



REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS
PERMANENT MISSION
TO THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Statement by Cyprus at the reinforced Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council on 26 September 2023

As delivered by State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Dr Kyriacós Kouros

Mr. Chairperson,

Excellencies,

Dear colleagues,

To begin with, Cyprus fully aligns with the statement delivered by the European Union. In addition, I would like to proceed with some remarks in my national capacity.

We are meeting today to discuss the unprecedented challenges the OSCE is facing, in pursuit of solutions, in order for this Organization to continue to fully function for the benefit of security, stability and peace.

The first question we are obliged to answer is whether the OSCE is still relevant. We believe, yes. None of us disagrees, and I am certain that our active presence here today is a testament to our collective interest to protect and preserve this Organization. OSCE remains an important framework for dealing with security issues. Given the current tensions worldwide, we say it is needed more than ever.

The second question is: then what can we do?

For more than a year and a half, this Organization has been functioning in a non-business as usual manner. This war of aggression against Ukraine was uncalled for. The Russian leadership did not need to resort to this catastrophic path. This absurd war has multiplying consequences to the security and stability for our continent but also for the rest of the world. We have witnessed the violations of the Helsinki Final Act principles and OSCE commitments. The use of force cannot and should not replace the rule of law. Respect to international law and the international legal order must prevail. Cyprus, itself a victim of foreign aggression since 1974 on going, has been adamant: Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, within its internationally recognized borders' must be respected. Revisionist policies and the use of force and coercion to change borders, has no place in the 21st century.

In the meantime, the Republic of Cyprus has been closely monitoring the events that unfolded this past week in Nagorno-Karabakh and their grave repercussions. Cyprus supports the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all countries. The use of force to resolve disputes is not acceptable and we condemn the loss of lives as a result of the recent flare up of aggression in the region. The aggressor bears the responsibility to ensure full respect for the rights and security for all innocent noncombatants and prisoners of war. Their unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance needs to be safeguarded and protected. Azerbaijan should also ensure the unobstructed freedom of movement of the Karabakh Armenians, including the full reopening of the Lachin corridor.

Dear Colleagues,

Despite the grave challenges -and there are plenty-, the OSCE remains, the most important regional platform of dialogue and cooperation. These channels of communication, must be preserved for the benefit of peace and stability but also for the benefit of future generations. OSCE was created with the aim to prevent war and build bridges. Sometimes we will fail but the perseverance of peace should be our collective compass. We owe to recall what brought us together and our commitment for peace, security and stability in the OSCE area and beyond.

We deeply regret that no consensus has been achieved, yet, on the OSCE Chairpersonship for 2024, the 2024 budget of our organization, as well as for the appointment of the top executive positions in the OSCE. It is imperative for each member state to evaluate how much its own stance affects the future of the organization and to engage constructively towards preserving the institutional and budgetary function of the OSCE.

The candidacy of one EU Member State, Estonia, for the 2024 Chairpersonship is merit and value based and is supported by Cyprus. Such support bestows more responsibilities on the able shoulders of Estonia. The lack of consensus on this matter up until today obstructs the smooth functioning of our Organization. Moreover, both the Secretary General, Helga Schmid, as well as the OSCE structures and institutions, including the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the Representative on Freedom of the Media and the High Commissioner on National Minorities, managed, despite the challenging circumstances to navigate our Organization based on the values and principles of the Helsinki Final Act. Cyprus strongly supports a renewal of their mandates. As for the 2024 budget, and since the figures have been agreed, we expect the Member State blocking consensus to review its position. Its imperative to reach consensus the soonest possible.

Excellencies,

Dear colleagues,

OSCE and multilateralism must be preserved, not at the expense of our values, but on building upon and safeguarding them. Rule-based order and commitment to our fundamental values will must prevail. Cyprus will be assuming the Chairpersonship of the Forum of Security Cooperation in January and I can assure you that we will exert all efforts to preserve the effective functioning of our Organization, while standing up for an international rules based order, in full respect of the UN Charter and the OSCE principles and commitments.

Thank you Chair