



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Special Meeting of the Permanent Council
Remarks Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid
Thursday 12 January 2023
AS DELIVERED

Thank you, Dear Ambassador,

Minister Osmani, it is a real pleasure to welcome you as you take up the Chairpersonship of the OSCE.

You present a compelling set of priorities, and let me wholeheartedly thank you for that. They speak to the vital role that the OSCE has to play in the face of this tremendously challenging environment.

Dear Colleagues,

The war against Ukraine wages on – against all our principles, and despite all our efforts so far. OSCE staff remain in detention – held illegally since April – though our work to secure their release continues with urgency. The needs of the government and people of Ukraine are increasing – as are the threats, whether to vulnerable populations or environments.

But the OSCE is doing its part to make a difference – for the people and the places they call home. We had to close both of our missions to Ukraine last year. And yet through a wholly donor-funded support program, it is possible to continue the important work of addressing Ukraine's challenges – whether humanitarian demining, combatting human trafficking, or addressing environmental damage caused by the war.

We are working to support those vulnerable to human trafficking – and we are working with a broad range of States and organizations to address trafficking – whether through the tools on which traffickers rely or through policies that ensure that we don't inadvertently support trafficked labour through the products we buy.

Our field missions – from Central Asia to South-Eastern Europe – provide outstanding expertise, tailored to the needs of their host communities. Through this approach we are able to provide early warning of rising tensions, and we are able to build connections between communities that contribute to greater stability.

We support governments as they seek to address challenges – whether from small arms and light weapons or from cyberspace.

And in all that we do – as you, Minister, rightly noted – it's about people. The OSCE is renowned for its comprehensive approach to security. While its value may be better recognized today than it was at the start, we have always understood that we can only truly be secure when we address the politico-military, but also the environmental and economic, and human dimensions together.

In 2023, we will continue to draw on our experience and expertise across the three dimensions to make a difference in the lives of people across the OSCE region. To address challenges posed by climate change – as we will at the Ministerial Conference here in Vienna in March. To focus on economic issues – including those related to women's economic empowerment. To combat corruption and to counter terrorism, including through our programs that target youth to prevent criminality and support better futures.

And we will, as ever, including through the vital work of the OSCE institutions, also working closely with the Parliamentary Assembly, continue our efforts in the human dimension. To support democratic processes, address gender-based violence, safeguard the rights of national minorities, advance media freedoms, and so much more.

There is no shortage of work to do – and with your support, we are ready to continue doing it – for the benefit of us all.

But we need adequate financial funding to do our work. And as you said, we need a swift adoption of the budget. This is not only a responsibility of the Chair but of all participating States.

So thank you for your inspiring statement. You can count on my support and that of all OSCE staff as we work for a better future for us all.

Thank you.