



Permanent Mission
of the Republic of Poland
to the Organization for Security
and Co-operation in Europe
in Vienna



**ADDRESS BY THE OSCE CHAIRMAN-IN-OFFICE
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
H.E. ZBIGNIEW RAU**

**CLOSING SESSION OF THE TWENTY-NINTH MEETING
OF THE OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL
(Łódź, 1 and 2 December 2022)**

Distinguished Ministers,

Madam Secretary General,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Organization is strengthened by the resilience and resolve of its members and their commitment to its fundamental principles.

That is, it depends on the participating States whether the OSCE will survive and ultimately succeed.

Gustav Radbruch, a famous legal philosopher, once said that the **first great task of law is peace.**

At the same time, however, following the remarks of Alexis de Tocqueville, we are aware that the weaknesses inherent for human nature often affect compliance with laws.

Still, **breaking the rules does not invalidate them.**

Violating a law does not make it any less valid.

There are objective boundaries, which cannot be violated even by the will of a nation. This is the point of my message – **for this Organization to succeed, all future Chairmanships and all peace-loving States must not betray the principles** of the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter.

Let me offer here a personal experience.

Both the Act and the Charter do not belong only to the realm of diplomats and politicians.

The adoption of these documents, and the strength of the principles expressed in them brought hope to many nations of Eastern and Central Europe.

Helsinki was a promise that the Soviet domination would end and the subjugated nations would reclaim their right to determine their future freely.

The spirit of Helsinki was also the spirit of the Polish Solidarity movement – the movement that brought freedom to my homeland.

Then, Paris brought hope for a successful transformation of Europe, for making it whole, free and at peace as US President Bush said in Mainz in 1989.

The message from Paris emboldened my nation to make a sovereign decision to tie its future with the community of democratic States, believing and supporting the rules-based international order.

Similar decisions, taken by a group of States once being satellites of the Soviet Union finally ended the Cold War's division of Europe.

Such can be the power of law, when only States commit themselves to respecting it.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have no doubts that in the **next few years, it will be extremely difficult for this Organization to deliver on its mandate.**

Unlike in the past, there are now participating States, which do not aim to decrease tensions and introduce even basic predictability to military matters in Europe.

And we should not be tempted to think that any real advance in this dimension is possible before the current conflict is settled in an internationally recognized way, in full compliance with international law and with the full respect for the will of the Ukrainian people.

Hence, I believe that **the next big task for the OSCE is to increase its work in the human and economic dimensions, including on environmental issues.**

Indeed, respect for human rights contributes to peace and stability.

That is why, after Russia's opposition to the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting this year, we have recently hosted, together with the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference.

I believe this event was a success and an important step in co-operation between the OSCE and civil society.

I hope that this Organization will continue to effectively use its human dimension to bring positive change to the lives of all oppressed people, who struggle to have their basic rights and freedom respected.

But we must also do more in the economic dimension.

In particular, climate change is a universal threat which can affect both individuals and States, bringing more instability and further crises.

Working together on these issues is of utmost importance, if we want to prove our people that diplomacy matters and can change everyday life. If we want to see this Organization continue to be acknowledged as an indispensable part of the legal and political order in Europe.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me finish with emphasizing once again the importance and centrality of the **principles of the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter.**

These must remain **a light that shines in the darkness.**

As **a signpost for us**, they also set a clear course, like **a beacon**, for those who would like to break out of the darkness.

The **preservation of peace and security, dialogue and co-operation, and the human dimension of the OSCE are the cornerstones** of this Organization.

They are non-negotiable pillars fundamental to our better future, which, as I firmly believe, is coming.

I consider sticking to this path the legacy of Poland's Chairmanship-in-Office and of this Organization.

I urge you not to step aside from this path.

I want to thank personally those who supported the Chairmanship during this difficult period:

- **Helga-Maria Schmid**, the Secretary General of the OSCE, and the OSCE Secretariat,
- **Margareta Cederfelt**, the President, as well as the **members and Secretary General of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly**,
- **Matteo Mecacci, Teresa Ribeiro and Kairat Abdrakhmanov**, the Heads of OSCE's autonomous institutions,
- **Heads of the OSCE field operations, and my Personal and Special Representatives**,
- **Ann Linde, Tobias Billström and Bujar Osmani**, my Troika Colleagues,
- fellow ministers, ambassadors and diplomats,
- and last but not least – the excellent Team of Conference and Language Services of the OSCE.

I wish every success to **North Macedonia as the next Chairmanship** of the Organization.

Thank you.