



CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**Statement by
H.E. Mr Karl Erjavec
Deputy Prime Minister and
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia
at the 22nd Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council**

Belgrade, 3–4 December 2015

Mr Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to align myself with the statement delivered earlier on behalf of the European Union and to express my appreciation to the Serbian OSCE Chairmanship for steering the work of our Organisation in these challenging times. Allow me also to thank you for your dedicated work and the warm hospitality extended to us here in Belgrade.

This year, the OSCE participating States have been focused on a continuing crisis both in and around Ukraine. Let me therefore commend the Chairmanship and the OSCE Secretary General on their untiring efforts to stabilize the situation. I also salute the enormous efforts of the Special Monitoring Mission.

Despite visible progress, more must be done. The Minsk agreements must be implemented in full. The ceasefire must be respected. The working groups under the Trilateral Contact Group auspices should produce concrete deliverables. Engagement of the Normandy format must continue. No efforts should be spared to end this serious crisis of European security. The key to addressing the current crisis in and around Ukraine is the political will to restore respect for the Helsinki Final Act principles and to fully implement the OSCE commitments.

I would like to reiterate my country's unwavering support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Ukraine. This also extends to Crimea. On this occasion, I would like to welcome the Human Rights Assessment Mission Report jointly published by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in September.

I would also like to commend the work of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media. In this context, allow me to recall that this year, the Slovenian Parliament adopted a legislative amendment to strengthen the standards of media freedom in my country.

In this regard, I would like to stress that the OSCE autonomous institutions deserve ongoing support for assisting the participating States in the implementation of their commitments. We should welcome their advice and recommendations, since they

allow us to identify our own shortcomings. We should also avoid any interference in the work or mandates of these institutions.

Mr Chairperson,

The recent terrorist attacks remind us once more how important it is to stand united in combatting terrorism. We should take decisive action to address transnational threats and fight terrorism, violent extremism and radicalisation. We must continue and even strengthen international efforts to bring about political solutions to ongoing conflicts, including the one in Syria.

In this regard, I would like to mention the Slovenia-led "Western Balkan Counter-Terrorism Initiative" (WBCTI), which is aimed at reducing redundancy and overlap in countering respective threats through a new concept that builds upon the needs and priorities jointly identified by the Western Balkan countries and international strategic partners. Slovenia very much appreciates the OSCE's constructive involvement in the Initiative, including the support by many OSCE participating States. The Initiative remains open to all interested international stakeholders and could serve as a model of an integrated and complementary approach for other regions.

We should continue promoting the idea that terrorism should not be associated with any religion, race or belief. We must increase our efforts at prevention, which is vital. It is necessary to address the root causes of radicalisation, violent extremism and terrorism. An effective way to combat extremist ideology is education, including human rights education, non-discrimination, and intercultural and interfaith dialogue.

Young people are among the most susceptible groups when it comes to radicalisation leading to extremism. We must therefore look for positive alternatives for young people, especially through education and jobs and through their active involvement in the political process.

To this end, the *Positive Agenda for the Youth in the Western Balkans* was launched (in cooperation with the European Commission) at the meeting of foreign ministers within the Brdo Process in April this year. The Agenda covers programmes of educational mobility, vocational training and people-to-people contacts available to young people. We are convinced that the Agenda serves as an example and could also be beneficial for the wider OSCE region.

In this regard, we commend the efforts undertaken by the Serbian OSCE Chairmanship regarding youth empowerment. Young people can play an important role by supporting the participating States in meeting their commitments.

Mr Chairperson,

Another challenge currently facing Europe and the rest of the world is migration. Over the past weeks, we have been confronted with a massive wave of refugees and migrants along the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkans migration route. So far, more than a quarter of a million refugees and migrants have passed through Slovenia, a country of only two million.

Slovenia aims to improve the dialogue and practical cooperation between countries along the Western Balkans migration route. It is equally important to establish close cooperation between the countries of origin, transit and destination.

I believe that the OSCE can effectively contribute to addressing the migrant and refugee crisis through its cross-dimensional approach, from cooperation in border management to exchanging best practices in the management of migration and integration. The cross-dimensional approach was already approved by the OSCE Ministerial Council Decision on Migration in Ljubljana in 2005, during the Slovenian OSCE Chairmanship.

The developments in Libya, Syria and Iraq, the terrorist threats and the ongoing refugee and migrant crisis are causing grave concern and point to the need for more intensive engagement of the OSCE participating States with OSCE partners for cooperation and other international organisations. In this regard, countries on the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean must strengthen their political and security cooperation on mediation in emerging conflicts and on institution building, security sector reforms and disarmament.

Mr Chairperson,

OSCE participating States are accountable to their citizens and responsible to each other. Consequently, it is essential that they should get ready to deal with the current and new challenges. In this light, I appreciate the work of the Panel of Eminent Persons on European Security as a Common Project and its recommendations on broader security issues in Europe.

To conclude, I wish the incoming Chairmanship every success. We stand ready to actively engage in improving dialogue and cooperation in the OSCE region. The common principles of the Organisation should unite us even further. Therefore, I would like to assure our German friends of our support in fostering the noble goals of the OSCE.

Thank you for your attention.