

# Report by the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly: UK response, October 2022

Madam President, thank you for your address and welcome back to the Permanent Council.

It was a great honour for the United Kingdom to host the [OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Annual Session](#) this year. I was proud to join Professor Ibrahim and Dr Elliott on the panel for preventing and prosecuting war crimes, and speak to the UK's support for the [Murad Code](#). I look forward to continued engagement on this important initiative, which will help to ensure justice for survivors of sexual violence.

I also congratulate you and OSCE parliamentarians on the successful adoption of the [Birmingham Declaration](#), which was approved with overwhelming support. We strongly endorse the Declaration's core tenet – that Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, facilitated by the Belarusian regime, constitutes a gross violation of the fundamentals of international law, as well as a severe breach of the OSCE's commitments and principles. It jeopardizes the security architecture of Europe and the whole OSCE region.

In response to my Russian colleague's tired accusations on access in July, may I remind them that it is Russia's actions alone that led to their exclusion.

Unfortunately, since the Annual Session we have seen the Kremlin's war rage on. In the last few weeks alone we have witnessed Russian military attacks on both civilians and critical infrastructure in Kyiv and across Ukraine, with the intention of cutting off Ukrainian people from energy, heating, and water. Sham referenda have been cynically deployed to facilitate attempted illegal land grabs. And the Russian military's bombing of Ukraine's agricultural and transport infrastructure continues to exacerbate global food insecurity.

Not content with attacking another State, the Russian Government continues to inflict misery upon its own population. As the latest Moscow Mechanism report found, the Russian government continues to wage a systematic and repressive war against the freedoms of its own people. This has included cracking down on independent media and restricting civil society activities, all of which also serve to quell any internal dissent against its external aggression.

So what role should the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly play in all of this?

As you said, Madam President, during an interesting side event at the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference, the role of Civil Society Organisations is key in all OSCE participating States. You noted the importance of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly working with civil society organisations and that OSCE

Parliamentarians should use their privileged positions wisely, to reach out to others and to influence beyond their own Parliaments.

We agree that parliamentarians have a crucial role to play in harnessing their considerable political leverage to ensure sustained support for Ukraine. This includes pursuing accountability for war crimes and pushing for humanitarian, economic and military assistance to Ukraine. It also includes forcefully defending OSCE principles in all available fora, and supporting diplomatic efforts to secure a just and lasting peace in Ukraine, with full respect for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. I would also like to thank the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and its members for their ongoing efforts in this regard.

Beyond the war, parliamentarians play a key role in continuing to support participating States to implement their OSCE principles and commitments. This includes defending human rights and democratic institutions, sharing knowledge and expertise on security challenges and military transparency, and performing the necessary checks and balances to hold our executives to account. I welcome the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's vital work in these areas.

In conclusion – and ahead of your Autumn Meeting in Warsaw next month – the UK offers its full support to you and the Parliamentary Assembly and we look forward to continued co-operation and collaboration in 2023 and beyond.