



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Address by the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Pia Kauma

As delivered by Ambassador Michael R. Carpenter
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
September 7, 2023

President Kauma, welcome to the Permanent Council. Congratulations on your election as President of the Parliamentary Assembly.

I commend the Parliamentary Assembly and you personally for holding Russia accountable for its war against Ukraine as well as its repression at home.

In his opening statement at the Nuremberg trials on November 21, 1945, U.S. Justice Robert H. Jackson said, “The wrongs which we seek to condemn and punish have been so calculated, so malignant, and so devastating, that civilization cannot tolerate their being ignored, because it cannot survive their being repeated.” The promise was made then: “never again.” And yet, today, Russia and members of its forces appear to be committing some of the same crimes that the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg was created to address: aggression, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.

At the Annual Session in Vancouver in July, the Parliamentary Assembly adopted a declaration that condemned the “large-scale military invasion and war of aggression by the Russian Federation, with the shameful accomplice role of Belarus as co-aggressor, against Ukraine.” It stated that Russia’s war against Ukraine, “constitutes a clear, gross and uncorrected violation of Helsinki principles.” It condemned the war crimes committed by members of Russia’s forces and called for justice.

Vladimir Putin and all those who have ordered or committed crimes in Ukraine must be held accountable. The United States joins the Parliamentary Assembly in condemning the violence that members of Russia’s forces and other Russian officials have perpetrated in Ukraine since 2014, including torture, rape, forcible transfer and deportation of children, and the destruction of civilian infrastructure and cultural property.

Several resolutions adopted in Vancouver focused on the forcible deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia or their forcible transfer to Russia-occupied areas of Ukraine where they face Kafkaesque “re-education” to Russify them and suppress their identity as citizens of Ukraine. We join in condemning this abuse against the most innocent of victims. The International Criminal Court has already indicted President Putin and Commissioner for Children’s Rights Maria Lvova-Belova for the war crime of unlawfully deporting and transferring children. On August 24, the United States sanctioned additional individuals and entities that have played a role in forcibly transferring and deporting Ukraine’s children. This must stop and the children Russia has taken must be returned.

President Kauma, you spoke out on August 22 to express your concern about Russia’s repression of its civil society, including the closure of the Sakharov Centre and the arrest of one of the leaders of the independent election-monitoring group Golos. The United States joins your call for the release

of Grigory Melkonyants, co-chair of Golos. The United States strongly condemns Russia's continued detention of Vladimir Kara-Murza, Aleksey Navalny, and the more than 500 other political prisoners Russia holds, and we call for their release.

The Vancouver Declaration also addressed the effects of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which turned millions of civilians, mainly women and children, into displaced persons vulnerable to human trafficking. The Declaration lays out several concrete actions OSCE states should take to protect potential victims. These include stepping up law enforcement during refugee flows, vetting volunteers and humanitarian workers, and implementing national referral mechanisms that are trauma-informed and age-appropriate. I urge you all to consider these recommendations and, broadly, to remain vigilant in maintaining and strengthening efforts to prevent human trafficking among refugees from Ukraine.

Madam President, we welcome the Assembly's ongoing collaboration with the OSCE institutions, including on election observation. Parliaments play a crucial role in the implementation of our shared OSCE commitments. We welcome the PA's decision to establish a Parliamentary Support Team for Ukraine to further enhance its work in defense of Helsinki principles in the face of Russia's flagrant aggression. We look forward to working with you to act on the Vancouver Declaration and to hold Russia to account.

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