



EUROPEAN UNION

29th Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council

Łódź, 1-2 December 2022

EU Opening Statement

Remarks by HRVP Josep Borrell

Thank you Foreign Minister Rau, I am very pleased to join you in Łódź today.

In 1975, our predecessors signed the Helsinki Final Act. A core set of principles was agreed: renouncing the use of force, respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity, and protecting human rights and freedoms.

These values are universal, not a Western construct. They remain at the heart of the OSCE and at the core of the European Union's efforts to promote multilateralism and defend a rules-based international order.

By launching its war of aggression against Ukraine, Russia has flouted not only specific OSCE commitments. Russia has also violated the core principles on which European security is built as enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act, the Paris Charter and underpinned in the UN Charter.

We have to be clear-eyed on the most crucial element of our answer: There can be no respect to the OSCE values as long as Russia continues its war of aggression against Ukraine with Belarus' complicity.

Russia has brought the war back to Europe. Russia is now turning this into a purely punitive campaign, trying to inflict as much pain as possible on Ukraine

and its citizens, using winter as a weapon of war. The Russian army is deliberately targeting energy and water infrastructure on which normal Ukrainian citizens depend.

The commitment of the European Union to Ukrainian territorial integrity, security and freedom is steadfast.

The EU and its Member States have been at the forefront of the solidarity effort with Ukrainian people. We already mobilised over EUR 19 billion of assistance to Ukraine. An additional package of EUR 18 billion was already proposed for 2023. The Union's and its Member States' military assistance is estimated at over EUR 8 billion.

Russia's war of aggression has effectively destroyed the security in Europe. We are here to discuss how to address this situation and to reinforce the OSCE through common efforts, in order to pave the way for rebuilding the European security architecture.

Apart from its brutal attack on Ukraine and its people, Russia's continued destabilising role in the Georgian regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova have also severely deteriorated the security situation in the OSCE area.

There is a historic opportunity to achieve a sustainable conflict settlement in the South Caucasus, which we strongly encourage Armenia and Azerbaijan to seize.

We equally condemn Russia's systematic crackdown on human rights and fundamental freedoms internally, and we also call on the Belarusian authorities to release and rehabilitate all political prisoners and meet the demands of the people for free and fair elections.

Despite all these, OSCE Institutions and field operations continue their efforts. Their work is testament to the OSCE ability to act even under very difficult circumstances.

In this context, our contribution to the Support Program for Ukraine presents us

with an opportunity to achieve support for the OSCE and provide meaningful assistance to Ukraine. For this reason, the EU has committed to provide EUR 1,2 million for the OSCE mine activities in Ukraine.

To conclude, let me reiterate again our steadfast commitment to the OSCE and the values it represents.

With that in mind, I would like to wish every success for North Macedonia's OSCE Chairmanship in 2023. You can count on the EU's full support in steering the Organisation.