

News from Copenhagen

Muttonen delivers remarks to OSCE's EEC on International Women's Day



Christine Muttonen (third from left) addresses the OSCE's Economic and Environmental Committee in Vienna, 8 March.

OSCE PA President Christine Muttonen (MP, Austria) spoke Wednesday at a special meeting of the OSCE's Economic and Environmental Committee in Vienna on the occasion of International Women's Day, addressing women's economic empowerment and the importance of closing the gender gap to reduce poverty and promote comprehensive security.

Convened by EEC Chairperson Kairat Sarybay, the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the OSCE, the meeting was dedicated to promoting the participation of women in economic and environmental decision-making. In her remarks, Muttonen shared her experience as only the second female President of the OSCE PA, and stressed the potential of women in leadership positions throughout society.

"There is no reason why women should not be found in the highest positions, be it in business, politics, institutions or diplomacy," Muttonen said. "No question, progress has

already been achieved, but despite this, we still face female underrepresentation in almost all levels of public life."

She noted that the OSCE aims to guarantee security and pointed out that there cannot be security without the involvement of women. "Women represent half of the world's population and excluding them from productive and social life is not only discriminatory but also highly counterproductive. One of the top priorities for the OSCE PA is to make sure that parliamentarians are aware of the need for balanced participation of women," Muttonen said.

The President highlighted the work of the PA's Special Representative on Gender Issues, Hedy Fry (MP, Canada), who recently addressed the Assembly's Winter Meeting on the topic of the gender aspects of migration. Muttonen described the Special Representative's work in monitoring the gender situation throughout the OSCE area, advising fellow members of parliament and helping identify room for improvement.

Muttonen also mentioned in her remarks the conference she is organizing in Vienna on 23 March under the theme, "OSCE Security Policy – Female Perspectives," which will feature the participation of parliamentarians, representatives of OSCE field operations, and civil society representatives. The conference will include discussions on the role of women in the fight against violent extremism and gender perspectives for a new pan-European security architecture.

Sanchez Amor, Montella in Brussels for discussions on election observation



Sanchez Amor addresses election observation panel in Brussels chaired by ODIHR Director Michael Georg Link (right), 7 March.

Ignacio Sanchez Amor (MP, Spain), Chair of the Assembly's human rights and democracy committee, was in Brussels this week for a seminar on accountability of parliamentarians in election observation on 7 March. Convened by the European Parliament together with the European Platform for Democratic Elections, the event served as an opportunity to consider strategies to prevent bias in observation of elections. Secretary General Roberto Montella also participated in the event, which brought together Members of the European Parliament and officials from the OSCE PA, OSCE/ODIHR, PACE, and civil society.

Numerous participants noted the credibility and visibility that parliamentarians bring to election observation efforts, and Sanchez Amor drew on his extensive personal experience to discuss prevention and mitigation of biased observation.



Iryna Sabashuk, Andreas Baker, Roberto Montella, David Hobbs and Ruxandra Popa at NATO PA office in Brussels, 6 March.

He noted the strong mechanisms within the OSCE to ensure credible election observation, including the collection of good information helped by long-term observation, and consistent application of a clear set of standards. The discussion also focused on possible preventive measures against biased observers – whether part of a larger delegation or functioning on their own – who should not be allowed to undermine entire observation missions, participants said.

On Monday in Brussels, Montella met with Members of the Belgian Delegation to the OSCE PA, led by Nahima Lanjri, to discuss various Assembly activities, including election observation. Montella also met with NATO PA Secretary General David Hobbs and Deputy Secretary General Ruxandra Popa. The delegation was supported by Andreas Baker and Iryna Sabashuk from the International Secretariat.