



German Bundestag

Head of the German Delegation
to the Parliamentary Assembly
of the OSCE

To:
OSCE PA President
Members of the OSCE PA Standing Committee
OSCE PA Secretary General

Berlin, 3.04.2020

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Dear Members of the Standing Committee, dear George,
dear Roberto, dear Colleagues,

Thank you for the very good and timely information you provided us with! Due to the session in the Bundestag in late March, I was unable to attend the video-conference of the Bureau. Therefore, I take the opportunity with this letter to present my view on the situation to you all.

At the moment, we cannot yet assess the full long-term impact of the coronavirus outbreak, its consequences for our societies, our economies, or political systems. But we know this global crisis is going to become one of our biggest challenges at the past decades. We, as the OSCE PA, have to give a strong and effective response to enormous problems caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Uncertain situations offer opportunities for both innovations for improving our societies, but also for abuse of difficult circumstances to strengthen one's own political or financial power. Especially the developments in some member states worry me, and we have to make sure that we will secure free and open societies. Fighting the pandemic cannot be used as an excuse to abolish human rights, the rule of law, and democratic institutions.

There is no reasonable argument for going back to national isolation either. On the contrary, we need much more global solidarity and co-operation, we have to work much closer together to overcome our problems, and think twice before closing borders. Our scientists set a positive example: in this difficult time, they find new ways of exchange, and open up their researches in order to find an effective treatment for this virus and other threats to come. We on our part have to ensure freedom of science and expression, and thereby to enable building of stronger international networks.



Another lesson we have to learn after this crisis is that we have to reduce our dependence on single suppliers, to re-think the supply chains, and to re-establish the ability to produce equipment like facemasks or protection-suits, and vital infrastructure. This task, however, requires a different global co-operation from what we have today. We must also avoid that countries or companies weakened by the pandemic become victims of speculative investment.

The fight against the pandemic is currently, of course, the top priority in all of our countries. However, to help the people we need a ceasefire and peace, both regionally and worldwide. We must ensure that the pandemic does not dominate the agenda of the OSCE PA to the exclusion of other vital issues. I am particularly concerned that we are losing sight of the miserable fate of the many thousands of refugees in Greece, Turkey, and Italy because of our preoccupation with the COVID-19 crisis. Our mission remains to solve protracted conflicts and improve the living conditions of the people in the OSCE area. We need a ceasefire in the whole of the OSCE region right away! Let us have earnest talks how to resolve the crises in Eastern Ukraine and in other areas of the OSCE!

I therefore propose to not set up any new working groups, but to take up the issue of the pandemic at our next session (no matter whether in person or virtual) in all three committees and in plenary discussions. In the meantime we need to work together to help whenever there are extra resources. The current situation, especially in Italy and Spain, is severe, and I have great respect for their governments, who are becoming overwhelmed with the situation. I know that our governments have close contact among each other and help as best they can.

Concluding, I would like to suggest a resolution – together with the Council of Europe PA, the NATO PA, and the IPU, restating our quest for humanity, democracy, and the rule of law.

This crisis gives us the once-in-a-lifetime possibility to change the course of events for the better. I do hope all of us are still healthy (or getting better) and are doing what is necessary in their countries to overcome this unique crisis for the wellbeing of our peoples. All the best to all of you!

Sincerely yours,

Doris Barnett, MP
Head of the German Delegation to the OSCE PA