



**Statement by  
H.E. Dr. Miroslav Cerar  
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs  
of the Republic of Slovenia  
at the 25th Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council,  
Milan, 6 December 2018**

*Mr. Chairperson, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I would first like to express my sincere gratitude to the Italian Chairmanship for its hospitality and devoted work throughout this year.

Let me start by focusing on the **crisis in and around Ukraine**. Slovenia shares deep concern regarding the escalation of tensions in the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait. We urge all sides to refrain from the use of force and settle any disputes by peaceful means, in full compliance with the international law, OSCE principles and commitments, and fully respecting sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. We also support continued engagement of the Special Monitoring Mission on the ground.

Building trust and transparency among the participating States has never been more important than today. We actively contributed to these efforts during the **Slovenian Chairmanship of the Forum for Security Co-operation** this year. Ukraine was regularly on the agenda of this body, which significantly contributes to overall efforts to reduce tensions and promote cooperation.

This was also evident during the special session on the centenary of the end of the First World War, which provided valuable lessons-learned for the current security context. One of these is the need for multilateral mechanisms to prevent misperceptions and misunderstandings. This is why it is necessary to **nurture the process of Structured Dialogue**, which is exactly what we did by organizing a joint meeting of the Forum for Security Cooperation and the Permanent Council.

Together with the Italian OSCE Chairmanship we also organized a joint meeting on the **Mediterranean**. The event highlighted the closeness of Slovenia and Italy not only as neighboring countries, but also as participating States that are aware of the special importance of security of the OSCE's southern region. I therefore hope that we will be able to adopt the Declaration on the Mediterranean.

I am also pleased that we continued to advance dialogue on other topical issues, including arms control, small arms and light weapons, as well as mine action. We paid continued attention to **South-Eastern Europe**, which is an area of special importance both to my country and the OSCE, where almost half of its field presences are located.

Another area where we worked together with our Italian colleagues was the question of **gender mainstreaming**. I am glad that our advocacy of the role of women in security processes brought about the launching of the webpage of the OSCE MenEngage Network. Let me therefore emphasize the key role that men have in promoting gender equality.

Finally, I would like to underline that we all have a stake in making sure that the OSCE remains as effective as possible. I would therefore like to reiterate Slovenia's **full support for the Secretary-General's reform agenda** and his efforts to make the OSCE "fit for purpose".

This is, after all, one of the few international security organizations left where **dialogue among participating States** is not only possible, but also taken for granted. It is therefore up to us to use it to our collective benefit.

In this spirit, let me also wish every success to our Slovak friends, who are taking over the Chairmanship of the OSCE next year. You can count on our support and cooperation.

*Thank you.*