

**STATEMENT BY MR. TIMO SOINI,
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF FINLAND
AT THE TWENTY-SECOND MEETING OF THE OSCE MINISTERIAL
COUNCIL**

Belgrade, 3 December 2015

Mr. Chairperson
Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me thank you, Minister Dačić, for hosting us here in Belgrade. I am very grateful to you and your able team for chairing the OSCE during yet another turbulent year.

Mr. Chairperson,

Not even a month ago innocent people were brutally killed by armed terrorists in Paris. We were equally horrified by the terrorist attacks in Ankara, Beirut and on the Russian passenger jet in October.

These brutal acts of violence were designed to inflict terror and were targeted at our core democratic values. However, they have not and will not shake our resolve and our commitment to our fundamental values. Concerted international cooperation is crucial in countering terrorism and radicalization, also within the framework of the OSCE.

Mr. Chairperson,

This year has marked the 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act. The multifaceted Act is based on a comprehensive concept of security and has provided a solid foundation for security and stability as well as for dialogue and cooperation in Europe. The Final Act includes the principles of core importance: inviolability of frontiers, peaceful

settlement of disputes and respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

40 years later, and 25 years after the signature of the Charter of Paris, the framework of European peace and security is being put to the test, as was discussed at the informal high-level meeting in Helsinki in July this year. The annexation of Crimea in violation of international law and the course of action by Russia are against our shared principles and commitments and cannot be accepted.

Mr. Chairperson,

Despite the challenges we face, we must not lose sight of Ukraine. Thanks to the tireless efforts of the Normandy Group and the OSCE Trilateral Contact Group, positive steps forward have been taken to implement the Minsk Agreements. Unfortunately, we still have a long way to go. The situation on the ground remains fragile.

Bringing sustainable peace to Ukraine is of fundamental importance. We commend the work done by the Ukrainian Government to bring about a comprehensive reform programme, also linked to the Minsk implementation. We need better access for humanitarian aid and we need to be able to start the process of clearing of mines. Working on the next steps for finding agreement in holding local elections in certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk remains crucial. In these efforts, the Chairperson-in-Office and the OSCE deserve our full backing. We also need to support dialogue measures in Ukraine.

As before, Finland is committed to supporting the OSCE's work in Ukraine. Currently, we have 26 monitors in the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. Finland has increased funding for Ukraine substantially since the crisis started, and it is now 18,3 million euros in projects, humanitarian aid and experts. Finland has also fully supported the work of the OSCE institutions and Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine.

We need to further strengthen the capacity of the OSCE to deal with crisis and conflict situations, as has been recommended by the Panel of Eminent Persons in its interim report. We welcome the intention of the incoming OSCE Chairmanship Germany to continue a strategic dialogue to strengthen the Organization, based on the Helsinki +40 process.

Building trust and reinforced cooperation is needed, also in matters concerning arms control, political and military exchanges – no matter how difficult it is.

Mr. Chairperson,

Political and economic instability, armed conflicts, persecution and intolerable living conditions are forcing more and more people to leave their homes in search of a better life and a safer future.

Promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including minority rights, need ever more attention. Advancement of women's rights and rights of persons with disabilities are worthy of our special attention as well as supporting active participation of civil society. We also need to continue our efforts in strengthening the OSCE's mediation capacity. Women need to be involved in mediation and dialogue processes at all stages in accordance with UN Resolution 1325 and follow-up resolutions.

It is high time we updated the OSCE Gender Action Plan and agreed on the OSCE wide Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.

In conclusion, I wish to express my gratitude to you Mr. Chairperson and your most able Delegation in Vienna for all the work this year. I also wish the incoming German Chairmanship every success. You can count on our continuous support.