

**Address by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic,**

**H.E. Lubomír Zaorálek,**

**at the Twenty-First Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council (Basel, 4 December 2014)**

**“Addressing the Crisis of European Security: The Way Forward”**

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me from the outset thank the Swiss Chairmanship-in-Office for hosting this year's Ministerial Council and for the tremendous work during this year.

This has been an extremely challenging year for European security. The underlying principles of the Helsinki Final Act have been gravely violated by the Russian Federation's illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol and destabilizing actions in Eastern Ukraine. As a result, trust and confidence have been replaced by unpredictability and mistrust.

We remain committed to the effort aimed at reaching a sustainable political solution of the crisis in and around Ukraine based on respect for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. In this regard, the Czech Republic welcomes the OSCE's contribution to the de-escalation of the crisis. We commend the active role of the Swiss Chairmanship e.g. through the Trilateral Contact Group, the deployment of the Special Monitoring Mission, engagement of the OSCE autonomous institutions and the use of politico-military mechanisms in addressing the crisis. In order to support the OSCE activities, I would like to announce that the Government of the Czech Republic just approved 100.000 Euro as a further financial contribution to the Special Monitoring Mission. Since full and effective control by Ukraine of its borders is essential, let me stress the pressing need for a comprehensive monitoring of the Ukraine-Russia state border by the SMM, which is one of its key tasks in support of the implementation of the Minsk agreements.

Mr. Chairman,

As the 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act is fast approaching, we should not miss the opportunity to regain respect for the fundamental principles upon which our organization was founded. The comprehensive concept of security makes the OSCE unique, which is also reflected in its response to the current crisis.

We can only be successful in our goal to strengthen the OSCE and make it more effective, if we build upon its foundations and *acquis* in all three dimensions. In our debate on European security, we cannot shy away from addressing key issues, such as resolution of protracted conflicts in Georgia, Moldova and Nagorno-Karabakh, revival of conventional arms control

regimes as well as full implementation of our commitments in the area of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In this context, I would like to highlight the role of civil society as a “watchdog” of implementation of OSCE commitments by participating States. I commend the Swiss Chairmanship for organizing the Parallel Civil Society Conference in Basel. This is an excellent opportunity to discuss human rights challenges across our region. We should listen carefully to the civil society`s recommendations on how to address these challenges. The Czech Republic also highly values the work of OSCE field missions and of autonomous institutions. We refuse attempts by some participating States to restrict their mandate.

To conclude, let me express my wish that the participating States find sufficient political will to recommit to the basic principles and commitments of the OSCE in order to fully use its potential. The costs of not doing so are quite high.

Mr. Chairman, I thank once again your country for your warm hospitality and I wish every success to the incoming Serbian Chairmanship.

Thank you.