



MC.DEL/9/13
5 December 2013

ENGLISH only

**ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC,
H.E. JAN KOHOUT,
AT THE OSCE MINISTERIAL MEETING,
KYIV, 5 DECEMBER 2013**

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank the Ukrainian Chairmanship for hosting this year's OSCE Ministerial. As we meet at these very turbulent and challenging times for our host, we all cannot but think about the OSCE principles enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act. We stand for these principles sincerely and without any prejudice. We believe that Ukraine as the OSCE Chairman-in-Office will also live up to its role and will not shirk from our common values.

I would like to recall that through the acceptance of the OSCE acquis we all agree that security among states depends substantially upon respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the right of peaceful assembly being one of the fundamental ones.

Mr. Chairman,

Another year of hard work has passed and the anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act is fast approaching. We very much appreciate the fact that several past OSCE Chairmanships have been able to work together to coordinate their priorities and objectives. This has guaranteed the much needed continuity at the helm of the OSCE.

The 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act will be an opportunity to recall the basic principles upon which the OSCE was founded, as well as to strive for practical results to strengthen the implementation of our commitments in all three dimensions. We should not miss this rare opportunity. If we do not succeed, it could pose a serious challenge to the OSCE relevance.

Regrettably, the lack of political will has prevented us from fully exploiting the OSCE's potential so far. The Helsinki Plus 40 Process can only be successful, if we don't shy away from key substantial issues such as resolution of protracted conflicts in Georgia, Moldova and Nagorno-Karabakh, revival of conventional arms control regimes as well as better implementation of human rights commitments.

Tailoring the OSCE to the current world shall not be interpreted as an invitation to question the results we have achieved so far. Maintaining the autonomy of the OSCE institutions, including the vitality of field missions, must remain the priority for the Organization.

The Czech Republic highly values the professional and impartial work of the ODIHR, the Representative on Freedom of the Media and the High Commissioner on National Minorities. We oppose attempts by some participating States to restrict their autonomy, mandate and budget and to question the ODIHR's independent election observation methodology, which we unfortunately witnessed also with regard to the Helsinki Plus40 discussions.

Mr. Chairman,

The OSCE remains unique among international organizations in its commitment to the comprehensive concept of security. Bearing this in mind, we welcome the Chairmanship's efforts to adopt at this Ministerial meeting a balanced set of decisions and declarations reflecting all three dimensions.

OSCE's Human Dimension remains at the forefront of our consideration. Mainly because last two years, despite all the hard work of the Lithuanian and Irish Chairmanships, we were unable to adopt any decisions in this area due to opposition from some participating States. We commend the Ukrainian Chairmanship for their resolve to advance this agenda throughout this year. As the member of Freedom Online Coalition, we strongly support the efforts to strengthen commitments on protection of journalists, especially as we witness a rise in violent attacks, intimidation, or harassment of journalists in the OSCE area.

Within the framework of our commitments, we shall follow last year's landmark resolution of the UN Human Rights Council, which recognizes the importance of all forms of media including Internet. If we fail to do so, the OSCE would yet again stay behind the globally agreed standards. We welcome the Chairmanship's initiative on freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, which is an important individual right, as well as the focus on Roma and Sinti issues, especially on the 10th anniversary of the Action Plan to which we are fully committed.

Speaking about the Human Dimension, I must stress how much we welcome that so many civil society representatives and NGOs took part in the parallel event in Kyiv and called attention to human rights challenges across the OSCE region, while making recommendations on how to address them. We highly value these contributions of civil society, as it plays an important role in monitoring the implementation of commitments by participating States. It is so enriching that we really should think more seriously how to incorporate the outcomes of this type of events into some kind of deliverables of our gatherings.

My statement would not be complete if I do not mention how we appreciate that this year's Ministerial meeting underlines the OSCE's role also in many other crucial areas, such as the fight against trafficking in human beings, cross-dimensional expertise and assistance to Afghanistan in its transition, as well as in cyber security thanks to the agreement on a set of confidence building measures. At the same time we must honestly admit that much more needs to be done in order to increase the transparency and predictability in the OSCE area.

Mr. Chairman, I thank once again your country for your warm hospitality and I wish every success to the incoming Swiss Chairmanship.

Thank you.