



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, H.E. Petros Efthymiou

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a. i., Gary Robbins
to the Permanent Council, November 3, 2011

The United States warmly welcomes President Efthymiou to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his address today.

The Parliamentary Assembly (PA) continues to play an important role in facilitating the implementation of OSCE commitments through the work of our national parliaments. This role is best exemplified by the parliamentary dialogue within the assembly, which promotes awareness of OSCE initiatives among our respective countries' elected representatives. As President Efthymiou noted, this process is vital to enhancing the visibility of the OSCE and accountability within its institutions.

We are proud of the active role and contributions of our United States Congress to the initiatives of the Parliamentary Assembly. The Chairman of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, U.S. Representative Chris Smith, serves as Special Representative on Human Trafficking Affairs. His Co-Chairman, Senator Ben Cardin is a Vice President of the PA. Additionally, Representative Alcee Hastings serves as the PA Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs. Their efforts have contributed substantively to key components of PA declarations over the years, including resolutions on Mediterranean cooperation and political transition, labor trafficking in supply chains, and promoting the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative.

Through its meetings, seminars, and special missions, the PA contributes to efforts to address emerging regional concerns. My delegation places great emphasis on the Annual Session declarations of the Parliamentary Assembly, including its most recent 2011 Belgrade Declaration. The resolutions contained in these declarations offer informative proposals relevant for consideration by the Ministerial Council. The resolutions often reflect the pulse of interests within the constituencies of our participating States and can help OSCE institutions address their mandates armed with greater understanding of political developments.

We welcome President Efthymiou's interest in greater cooperation between the Permanent Council Committees and their complementary counterparts within the Parliamentary Assembly. The Winter Meeting of the PA has helped facilitate such engagement in recent years and we look forward to further developments in this regard.

Furthermore, we note the positive work being done by the Parliamentary Assembly across the region: to enhance democratic governance through election assistance to participating states;

to address the implications of protracted conflicts; and to respond to new challenges in connection with energy security, refugee rights, and media freedom.

We underline the importance of continued cooperation between the Parliamentary Assembly and the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in the development of election observation missions in the OSCE region. Each offers unique, complementary expertise and contributions to overall observation activities. It is vital that this cooperation improves and is sustained in accordance with the 1997 Cooperation Agreement. Additionally, the United States commends the Parliamentary Assembly for its unique observation missions which allow for timely engagement of the OSCE family in key regional developments, exemplified by the recent October 23rd Tunisian elections.

We commend President Efthymiou's leadership of the Parliamentary Assembly and the contributions of your colleagues to our shared goal of enhancing comprehensive human security.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.