

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY  
MR. DMITRY BALAKIN, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE  
OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE OSCE, AT THE  
2016 ANNUAL SECURITY REVIEW CONFERENCE**

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**Working session III: Bolstering the OSCE's conflict cycle toolbox**

Mr. Chairperson,

We agree that the OSCE's activities on early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation are among the Organization's key tasks.

The OSCE has accumulated a wide-ranging arsenal of mechanisms and considerable experience in crisis management, which nevertheless does not always enable us to react when crises arise in a way commensurate with their scale and potential consequences. This is strikingly illustrated by the events in the South Caucasus in 2008 and in Ukraine in late 2013 and early 2014 when it was clear that the OSCE fell short and was unable to anticipate these crises, to prevent worst-case scenarios from developing or even to give the events the attention they deserved, despite the intensive work of the field presences and OSCE humanitarian institutions in both regions when the crises first saw the light of day. It would seem that the corresponding signals were simply not brought to the notice of the participating States and were therefore not responded to properly.

Unfortunately, the widespread realization by participating States of the shortcomings of the existing OSCE crisis-response toolbox has not yet resulted in the elaboration of an agreed approach to alternatives for dealing with the problem.

Discussions on this issue are restricted to calls for radical solutions, which essentially involve a departure from the basic principle of consensus in OSCE decision-making, an increase in the so-called autonomy of its executive structures, burdening the Organization with new departments with functions that are not part of its remit and also the setting up of onerous crisis-response funds.

We believe that this is the wrong way to deal with the problem. The OSCE's existing crisis-response instruments are entirely adequate. The main task is to improve their effectiveness, and this is where our concerted efforts should be directed.

We firmly believe that our collective principles and consensus-based decision-making should be strengthened. The consensus principle does not in any way limit the Organization's ability to respond to crises. On the contrary, it gives additional weight and longevity to multilateral efforts, among other things, to strengthen the joint responsibility of all participating States in helping to deal with a crisis.

In this regard, we believe that it would be useful to further strengthen the key role of the OSCE's decision-making bodies in all stages of the conflict cycle and to increase the transparency and accountability to the Permanent Council of the work of the OSCE executive structures and humanitarian institutions. As the response to the Ukrainian crisis illustrates, if the political will exists, the participating States have the wherewithal to agree rapidly in the Permanent Council on the necessary measures to deal with the crisis and on the allocation of the appropriate resources.

With regard to the early warning of crises, we believe that work needs to be done to improve the efficacy and quality of information to participating States on the genesis and development of a crisis situation so as to be able to draw up an optimum set of measures for responding to it. We agree with the opinion expressed during the recent expert round table on early warning that unnecessary politicization of this quite technical task and attempts to immediately designate those responsible are counter-productive and conflict directly with the task of preventing escalation. The unnecessary focus on secondary issues such as an excessive bias towards human rights and gender aspects can make it more difficult to anticipate crises.

In our view, the OSCE's role is limited to helping the parties involved to resolve the crisis situation. The OSCE does not and cannot have the role of enforcement. This is the prerogative of the United Nations Security Council.

In that connection, we believe that the focus on the development of political mechanisms for resolving crises is legitimate. We are willing to support the idea of increasing the OSCE Secretary General's crisis-response powers on the basis of the consensus principle. This applies above all to the possibility for convening extraordinary meetings of the decision-making bodies in the appropriate format – Permanent Council, Forum for Security Co-operation, or joint meetings of the two.

Moreover, taking into account the unconditional requirement that the parties to the conflict themselves must agree and be willing in good faith to accept external assistance offered to them, we believe that it would be useful to think about other ways of enabling representatives of parties that do not belong to the Organization to take part in a status-neutral capacity in relevant OSCE meetings. By allowing them to present their positions it would be possible to acquire an overall picture of the development of the crisis and to adopt more viable decisions.

Regarding the idea of enlarging the OSCE's crisis-response capabilities by attributing a peacekeeping function, we believe that this question should be approached cautiously, based on the following principles.

- Approval of the OSCE's peacekeeping plans by the United Nations Security Council and compliance with the Charter of the United Nations;

- Strict observance of the consensus principle in the adoption of OSCE decisions on peacekeeping and crisis and conflict resolution as a whole;
- Strictly civilian nature of OSCE operations, which is the key to trust in the OSCE staff by the parties to the conflict;
- Prior agreement on the legal status of the OSCE, which requires the drafting and adoption of a constituent document and only then of a convention on privileges and immunities for its staff.

On the whole, we agree with the idea of strengthening the OSCE's ties with partner organizations in the field of crisis management, especially in those questions and regions where the OSCE's capabilities are limited. However, this work must also be based on collective decisions, in particular through agreement on specific approaches and a procedure for co-operation with the executive structures of international organizations in the field.

Thank you for your attention.