

Statement

by **H.E. Mr. Ditmir Bushati**
Minister of Foreign Affairs

as delivered at the 21st Ministerial Meeting of the OSCE
Basel, 4 December 2014

Thank you Mr. Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to first express my appreciation and respect to Swiss Foreign Minister and OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Didier Burkhalter for his extraordinary efforts at the helm of the organization this past year.

2014 saw the flagrant and unapologetic violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Our discussion here in Basel today on the crisis of European security is eerily similar to our discussion six years ago in Helsinki, only then the crisis was in Georgia.

The crisis in and around Ukraine has further increased the erosion of trust and confidence among OSCE participating States. The underlying causes lie in the failures on the part of participating States to implement OSCE commitments in all three dimensions and in the blatant violations of the principles enshrined in the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act.

These violations of core OSCE principles endanger the realization of the Astana vision of a free, democratic, common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community.

Refraining from any action inconsistent with the UN Charter and implementing the principles enshrined in the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, the Paris Charter and the Astana Commemorative Declaration, is of paramount importance for overcoming the current crisis and rebuilding trust among us.

In our common search for ways to overcome the broader crisis in European security, we should make the best use of the OSCE as a unique platform for confidence-building, dialogue and cooperation.

The OSCE is the only intergovernmental body which has the appropriate formats for addressing current security challenges in Europe and Eurasia. The crisis in and around Ukraine has underscored the critical importance of the OSCE's role as a forum for inclusive dialogue and joint action, particularly in times of tensions and conflict.

In this context, and as part of the Helsinki +40 process, we see a need to engage in a process of lessons learned from the crisis in and around Ukraine, with a view to further strengthening the OSCE's role in early warning, conflict prevention, protection and promotion of human rights, crisis management and response, conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation. We also need to take further steps to strengthen OSCE capacities to act in this regard.

With this in mind, we believe that the establishment of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on European Security as a Common Project is a timely and appropriate initiative. It represents an opportunity to bring in fresh ideas on how to reinvigorate the OSCE's capacities to effectively guard its core principles and address existing and emerging security concerns.

Mr. Chairperson,

The OSCE under Swiss chairmanship demonstrated that it is capable to manage international crises, while strengthening the organization's capacity to act, the OSCE's mediation capacities in particular.

Albania strongly believes that the only means for a solution to the Ukraine crisis is through dialogue. I would like to express our appreciation and full support for the work of the Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine and that of the CiO Special Representative, Ambassador Heidi Tagliavini. We sincerely hope that the endeavors to facilitate dialogue among all parties will prove successful, and in so doing, pave the way for stabilizing the situation in Ukraine. Until a final and peaceful solution is found, we call on all parties to comply fully with their obligations under the Minsk agreements.

Dear colleagues,

The Western Balkans were among the priorities of the consecutive Swiss and Serbian Chairmanships. However, the Swiss term was dominated by the Ukraine crisis.

On 1 January 2015, the chair of the OSCE goes to our neighbor in the region, Serbia. Without any doubt, Serbia's chairmanship of the OSCE is a historic achievement, not only for the country itself, but for the entire region. It represents tangible evidence that the Western Balkans of 2015 are security contributors, not security consumers anymore.

As the first country from the Western Balkans prepares to lead the OSCE, we would like to assure the Serbian Foreign Minister of Albania's support in realizing the priorities set for 2015.

We look forward to cooperating with the Serbian Chair-in-Office. In spite of differences, Albania is determined to work with Serbia, just like with all other countries in the region.

What lies between Albania and Serbia are not only differences; there is an increasing array of similarities too. Both Albania and Serbia are candidate countries for the European Union. Regional cooperation is important to the Western Balkans in no

small part due to our Euro-Atlantic integration aspirations. As we get closer to the EU, we have to step up our performance, including the fulfillment of the obligations the EU integration process demands of us. This is the same for all candidate countries, Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

It may seem a heavier burden to during a Chairmanship of the OSCE, but we would strongly encourage Serbia to see the added value of aligning its position with that of the European Union, particularly during its OSCE Chairmanship, as an instrument to better fulfill the role of Chair-in-Office.

The OSCE, with its field operations and institutions, provides a significant contribution to regional cooperation in the Western Balkans, thus fostering security and stability in the region.

I will take this opportunity to express our satisfaction with Serbia's full commitment to the EU-facilitated dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo, and to the implementation of all arrangements based on the Brussels agreement of April 2013.

I would also like to reiterate Albania's stance with regard to the participation of Kosovo in international and regional fora, including the OSCE. Giving Kosovo a voice in the planning phases and the discussions of the activities of OMiK would increase the effectiveness of OMiK's work. We strongly believe that it is time that Kosovo have its own seat among us in this Council.

Finally, I would like to thank once again our Swiss hosts for their excellent organization and hospitality at this Ministerial meeting.

Thank you.