assembly's ongoing collaboration with the OSCE institutions, including on election observation. Parliaments have a crucial role to play in the implementation of our shared OSCE commitments. We look forward to the upcoming Parliamentary Assembly Meeting here in Vienna as an opportunity to exchange information and to hear the views of PA members. We anticipate that the Winter Meeting will be another opportunity to hold Russia accountable, as it was last year.

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