

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly – 33rd Annual Session,

The Hague, 5 July 2026

**Statement by Ms Petra Bayr,
President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe**

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear colleagues,

Look around you.

We are meeting in The Hague — the city the world chose when it decided that power needed a judge.

That was not an accident. It was a statement. And today, I want to make a statement too.

The rules-based international order is not in crisis because international law is weak. It is in crisis because too many of us have been timid in defending it. That ends here. That ends now.

Europe is at war. Not metaphorically — literally. A permanent member of the UN Security Council is killing civilians, destroying cities, and deporting children. And the response of the international community will define the character of this century. Not the next one. This one.

So let me be direct about where I stand, and where the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe stands.

We stand for accountability — not when it is convenient, but when it costs something.

We stand for the rule of law — not as a phrase to fill speeches, but as a principle to build institutions around.

And we stand here, in this room, as your partners — because the threats we face do not care about the boundaries between our mandates.

Disinformation attacks OSCE states and Council of Europe members alike. Democratic backsliding does not stop at institutional borders. Hybrid warfare is hybrid precisely because it hits everything at once — elections, courts, media, energy systems, trust itself.

You cannot fight that alone. Neither can we. But together — 46 Council of Europe member states, the broadest human rights system in the world, 320 parliamentarians with the political mandate and the legal tools to act — together, we are formidable.

And I want this Assembly to know what PACE brings to that partnership.

We established the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine. Here, in The Hague — because justice needs an address. We suspended Russia. We monitor democratic standards from Reykjavik to Tbilisi. We have skin in the game.

But I am not here to list achievements. I am here to propose something more ambitious.

The founding generation of international institutions like us made a bet. They bet that if you build enough shared structures — enough common law, enough mutual accountability, enough reasons to talk before you fight — you can make war between member states of these institutions unthinkable.

For seventy years, that bet paid off.

We are now in a moment when someone is trying to prove that bet wrong. And the only answer — the only answer — is to double down. More law, not less. More accountability, not less. More cooperation between institutions like ours, not less.

The Helsinki Final Act was not just a document. It was a declaration that even divided Europe could agree on rules. That was 1975. In the shadow of the Cold War. If that generation could do it then — we have no excuse not to defend it now.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

More than one billion people live in the OSCE area. They did not elect us to manage decline. They elected us to hold the line.

So here is what I ask of this Assembly: be a partner that matches the moment. Support the institutions that uphold international law. Demand accountability when states violate it. And when the pressure comes to look away — because it will come — remember why we are in The Hague.

We are here because someone, a long time ago, decided that might should not equal right.

That idea is worth fighting for.

Let's fight for it — together.

Thank you.