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Parliamentary Association



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# **Report of the Canadian Delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly**

## **19<sup>TH</sup> Autumn Meeting**

### **By Videoconference**

### **From November 3 to 4, 2021**

## **REPORT**

On 3 and 4 November 2021, a delegation of eight Canadian parliamentarians attended the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly's (OSCE PA) 19th Autumn Meeting held in hybrid format. The delegation, which attended remotely, comprised:

- The Honourable Hedy Fry, P.C., M.P., Head of the delegation;
- The Honourable Senator Patricia Bovey;
- The Honourable Senator Brent Cotter;
- The Honourable Senator Lucie Moncion;
- Mr. Ziad Aboultaif, Member of Parliament;
- Ms. Heather McPherson, Member of Parliament;
- Mr. Yves Perron, Member of Parliament; and
- Ms. Ya'ara Saks, Member of Parliament.

The delegation was assisted by Laura Munn-Rivard and Anne-Marie Therrien-Tremblay, Advisors with the Library of Parliament, and Matthieu Boulianne, the Association's Secretary.

### **2021 OSCE PA AUTUMN MEETING**

Parliamentarians from across the OSCE region, together with representatives from the Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation states, met by videoconference for the 19th OSCE PA Autumn Meeting. The Autumn Meeting included a meeting of the Standing Committee. It was followed by the Mediterranean Forum, which debates specific issues affecting the Mediterranean region and includes an opportunity for the Heads of the Parliamentary Delegations from the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia) and the Palestinian Legislative Council to address the OSCE PA. This forum was followed by the Parliamentary Conference on "Current Security Challenges: Focus on Afghanistan."

### **STANDING COMMITTEE**

The meeting of the Standing Committee, which took place on 3 November, began with the delivery of the report of the President of the OSCE PA, Ms. Margareta Cederfelt (Sweden), which outlines the recent work of the OSCE PA. This was followed by the delivery of two reports providing administrative information on the OSCE PA: the first by the Treasurer of the OSCE PA, Mr. Peter Juel-Jensen (Denmark), and the second by the Secretary General of the OSCE PA, Mr. Roberto Montella.

A review of OSCE PA activities and current international political issues was presented next and included: reports on election observation activities, reports on the activities of the Ad Hoc Committees, and reports on the activities of the special representatives.

The meeting ended with a review of upcoming meetings of the OSCE PA; this included discussion of the 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Session, which is scheduled to take place in Vancouver, British Columbia (Canada) in summer 2023.

## **A. CANADIAN PARTICIPATION AT THE STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING**

The **Honourable Senator Cotter**, the **Honourable Senator Moncion**, the **Honourable Senator Bovey**, **Mr. Aboultaif, M.P.**, **Mr. Perron, M.P.**, and **Ms. Macpherson M.P.**, attended the meeting as observers.

## **MEDITERRANEAN FORUM**

The meeting of the Mediterranean Forum, which took place on 4 November, was opened by Mr. Pascal Allizard (France), OSCE PA Vice-President and Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs. Mr. Allizard reminded delegates of the need for collaboration at both the governmental and parliamentary level to respond to challenges in the health sector with regards to COVID-19, to humanitarian crises with regards to migration, and in the security dimension with regards to trafficking.

President Margareta Cederfelt delivered a keynote address. She noted that two full years had passed since the Mediterranean Forum last met, as the COVID-19 pandemic had resulted in the cancellation of the OSCE PA 2020 meeting. She emphasized that, despite this hiatus, the OSCE PA deeply valued the participation of Mediterranean partners in all three dimensions – the politico-military, the economic-environmental and the human dimensions.

This was followed by the address of Ambassador Adam Halacinski (Poland), the Chairperson of the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group, who provided an overview of past and future OSCE initiatives with Mediterranean Partners. He also spoke of the ways that the OSCE can be a platform to seek solutions to current challenges in the Mediterranean region and shared information about the new Young Policy Advisers Course, designed for young people in the Mediterranean region.

Next, the Heads of two Parliamentary Delegations from the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation – Algeria and Morocco – delivered their remarks to the Forum.

These presentations were followed by an open debate among delegates.

## **B. CANADIAN PARTICIPATION AT THE MEDITERRANEAN FORUM**

The Mediterranean Forum was attended by the **Honourable Dr. Fry, M.P.**, **Ms. Saks, M.P.**, and **Mr. Perron, M.P.**

Ms. Saks and Mr. Perron made interventions during the open debate.

- **Ms. Saks, M.P.**, described the crisis of climate change as a non-traditional security threat with profound implications for the region. She called on

OSCE PA participating States and Mediterranean partners to collaborate on climate change solutions at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) and beyond. Ms. Saks said that efforts to address the climate crisis must focus on diplomacy between countries. She expressed particular concern about tensions surrounding shared water resources, noting that climate change is leading to more droughts and floods, which can result in social unrest and conflicts. Cross-border water governance, she argued, is a key diplomatic avenue to address such challenges. As an example, Ms. Saks outlined the joint Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian EcoPeace project, which focuses on renewable water exchange between countries.

- **Mr. Perron, M.P.**, congratulated the OSCE PA and the Mediterranean Forum for their work promoting international dialogue. In particular, he spoke of the importance of dialogue between Greece and Turkey in order to promote security and stability in the region. He noted that all countries lose in a conflict, but all win when there is collaboration. He observed that cooperation between countries is particularly important when addressing the challenges presented by climate change and extreme weather events, such as wildfires, floods, and droughts. He expressed serious concern that, in the future, there will be waves of climate change refugees escaping famine and conflict. Mr. Perron called on all OSCE PA participating States and Mediterranean partners to take action to address climate change collaboratively.

## **PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE**

The theme of the Parliamentary Conference, held on 4 November, was “current security challenges: focus on Afghanistan.”

### **A. OVERVIEW**

President Margareta Cederfelt introduced the debate, noting that the situation in Afghanistan has major implications for neighbouring countries, as well as for international security in general.

Following the introductory remarks, the chairpersons of each of the OSCE PA three General Committees delivered addresses. Mr. Pere Joan Pons (Spain), Chair of the General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment, noted that that human-induced climate change has magnified the crisis in Afghanistan. He explained that several years of droughts had affected agricultural production and contributed to the current humanitarian crisis. Mr. Richard Hudson (United States), Chair of the OSCE PA’s Committee on Political Affairs and Security, stressed that the recent developments in Afghanistan will certainly have an impact on the security of the OSCE region for years to come. He also identified the return of an international terrorist threat from Afghanistan as one of the main challenges to global security. Ms. Sereine Mauborgne (France), Chair of the General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions, underscored the importance of continued access to

humanitarian aid for Afghans, especially as such access was already affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, floods, and droughts.

Ambassador Tuula Yrjölä (Finland), Director of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC) and Deputy Head of the OSCE Secretariat, then delivered a keynote address. She invited the OSCE to support participating States in mitigating the impacts of the evolving situation in Afghanistan and encouraged the OSCE to remain flexible in its response.

These presentations were followed by an open debate among delegates. Parliamentarians raised concerns about the human rights situation in Afghanistan, in particular the threat posed to vulnerable groups, such as women leaders, human rights defenders, journalists, persecuted religious minorities, and LGBT+ individuals. Other topics discussed included the risks of increased terrorist activities, the respect of human rights, and migration and refugee flows.

## **B. CANADIAN PARTICIPATION AT THE PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE**

The Parliamentary Conference was attended by the **Honourable Dr. Fry, M.P.**, the **Honourable Senator Bovey**, the **Honourable Senator Cotter**, the **Honourable Senator Moncion**, **Mr. Aboultaif, M.P.**, **Ms. McPherson, M.P.**, and **Mr. Perron, M.P.**

Dr. Fry and Mr. Perron made interventions during the open debate.

- **Dr. Fry, M.P.**, spoke about the human rights situation and offered some reflections on potential areas of action that parliamentarians from OSCE participating States could take to promote respect for human and women's rights in Afghanistan. Dr. Fry expressed deep concerns about the situation for Afghan women, and in particular for women politicians, who have been pushed to the margins of political life and become targets for threats and violence. She also remarked that OSCE participating States must offer refuge to Afghans who are fleeing the Taliban, and especially those who are particularly vulnerable because of their intersecting identity factors.
- **Mr. Perron, M.P.**, said that vigilance was needed to prevent Afghanistan from becoming the terrorist sanctuary it once was. He also spoke about the importance of ensuring the delivery of humanitarian aid and stated that all Afghan citizens who wish to leave the country should be able to do so freely and safely. Mr. Perron called on OSCE PA parliamentarians to cooperate more effectively in order to better address the various challenges posed by the recent developments in Afghanistan.

Respectfully submitted,

The Hon. Hedy Fry, P.C., M.P.  
Director, Canadian Delegation to the OSCE PA

## **Travel Costs**

<b>ASSOCIATION</b>	Canadian Delegation to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA)
<b>ACTIVITY</b>	19th Autumn Meeting
<b>DESTINATION</b>	Videoconference
<b>DATES</b>	From November 3-4, 2021
<b>DELEGATION</b>	
<b>SENATE</b>	Hon. Patricia Bovey Hon. Brent Cotter Hon. Lucie Moncion
<b>HOUSE OF COMMONS</b>	Hon. Hedy Fry Mr. Ziad Aboultaif Ms. Heather McPherson Mr. Yves Perron Ms. Ya'ara Saks
<b>STAFF</b>	Mr. Matthieu Boulianne Ms. Laura Munn-Rivard Ms. Anne-Marie Therrien-Tremblay
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	\$ 0.00
<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	\$ 0.00
<b>HOSPITALITY</b>	\$ 0.00
<b>PER DIEMS</b>	\$ 0.00
<b>OFFICIAL GIFTS</b>	\$ 0.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 0.00</b>