



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Address by the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, H.E. George Tsereteli

As delivered by Ambassador James S. Gilmore III
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 26, 2020

The United States welcomes President George Tsereteli back to the Permanent Council, I'd also like to welcome back to the Permanent Council the distinguished representative of the Russian Federation. As you know, I listen very closely to his comments, and today I thought they were especially colorful. Welcome back Alexander.

In the meanwhile, this meeting today is focused on George Tsereteli and the *Parliamentary Assembly*. I want to acknowledge the friendship we have developed over the recent year, George, and thank you very much for your leadership, which has been very vigorous and has been a big benefit to the *Parliamentary Assembly*. And I also want to recognize your Secretary General Montello who I think has done extraordinary good work.

I think I should point out that the U.S. Mission here has a very close working relationship with the U.S. representatives to the *Parliamentary Assembly* through our own Helsinki Commission. Our representatives work closely with the U.S. Mission, across branches of government, which is relatively unique in the American system. We have a very cordial relationship and that is in no small measure due to your leadership in the *Parliamentary Assembly*.

We appreciate your work that has gone on in this very challenging year. Since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, the *Parliamentary Assembly* has organized many well-attended web dialogs, hosting notable guest speakers to discuss the pandemic's impact across all dimensions of our region's security. Issues that we have been coping with here at the Permanent Council as well. The dialogues addressed: economic security, human rights and democratic norms, gender, social cohesion in diverse societies, and counterterrorism. Most recently, the *Parliamentary Assembly* addressed protection of the Arctic region and partnering with journalists to combat corruption, which has been a major focus of this Chairperson in Office.

Last week, you celebrated the 30th anniversary of the *Paris Charter for a New Europe* together with our incoming Chairperson, Swedish Foreign Minister Ann Linde, keeping a focus not just on the past, but also on the future. Our focus here should be, more and more, on remembering the *Paris Charter for a New Europe* and the direction that it set out.

Members of the U.S. Congress, representing both chambers and both political parties, have participated in these events, including Representatives Alcee Hastings, a Democrat, and Richard Hudson, a Republican, and Senators Roger Wicker, a Republican, and Ben Cardin, a Democrat. Their active role in the OSCE *Parliamentary Assembly*, now and over many years, embodies the depth and political breadth of the U.S. commitment to security and cooperation in Europe across the

entire OSCE region. We are proud of their service in support of the *Helsinki* process through the *Parliamentary Assembly*.

The pandemic has cast a shadow over 2020, so it is all the more important that the OSCE *Parliamentary Assembly* has kept a spotlight on the range of concerns confronting the OSCE region, as you have laid out in your remarks, including continued Russian aggression in Ukraine and Georgia, which you have discussed today, and it is proper that you do so, because these are two of the central conflicts that have been going on and that have laid the foundation for further difficulties. For example, the brutal crackdown in Belarus; I take note of your statement of November 16th regarding police violence in Belarus and calling for an investigation. That's the kind of leadership that is being provided by you in the *Parliamentary Assembly*. And, most recently, the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. Anti-Semitism, racism, and other forms of intolerance and discrimination, along with human trafficking, corruption, and violence against journalists continue to challenge all of us. We count on *Parliamentary Assembly* delegates to address these challenges moving forward and they provide enormous weight to the work of the OSCE.

The United States also appreciates the resumption of the OSCE *Parliamentary Assembly's* election observation activities and the deployment of missions to Montenegro, Georgia, and the United States. You will recall my personal intervention with regards to the OSCE *Parliamentary Assembly* mission to observe the United States election and we have facilitated that in a successful way. I appreciate your work to safeguard OSCE's methodology, even as operations have been adapted to keep observers and staff safe during the health crisis. We wish the *Parliamentary Assembly* continued success in this regard as you consider deployment to the Presidential election in the Kyrgyz Republic and Parliamentary elections in Kazakhstan in January.

As we wait for the release of the OSCE's final report on the observation of the general elections held in the United States earlier this month, I want to assure you the United States takes OSCE's report seriously and welcomes its independent perspective. We don't subscribe to every comment that's been made, but that's the nature of the independent investigation, and we recognize that.

In response to the concern the OSCE PA has expressed regarding the health of the OSCE, including in your July 24 statement to OSCE foreign ministers, I can assure you based on my experience here, that the OSCE is not in jeopardy, its leadership continues to be vigorous, and its institutions are still playing a key role, as we continue on for the appointment of the leadership. We regret that threats to mandates, agendas, and budgets, have become commonplace in our deliberations in recent years. We are hopeful that we can, under the leadership of the Albanian Chairpersonship, reach consensus on key appointments at next week's *Ministerial Council*. And this is at this point only possible because of the vigorous leadership of the Chairperson to bring about consensus.

The success of the OSCE process rests ultimately on the political will of the participating States to make good on the commitments we freely made to one another and to our people. The United States' resolve remains as steadfast today as it was 45 years ago in Helsinki and thirty years ago at the signing of the *Charter of Paris for a New Europe*.

To conclude, Mr. President, we encourage OSCE *Parliamentary Assembly* delegates to continue to use your independent voices to defend not only this organization and its worthwhile institutions, but also the principles and values it represents. Your experienced Secretariat staff, enhanced lately by our former Secretary General and High Commissioner Lamberto Zannier, provide an added ability to do just that. Mr. President, you can count on our continued strong support as you go forward, and we are very grateful for your leadership.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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