

**Secretary General Thomas Greminger**  
**Opening Remarks**  
**2018 Annual Security Review Conference**  
**Vienna, 26 June 2018**

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the 2018 Annual Security Review Conference.

We have come together at a moment when our security order is in an intense state of flux.

Our rules-based system is being challenged on multiple fronts.

Fear and prejudice are creating divisions within our societies, and between states and regions.

Relations among key stakeholders are being shaken up and reassessed.

Trust has broken down. Tensions are rising.

Rhetoric is becoming increasingly hostile and the dynamics of confrontation continue to gain momentum. The risk of conflict is growing — including conflict triggered by accident or by misunderstanding.

In this increasingly unpredictable and unstable security environment, skepticism about the value of multilateralism and international co-operation is also on the rise.

Yet we continue to face a host of challenges that demand co-operative approaches. In fact, multilateral co-operation is needed now more than ever. From peacefully resolving military conflicts to tackling global and transnational threats, we must work together. We have no other choice. So we should look for convergences of interests and areas for constructive engagement within the framework of our fundamental principles.

The first step toward this kind of pragmatic co-operation is dialogue. Yet the space for genuine dialogue is shrinking. This makes the OSCE's inclusive forum all the more important.

Urgent actions are needed to reduce tensions and to prevent military incidents or accidents from spiraling out of control. OSCE participating States took an important step by initiating the Structured Dialogue. The constructive tone of this informal platform for discussions on politico-military matters has already yielded useful exchanges on threat perceptions, force postures and military doctrines. I am hopeful that the Structured Dialogue process could lead

to agreement on military risk reduction measures and a reinvigoration of existing confidence- and security-building measures. Eventually, it might even revive interest in conventional arms control.

Given the serious risk of confrontation in border areas, a number of practical, verifiable steps could be considered to ease tensions and show readiness to co-operate. These include:

- enhancing measures on incident prevention and management, especially in the air and at sea;
- self-restraint measures for military activities near borders;
- voluntary notification of major exercises, especially snap exercises; and
- complementary regional CSBMs, such as information exchange and additional visits.

We need trust-building steps like these. We also need more military-to-military dialogue. And more opportunities like the ASRC and Structured Dialogue for interaction between the military and the diplomatic communities.

With this in mind, and with the explicit backing of the Chair of the Structured Dialogue, in September I will convene a Security Days expert roundtable in support of the Structured Dialogue to look at possible ways to prevent military incidents at sea and in the air. I invite you to attend this closed-door discussion featuring leading experts from think tanks and academia.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The greatest obstacle to restoring trust and to rebuilding our shared security is the crisis in and around Ukraine. After more than four years of fighting, military logic prevails. The welfare of the people in the conflict zone seems to have dropped out of the equation.

The human cost of the conflict in eastern Ukraine is devastating. The failure of the sides to respect the ceasefire or to withdraw heavy weapons — especially from populated areas — continues to result in civilian deaths and injuries. Access to basic necessities like water, food and medicine is severely curtailed for hundreds of thousands of people on both sides of the contact line.

Meanwhile, the OSCE's — our — civilian monitors face increasing harassment, intimidation and physical threats. The sides need to fulfill their commitments to guarantee our monitors' safety and security, and to grant them full and unhindered access throughout the conflict zone. They need to protect our monitors and stop targeting our UAVs.

A new political impulse is urgently needed to break the deadlock and to get the parties to finally implement the Minsk agreements. So I am encouraged that the Normandy Four is re-engaging at high levels.

If agreement should be reached on launching a peace operation, the OSCE is ready to co-operate with the UN. After more than four years on the ground, we have invaluable experience and knowledge, and we have proven our worth as an impartial observer and as an honest broker.

I am convinced that achieving a peaceful settlement in Donbas is possible. But responsibility for peace lies with the parties. I urge all who have influence on the sides to press them harder to take real and substantial steps to end the conflict.

Ultimately achieving sustainable peace in eastern Ukraine hinges on political will. This is obviously also true for the protracted conflicts in our region.

The Transnistrian settlement process has shown that co-operation is possible, and that it can lead to practical results — provided the international stakeholders pull together, and the sides muster the political will to enable progress.

So we must intensify our efforts to work together constructively in all the existing mediation formats — including by bringing more women to the negotiation tables.

The evidence is indisputable that the meaningful engagement of women in peace processes leads to more effective and sustainable outcomes. A failure to include women is a waste of resources and a missed opportunity to use all possible factors to achieve peace.

The OSCE is striving to ensure that the Women, Peace and Security Agenda is an integral part of our policies and initiatives rather than just an ad hoc element. We are also making a conscious effort to achieve gender parity in senior management, including in our field operations. But we cannot do this alone. You have a responsibility too. So I once again urge you, the participating States, to put forward more female candidates for our top positions.

Dear colleagues,

I said earlier that we need to co-operate in areas where interests converge. This is the only effective way to find solutions to complex and transnational security challenges — challenges like terrorism, violent extremism, organized crime, large movements of people, and climate change.

However, let me be perfectly clear: our basic principles cannot be sacrificed for the sake of finding common ground. Instead, our principles should underpin our efforts.

In the current context, the general lack of trust means that we must rely on an incremental approach to co-operation. Small steps. While progress will be slow, and doubtless there will be setbacks, we will be moving in the right direction.

The OSCE's pioneering cyber-CBMs show how well an incremental approach can work. It is in every state's interest to co-operate to prevent the malicious use of information and communication technologies. Our 16 confidence-building measures, agreed by all 57 participating States, are designed to lower the risk of misperception and miscalculation connected to the use of ICTs by states. They have the potential to enhance transparency and predictability. Now we need to focus on implementation.

Excellencies,

UN Secretary-General Guterres has called for a “surge in diplomacy for peace,” with particular focus on prevention and peacebuilding. These are both areas where the OSCE has decades of experience, and where we can make a significant contribution to the

implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda — in particular, SDG 16 — in our region.

On the prevention side, we help countries increase their resilience to the root causes of conflict and instability. And in post-conflict settings, we focus on building sustainable peace. Our field presences and our Institutions focus on long-term strategies to build capacities and to build institutions. They are tailored to local needs and grounded in local ownership, with key roles played by civil society, by women and by youth.

But the Organization has to adapt to the realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We need to ensure that the OSCE remains fit for purpose and ready to seize opportunities for co-operation.

A new regional dynamic in Central Asia and positive developments in the Western Balkans are creating openings where the OSCE can make a difference. We also have opportunities for intensified co-operation with our Mediterranean and our Asian Partners.

There is no doubt that the security of adjacent regions affects our own security. We would benefit from more strategic co-operation with our Mediterranean and Asian Partners to address both common challenges and shared opportunities. For example, our efforts to support migration governance, and to ensure that it complies with OSCE commitments to protect human rights, strengthen both our security and that of our Mediterranean neighbors.

Dear colleagues,

If we want to be successful in preventing conflict and promoting sustainable peace, we need a vision of peace that is broadly shared.

Comprehensive and co-operative security still offers the best prospect for a safer future for us all. So we need to restore our rules-based system of co-operative security. But to get there, we first need to return to a common understanding of the fundamental principles that uphold it.

Despite different views on how we ended up in today's dangerously unstable security landscape, we clearly have a common interest in finding a way out.

Throughout its history, the OSCE has been an instrument for stability. Our inclusive platform for dialogue and joint action remains a useful tool for reducing confrontation and for encouraging co-operation.

It is our common responsibility to make full use of this potential to help build a safer and more stable future for us all.

But this requires you, the participating States, to recommit wholeheartedly to genuine dialogue and co-operation.

Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to our discussions this week.