CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

Conference hosts and dignitaries

Martin CANDINAS

President of the National Council of the Swiss Parliament

Martin Candinas is the President of the National Council of the Swiss Parliament for 2022/2023. As a representative of the canton of Graubünden (Grisons), the concerns of the mountain regions and tourism are of particular interest to Mr Candinas. In the National Council (member since 2011 for the Center Party), he is a member of the Committee for Transport and Telecommunications and the Committee for Security Policy. In addition, the topics of family and social welfare-policy are of particular importance Mr Candinas, and he is committed to a forward-looking climate and energy policy.

Tiny KOX

President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)

Tiny Kox is the current President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), elected to office in January 2022.

He graduated with a degree in Law from the University of Tilburg and worked at the Tilburg Law Centre until his election to the Tilburg Municipal Council in 1982. He served as leader of the local Socialist Party (SP) group in the Council until 1999. He was also General Secretary of the SP between 1993 and 2003.
Mr Kox was elected to the Dutch Senate in 2003 and has been leader of the Socialist Party in the Senate since then. He has been a member of the Dutch delegation to the PACE since 2003 and has held the roles of Vice-President to the Assembly, General Rapporteur on the Budget and Intergovernmental Programme and Chairperson of the United European Left political group.

Bjørn BERGE

Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe

Bjørn Berge has served as the Council of Europe's Deputy Secretary General since 1 March 2021.
His priorities include shaping the Programme and Budget, while ensuring that the Organisation's activities have maximum impact in advancing democracy, human rights and the rule of law. He also oversees the Council of Europe's staff policy, as well as other key areas of the work of the Organisation.

Before taking up his post, Mr Berge was for four years Director General and Secretary to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. Between 2009-2017, he served as Director of the Private Office of the Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General, helping to prepare, co-ordinate and implement a number of comprehensive reforms of the Organisation.
As a former Norwegian diplomat, he served as International Adviser to the Prime Minister and as Deputy Director of the Foreign Minister's Cabinet responsible for all matters related to Parliament.
Mr Berge holds a M.A. in International Relations from the Paul Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), Johns Hopkins University, Washington D.C., USA.

Claire BAZY MALAURIE

President of the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe

Claire Bazy Malaurie is member of the Constitutional Council of France since 2010. In 2022 she was elected **President of the Venice Commission,** of which she has been member since 2014.

A graduate of the National School of Administration in France (1978-1980), Ms Bazy Malaurie has held varied positions in the French government, from Senior Public Auditor of the French Court of Audit (1990-1994) to Director of Hospitals at the French Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (1995-1998). She was member of the Commission for the compensation of victims of spoliation resulting from anti-Semitic legislation in force during the Occupation (1999-2002), Chair of the Board of Directors of the Regional Administration Institute (IRA) of Metz (2001-2008) and Chair of the monitoring committee of the laws relating to the rights and responsibilities of universities (2008-2010). She has been decorated with the order of *Officier de la Légion d'honneur* (2009) and *Officier de l'Ordre national du Mérite* (2005).

Leendert VERBEEK

President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

Leendert Verbeek is a Dutch politician serving as the King's Commissioner of Flevoland since 2008. In 2021 he was elected President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.

Mr Verbeek attended the Academy for Educational Labour in Baam and debuted his career as a youth worker in Leiden. Ten years later Verbeek started his political career through political institutions, ending up as an alderman in Houten (1989–96). A member of the Labour Party (PvdA), he served as Major of Purmerend from 2003 to 2008. In November 2008, Mr Verbeek was appointed the Queen's Commissioner (in 2013 the title changed to King's Commissioner) for the province of Flevoland.

Conference chairperson

Damien COTTIER

Chair of the Swiss delegation to PACE, Chairperson of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

Since 2019, **Damien Cottier** is a member of the Swiss National Council. In 2022 he was elected President of the Liberal-Radical Parliamentary Group (PLR). In this capacity he sits on the Bureau of the National Council. He also sits on the Political Institutions Committee. In the past he was a member of the Grand Council (Parliament) of the Republic and Canton of Neuchâtel for more than 10 years and in two communal parliaments, one of which he chaired (Le Landeron, NE, 1998).

Since January 2020, Mr Cottier has also represented Switzerland in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). For the period 2022-2023, he chairs both the Swiss parliamentary delegation in Strasbourg and the Assembly's Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights. In this capacity he is a member of the Bureau and the Standing Committee of the PACE.

Mr Cottier spent eight years as head of cabinet and personal assistant to former Federal Councilor Didier Burkhalter, Federal Minister of the Interior (2009-2011) and Minister of Foreign Affairs (2012-2017). In 2014, he assisted Mr Burkhalter while he was simultaneously President of the Swiss Confederation and Chairman-in-Office of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

From 2018 to 2020, Mr Cottier held diplomatic functions at the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations in Geneva. As head of the humanitarian affairs section, he was responsible for relations with the ICRC, UNHCR, IFRC and IOM. In the past, Mr. Cottier has also worked for the Swiss Business Federation (*economiesuisse*), the Liberal-Radical Party and the Swiss Consulate General in New York.