

2006

Democratic Control of the OSCE: The Role of the Parliamentary Assembly

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Introduction

Political decision-making processes are increasingly shifting to the international level. Today, it is difficult to think of issues affecting the policies of an individual state that do not have an international dimension. Indeed, many problems are directly dealt with in international institutions. At the same time, these institutions are often criticized for their lack of democratic accountability. The main concerns are that public participation is not adequate when the ‘chains of delegation’ become ever longer; that transparency is missing when most decisions are taken behind closed doors; and that sanction mechanisms cannot work when it is impossible to assign responsibility. Yet, a lack of democratic accountability does not mean that there is no accountability at all. For instance, international organizations are subject to supervision by their member states — a mechanism that is, of course, ‘more or less democratic as states are more or less democratic’.²

Moreover, an element of fiscal accountability is usually also present, because most international organizations rely largely on government appropriations. Nevertheless, democratic procedures enjoy particular political legitimacy in the eyes of citizens and contribute more than any other mechanism to the perception that political decision-makers are held to account. Therefore, in the era of globalization and internationalization of policy-making, democratizing international organizations has become a fundamental challenge that requires new approaches for improving the quality of representation, transparency, and accountability.³

One proposed solution for tackling what is often called the ‘democratic deficit’ is the creation of interparliamentary organs within the institutional framework of international organizations.⁴ Parliamentary assemblies, being composed of deputies who are at the same time representatives in their respective national parliaments, create an immediate link between the national and the

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² For these and other accountability mechanisms, see: Ruth W. Grant and Robert O. Keohane, ‘Accountability and Abuses of Power in World Politics’, *American Political Science Review*, 99(1), 2005, pp. 29-43, at p. 36.

³ See for example the UNDP Human Development Report 2002 (Deepening Democracy in a Fragmented World), New York, 2002, pp. 102 and 112f.

⁴ This approach has gained more prominence recently. Cf. Anne-Marie Slaughter, *A New World Order*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004; Richard Falk and Andrew Strauss, ‘Toward Global Parliament’, *Foreign Affairs*, 80(1), 2001, pp. 212-20.

international decision-making levels. This approach of integrating parliamentarians builds on a core idea of democratic polities in which parliament secures the legitimacy of political action through a process of representation, at the same time assuring citizens' participation and guaranteeing transparency in the political process. Thus, the establishment of a parliamentary assembly would give international organizations a system of 'checks and balances' between governmental and parliamentary bodies similar to what is already in place at the national level.

Parliamentary assemblies exercise a number of functions that are comparable to those of national parliaments. Among the traditional functions of parliament is the ability to constrain or check executive power. In order to exercise this controlling function, the parliament must be institutionally linked to the executive. Further, most parliaments have developed institutional mechanisms for facilitating this role, such as the oral or written questioning of ministers or other instruments for extracting information from the executive. The fundamental characteristics of parliamentary control, as they have developed on the national level, can also be applied to international organizations.

Accordingly, institutional links must exist between the interparliamentary and the intergovernmental bodies, and the interparliamentary organ must develop mechanisms for supervising and evaluating intergovernmental activities. More explicitly, the interparliamentary organ should have the right to demand and obtain information, the right to be consulted on (at least some) political matters, and the right to submit recommendations. Altogether, parliamentary control is aimed at making intergovernmental political action publicly visible in order to improve the transparency of the decision-making process and, ultimately, to prevent the abuse of power.

In 1990, the Charter of Paris for a New Europe called for 'greater parliamentary involvement' in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), 'in particular through the creation of a CSCE parliamentary assembly'. In April 1991, parliamentarians from all CSCE signatory countries gathered in Madrid and established the CSCE Assembly.⁵ The first official session was held in the following year in Budapest. In 2005, in addition to a growing number of meetings throughout the year, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) held its 14th annual meeting. Accordingly, the OSCE has developed into an organization that is no longer exclusively defined by intergovernmental actors and processes, but is characterized by the integration and participation of an interparliamentary body.

With regard to the controlling function of parliamentary assemblies, it is the goal of this article to show whether and to what extent such elements can be identified in the institutional framework of the OSCE. Two questions will be answered: In the first section, I will determine the institutional links between the Assembly and the intergovernmental OSCE. I will argue that over time, the two

⁵ See Robert Spencer Oliver, 'The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly', *Helsinki Monitor*, 7(1), 1996, pp. 42-57, at p. 43

bodies have established a rather informal, but quite dense network of contacts and cooperation. In the second section, the emphasis is on the Assembly's parliamentary rights. Here I will show that apart from a few rather modest rights, the Assembly has not acquired instruments for exercising effective parliamentary control over the intergovernmental OSCE. In conclusion, I will argue that rather than concentrating too exclusively on these high ambitions, the Assembly should focus on consensus-building among parliamentarians and on facilitating dialogue between parliamentarians and the OSCE executive bodies and institutions.

Institutional links between the Assembly and the OSCE

According to its rules of procedure, the OSCE Assembly assesses the implementation of the OSCE objectives, discusses subjects addressed by the OSCE governing bodies, develops and promotes mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflicts, supports the strengthening and consolidation of democratic institutions in the OSCE participating states, and contributes to the development of the organization's institutional structures and the relations between the existing institutions.⁶

It is obvious that the Assembly can only meet these objectives in close cooperation with the intergovernmental OSCE. Yet, legally speaking, the Assembly has 'no bridge by which to cross to the intergovernmental process'.⁷ From a strictly formal perspective, the Assembly is not part of the OSCE, but is an independent body consisting of parliamentarians from the OSCE member states. Consequently, there are no coordinating organs between the intergovernmental and the interparliamentary part of the OSCE, such as those enshrined in the institutional framework of the Council of Europe.⁸

In practice, however, various institutional links exist. For instance, several declarations of the OSCE Summits or Ministerial Councils explicitly refer to the Assembly, describing it as an institution belonging to the OSCE. In 1992, the Summit of Heads of State or Government welcomed the establishment of the Parliamentary Assembly, looking forward to the 'active participation of parliamentarians in the CSCE process'.⁹ In 1994, they decided to enhance the 'contacts and dialogue' with the Assembly.¹⁰ Then, in 1999, they even stated that the Assembly 'has developed into one of the most important OSCE institutions, continuously providing new ideas and proposals'.¹¹ Victor-Yves Ghebali has called the last statement an 'unusual tribute from an intergovernmental body towards an

⁶ OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Rules of Procedure, Rule 2.

⁷ Thomas M. Buchsbaum, 'The 1993 Session of the CSCE Parliamentary Assembly', *Helsinki Monitor*, 4(4), 1993, pp. 26-35, at p. 33.

⁸ Beat Habegger, *Parlamentarismus in der internationalen Politik*, Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2005, pp. 113-5; Jerzy Jaskiernia, *The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe*, Warsaw: Information Office of the Council of Europe, 2003, pp. 274-8.

⁹ Summit declaration 1992, para. 41.

¹⁰ Summit declaration 1994, para. 9.

¹¹ Charter for European Security (SUM.DOC/1/99), para. 17.

inter-parliamentary organ'.¹² In 2001, the Ministerial Council decided that 'active communication and interaction' between the 'Assembly and other OSCE structures should be developed, as appropriate'.¹³ Lastly, in 2005 the ministers underlined 'the important role of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly', appreciating 'the close interaction with it that has developed in recent years'.¹⁴

The following sections will evaluate the development and current state of institutional links between the Assembly and the OSCE's intergovernmental bodies: The participation of OSCE representatives in plenary sessions of the Assembly, the participation of Assembly representatives in meetings of OSCE institutions, the participation of Assembly representatives in meetings of the Permanent Council, and the role of the Assembly's liaison office in Vienna.

Participation of OSCE representatives in plenary sessions of the Assembly

The 'Prague document on further development of CSCE institutions', adopted at the 1992 Ministerial Council, declared that the chairman-in-office would be in contact with the Assembly president 'in order to explore possible interest' in his presence at the Assembly's annual meeting in July 1992. It stated further that he 'will be prepared to make himself available to report on the work of the CSCE; to answer parliamentarians' questions in this regard; and to take note of parliamentarians' views for subsequent transmission to the Council'.¹⁵

As a result, the Swedish foreign minister spoke as the first chairman-in-office to the parliamentarians at the Assembly's second annual meeting in July 1993. The Ministerial Council confirmed this practice in 1994 and stipulated that the chairman-in-office would inform the parliamentarians on CSCE activities and bring the Assembly's recommendations to the attention of the Permanent Council.¹⁶ In a memorandum of understanding concluded in 2002, the OSCE chairman-in-office and the Assembly president agreed that the former 'will continue to be invited to address the main events of the Assembly'.¹⁷ The Assembly explicitly regulates in its rules of procedure the participation of governmental authorities in its sessions.

¹² Victor-Yves Ghebali, 'The Contribution of the Istanbul Document 1999 to European Security and Co-operation', in: Institute of Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg (ed.), *OSCE Yearbook 2000*, Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2001, pp. 289-305, at p. 294.

¹³ MC(9).DEC/3/Corr.1, para. 3. According to Ghebali, the term 'as appropriate' must be interpreted in view of 'the reluctance of some participating States vis-à-vis too close relationships with the parliamentarians'. See Victor-Yves Ghebali, 'The Bucharest Meeting of the Ministerial Council (3-4 December 2001): Towards a new consensus at the OSCE?', *Helsinki Monitor*, 13(2), 2002, pp. 157-66, at p. 161.

¹⁴ MC(13).JOUR/2 Annex 2.

¹⁵ Prague Document on Further Development of CSCE Institutions and Structures, para. 41.

¹⁶ Budapest Decisions 1994, para. 24. According to Borawski, before the Ministerial Council, EU officials had discussed the possibility that the chairman-in-office should 'respond' to the Assembly's recommendations. However, this proposition was not included in the final Summit document. See John Borawski, 'The Budapest Summit Meeting', *Helsinki Monitor*, 6(1), 1995, pp. 5-17, at p. 17.

¹⁷ CIO.GAL/40/02/Rev.1, para. 1 (memorandum of understanding, 26 June 2002).

Any member of the Ministerial Council has the right to attend the Assembly's sessions and may speak in debates with the permission of the chairperson.¹⁸

Besides the chairman-in-office, many other leading OSCE representatives such as the Secretary-General, the ODIHR Director, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Representative on Freedom of the Media, or the Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities, regularly take part in Assembly sessions, presenting in a speech the objectives of their work and current activities. Even though they are not legally obligated to do so, they usually respond to the parliamentarians' invitation. The reporting of OSCE representatives offers the parliamentarians opportunities for engaging in a political dialogue, but due to the absence of formal relations, its usefulness as an instrument for calling the OSCE executive bodies to account is limited.

Participation of Assembly representatives in meetings of OSCE institutions

The participation of Assembly representatives in the meetings of OSCE institutions is evidence of the Assembly's effective institutional integration into the organization. In particular, the Assembly president plays a very active role. Usually, he or she delivers a speech at the OSCE Summits, the Ministerial Councils, the Economic Forums, or the Review Conferences. Further, following a recommendation of the 1996 OSCE review meeting,¹⁹ the then chairman-in-office invited the Assembly president to take part in the meetings of the Troika in 1997.²⁰ The right of the Assembly president to participate was later included in the memorandum of understanding between the Assembly and the chairman-in-office.²¹ For former Assembly president Helle Degn, the meetings with the Troika are particularly important because they provide 'a very useful tool for contributing directly to the solution of many major issues which [are] on the agenda of the Organization'.²²

Participation of Assembly representatives in meetings of the Permanent Council

According to the Charter for European Security of 1999, the Permanent Council is 'the regular body for political consultations and decision-making' and addresses 'the full range of conceptual issues as well as the day-to-day operational work of the Organization'.²³ Therefore, participation in its work is inevitable for exerting an influence on the development of the OSCE. The memorandum of understanding

¹⁸ Parliamentary Assembly Rules of Procedure, Rule 40, 2 and Rule 25, 5.

¹⁹ 1996 OSCE Review Meeting, Report of Working Group 2, para. 4 (REF.S/91/96).

²⁰ REF.CIO/22/97 (Address by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly).

²¹ CIO. GAL/40/02/Rev.1, para. 8.

²² Helle Degn, The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly – Growth in Recent Years, in: Institute of Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg (ed.), *OSCE Yearbook 2001*, Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2002, p. 365-372, at p. 366.

²³ Charter for European Security (SUM.DOC/1/99), para. 35.

between the Assembly and the chairman-in-office grants the Assembly president the right to present the adopted resolutions to the Permanent Council and to take part in the following debate.²⁴ This practice has been firmly established in the last few years. Moreover, the Assembly president has addressed the Permanent Council on other occasions, and the usefulness of such a dialogue was acknowledged at the 1999 Review Conference.²⁵

In 2002, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Permanent Council intended to conclude a written agreement on their mutual relationship. This project ended quickly, however, when both parties realized that many forms of cooperation that are currently practised informally without any problems would be jeopardized by formal codification. Indeed, the draft document raised the awareness of many participating states regarding the variety of already existing institutional links between the two bodies. As a result, opposition arose among the countries that had adopted a critical — not to say a negative — stance towards the involvement of an interparliamentary body in the work of the OSCE.

To put down on paper in a comprehensive form the right of Assembly representatives to participate in the work of committees, working groups, and other bodies of the Permanent Council seemed unfeasible. On the other hand, had a rather restrictive agreement been adopted, the road for informal cooperation would have been closed. This quite paradoxical outcome is instructive for understanding the deeply rooted intergovernmental and barely institutionalized culture of the OSCE.

The role of the Assembly's liaison office in Vienna

At the beginning of 2003, the Assembly opened a liaison office in Vienna. The main reason for this decision was the geographical distance between the Assembly secretariat, located in Copenhagen, and the OSCE secretariat and decision-making bodies whose headquarters are in the Austrian capital city. This direct presence on the spot allows Assembly representatives to take part in OSCE meetings convened informally or at short notice, making it much easier for the Assembly to be informed about the current activities of the intergovernmental process and to influence it.

The liaison office is headed by a special representative whose primary objective is to ensure the regular presence of the Assembly at the meetings of the Permanent Council, its subsidiary bodies, and all other formal and informal meetings. After some initial reluctance on the part of a number of OSCE member states, the special representative was granted access to almost all of the aforementioned meetings. This may allow him to achieve his goals, which are to improve the exchange of information with the OSCE, to intensify contacts on a day-to-day basis, and to deepen mutual cooperation.²⁶

²⁴ CIO.GAL/40/02/Rev.1, para. 3.

²⁵ 1999 OSCE Review Conference, Report of the Rapporteur on OSCE activities, institutions, structures and instruments (RC.GAL/175/99).

²⁶ CIO.GAL/40/02/Rev.1, para. 7; see also Helle Degn, *op. cit.*, p. 370.

Parliamentary rights of the OSCE Assembly

Having evaluated the development and current state of institutional links between the Assembly and the OSCE, in the following paragraphs we will analyze the parliamentary rights of the Assembly: The right to information, the right to be consulted, the right to submit recommendations, and the Assembly's proposals for enhanced participation in the intergovernmental decision-making process.

The right to information

The parliamentarians' main political instrument is the right to put questions to OSCE representatives at Assembly meetings. This gives the Assembly 'first-hand' information for evaluating and criticizing their activities, making the Assembly an important platform for the OSCE's internal political dialogue.²⁷ Because there is no formal link between the Assembly and the other OSCE institutions, this dialogue is not about creating accountability in a legal sense, but offers an opportunity for communication on equal terms. Therefore, the Assembly does not exercise parliamentary control in the conventional sense of holding the intergovernmental bodies accountable. Nevertheless, such a dialogue may lead to more information and enhance the transparency of the organization. Furthermore, there are elements of 'quasi-parliamentary control'²⁸, since the parliamentarians control the foreign policy of their respective home countries within the bounds of their activity within the OSCE.

In addition to oral questions, the parliamentarians may at any time put written questions to the chairman-in-office, other members of the Ministerial Council, and the heads of the OSCE institutions.²⁹ However, these provisions are established by the Assembly itself and have not received the official consent of the OSCE governing bodies. None of the potential addressees are obliged to respond, even though it is politically appropriate to respond to requests from elected representatives of OSCE member states.³⁰ It is significant that it took the Assembly until 1999 to formally propose that parliamentarians 'should be able to submit written questions to the Chairman-in-Office between the plenary sessions',³¹ after having had a clause to this effect in its rules of procedure for several years. This right has not yet been granted to the Assembly; the parliamentarians are still dependent on the intergovernmental bodies' voluntary cooperation.

²⁷ See Robert Spencer Oliver, op. cit., p. 46.

²⁸ Jerzy Jaskiernia, op. cit., p. 291, made this statement in the context of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, but it equally applies to the OSCE Assembly.

²⁹ Parliamentary Assembly Rules of Procedure, Rule 40, 4.

³⁰ Thomas M. Buchsbaum, op. cit., p. 33.

³¹ Parliamentary Assembly Resolution on Correcting the Democratic Deficit of the (PA.GAL/4/99), para. 10. The Assembly recommended it again, the last time in 2005; see Washington Declaration 2005, para. 18.

The right to be consulted

There are no explicit political matters on which intergovernmental bodies are compelled to consult with the Assembly — in contrast, for example, to the rights enjoyed by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.³² Of course, the various institutional links provide opportunities for bringing positions and opinions to the attention of the governing bodies. For instance, the Assembly president speaks at Ministerial Council meetings, the special representative is present in Permanent Council sessions, and the parliamentarians themselves can communicate their ideas to leading personalities at Assembly meetings, but there is no obligation for the Assembly's opinion to be taken into consideration.

Nevertheless, the memorandum of understanding between the Assembly and the chairman-in-office declares that the two sides will keep each other informed about any decisions and resolutions adopted and will consult one another about matters related to their respective activities.³³ Furthermore, the same document also states that the Assembly president will transmit the parliamentarians' comments on the OSCE budget to the chairperson, who informs the Permanent Council.³⁴

Although this involvement of the Assembly is not acknowledged by all participating states, it seems only logical that parliamentarians are willing to supervise the organization's financial conduct, since in national parliaments, decisions on financial matters, including the funding of international organizations, are among their most effective means for influencing and controlling political action. Altogether, an increased control of the financial management strengthens the entire organization's transparency and accountability.

The right to submit recommendations

The main outcome of Assembly meetings are resolutions on political matters on the agenda of the OSCE, containing policy recommendations addressed to OSCE bodies and institutions and the OSCE member states. These resolutions are not legally binding and all addressees are free to take up a point for discussion or not. The idea of a political dialogue and the 'advisory role'³⁵ of the Assembly suppose, however, that the intergovernmental side will at least take note of them. An overview of the 'policy impact' of the Assembly since its inception shows that especially in the first few years, parliamentarians had great difficulties in eliciting reactions from the OSCE executive bodies. To this day, it is difficult to find clear references to the Assembly in decisions or other documents of the intergovernmental OSCE.

Nevertheless, some examples for responses to policy recommendations of the Assembly in recent years can be found. In 2000, for instance, in a decision on enhancing efforts to combat trafficking in human beings, the Ministerial Council explicitly referred to an Assembly resolution.³⁶ On the same occasion, the

³² See Beat Habegger, op. cit., p. 119.

³³ CIO.GAL/40/02/Rev.1, para. 6.

³⁴ CIO.GAL/40/02/Rev.1, para. 4.

³⁵ PA(94)7, para 6.

³⁶ MC(8).DEC/1, para. 4.

chairman-in-office also pointed to Assembly declarations for combating corruption.³⁷ Another instructive example is the recent mentioning of Assembly recommendations by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. When he presented his report on policing in multi-ethnic societies to the Permanent Council in February 2006, he stated that by commissioning this study, he was responding to a call repeatedly made by the Parliamentary Assembly.³⁸

Overall, the influence of Assembly recommendations should not be overestimated. Nevertheless, these examples as well as the overall trend suggest that parliamentarians could contribute more to OSCE policy-making by pointing to emerging risks as well as by generating new ideas for their solution.

Proposals for enhanced Assembly participation

The Assembly has made a variety of proposals for enhanced participatory rights in the organization's decision-making process. First, it recommended that the Ministerial Council, before taking major decisions, should take into account the Assembly's opinion and explain how it has affected the discussions.³⁹ It is evident that in formulating this proposition, the Assembly had in mind similar rights enjoyed by the European Parliament or the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Further, the Assembly proposed that the nomination of the OSCE secretary-general be approved by a majority vote during its annual meeting, explicitly referring to the respective right of the Council of Europe Assembly.⁴⁰

Lastly, the Assembly recommended in 2003 that the Permanent Council be requested to consult the Assembly prior to making a decision to terminate an OSCE field office.⁴¹ Considering the organization's intergovernmental character, it is not surprising that the executive bodies rejected all of these proposals.

³⁷ MC.DOC/2/00 (Report on the OSCE Contributions to International Efforts to Combat Corruption).

³⁸ HCNM.GAL/2/06 (Statement by Rolf Ekéus to the 592nd Plenary Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council).

³⁹ Parliamentary Assembly Resolution on Correcting the Democratic Deficit of the OSCE (PA.GAL /4/99), para. 7; Parliamentary Assembly Resolution on Strengthening Transparency and Accountability in the OSCE (PA.GAL /2/01), para. 8.

⁴⁰ Parliamentary Assembly Resolution on Correcting the Democratic Deficit of the OSCE (PA.GAL/4/99), paras. 5 and 8. It should be noted, however, that the procedure for electing the secretary-general of the Council of Europe has produced mixed results. This is largely due to the fact that prospective secretaries-general are selected among active (or former) members of the Assembly. On the positive side, this means that when they assume office, they already know the organization quite well and are generally trusted by parliamentarians; however, on the negative side, the pool of candidates is rather small and often there is an apparent lack of politicians who combine political, diplomatic and managerial abilities.

⁴¹ Rotterdam Declaration 2003 (PA.GAL/5/3), para. 28.

Conclusions

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly does not have formal relations on a legal basis with the OSCE decision-making bodies and institutions.⁴² The failed undertaking to codify the right of the Assembly to participate in meetings of the Permanent Council exemplifies the difficulties of reconciling the aspirations of a parliamentary body with the organization's deeply rooted intergovernmental culture. The OSCE clearly prefers to work on an informal, non-institutionalized basis. Nevertheless, this 'OSCE approach' has also worked in the case of the Assembly, which was able to establish an informal, yet dense network. Thus, parliamentarians today have access to all OSCE governing bodies and contribute to the organization's political development. In short, even without having established formal relations, the Assembly has developed into a recognized part of the OSCE.

Considering the numerous institutional links between the interparliamentary and the intergovernmental side, it is questionable whether more formalized relations are needed. However, the lack of formal relations appears to be more problematic when assessing the Assembly's concrete participatory rights. Regarding the elements of parliamentary control as they were described in the introduction to this article, the only such right that has any, though modest, political value is parliament's right to receive information by putting questions to OSCE decision-makers. The Assembly cannot constrain or check the executive bodies, but rather contributes to the organization's internal political dialogue.

Regarding the involvement of nationally-elected parliamentarians in international affairs, three positions can be distinguished: Some states are clearly opposed to this idea, mostly because they are not democratically governed themselves and therefore do not attach any importance to promoting more transparency and accountability in international forums. Other states support the proposition of integrating parliamentarians as a matter of principle, but are also internally divided on this question. On the one hand, the proponents of a traditional diplomatic approach still consider foreign policy to be the prerogative of the executive power and try to minimize parliamentary influence. On the other hand, the proponents of more parliamentary involvement believe that increased decision-making on the international level demands the integration of other actors, such as parliamentarians or the civil society, in order better to reflect the diverse views on policy issues that are typical for pluralistic societies.

A parliamentary examination of intergovernmental activities can lead to more openness, public visibility, increased transparency, and ultimately to more democratic accountability. These mechanisms can be observed to some extent within the Council of Europe, where the Parliamentary Assembly exercises a few important rights vis-à-vis the intergovernmental bodies, but, in general, the opportunities for interparliamentary institutions to control intergovernmental

⁴² The two exceptions are the abovementioned memorandum of understanding between the Assembly president and the OSCE chairman-in-office (CIO.GAL/40/02/Rev.1) and the cooperation agreement between the Assembly and ODIHR regarding election monitoring (CIO.GAL/7/97).

organizations largely remain limited and modest. This is not only true for the OSCE, but quite accurately describes the situation in most international organizations where the institutional framework includes an interparliamentary body. In addition, it must be mentioned that parliamentarians themselves are responsible for translating the Assembly's policy recommendations to the domestic political context in order to provide an effective follow-up in national parliaments.⁴³

To make the best of this rather constrained position, the Assembly should continue to contribute to consensus-building among parliamentarians from all participating states by means of an open dialogue with all OSCE governing bodies. This is also clearly in line with the Assembly's stated objectives. Of course, the Assembly should not give up pushing for more transparency, accountability, and democracy within the OSCE. But rather than concentrating too much on high-flying ambitions for exercising parliamentary control, the Assembly might be better advised to focus on facilitating dialog within the entire OSCE.

⁴³ For concrete proposals, see PA.GAL/5/03 (Resolution on the Parliamentary Follow-Up of OSCE Activities at the National Level).