

As delivered

**Opening Remarks by
State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia
H. E. Ms. Roksanda Ninčić
on behalf of the 2015 OSCE Serbian Chairmanship
at the 2015 OSCE Mediterranean Conference
Jordan, Dead Sea
20 October 2015**

Excellencies,
Secretary General,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to join Minister Nasser Judeh and Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier in welcoming you to the 2015 OSCE-Mediterranean Conference. Let me start by expressing Serbian Chairmanship's sincere gratitude to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for hosting the conference in this outstanding location. I also wish to thank Germany, which has been chairing the OSCE Mediterranean Contact Group this year, for all the work done to prepare this high-level gathering. In a joint effort, Jordan and Germany have given the 2015 OSCE Mediterranean Conference the high profile that it deserves. The topics of the conference very much reflect the agenda that Serbia started promoting in 2014 when we had the privilege to preside over the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership and that led to the Basel Declaration on Co-operation with the Mediterranean Partners.

I am very pleased to see that so many ministers and other high-level representatives of governments and international organizations are taking part in this event. This confirms the importance that participating States, Partners and other international organizations attach to the co-operation between the OSCE and the Mediterranean region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act and its Mediterranean Chapter, which recognized that “*security in Europe is closely linked with security in the Mediterranean area as a whole*”. At no time has this link been more apparent than in the very challenging times we face today. Our regions are experiencing renewed and heightened tensions with terrorist groups waging a frontal attack on our shared values. Ankara, Copenhagen, Paris, and Sousse are just some of the many places that have been the scene of despicable acts of terrorism this year. The growing number of foreign terrorist fighters travelling from OSCE participating States to Syria and Iraq has added a new dimension to this challenge and represents a very dangerous trend.

Following the opposite trajectory, masses of people are taking a perilous journey to cross the Mediterranean Sea to Europe in a desperate attempt to flee conflict and poverty. Faced with a phenomenon of historic proportions, we must rise to the challenge and jointly develop a comprehensive, humane, and sustainable solution that meets the protection needs of refugees and the human rights of all. The magnitude and complexity of the challenges faced by the Euro-Mediterranean region cannot be addressed by a single state or organization on its own.

While addressing these emergencies, we also have to continue to promote integration as the foundation for diverse and peaceful societies. We should stand united in countering the divisive messages that are being spread by groups who reject dialogue, tolerance and peaceful coexistence and threaten the cohesion of our societies. It is our shared responsibility to reverse this negative trend towards extremism and polarization by developing a strong counter-narrative reaffirming our shared values.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The 2015 OSCE Mediterranean Conference comes at the end of the year which has been hard and successful at the same time. Hard because of the still ongoing crisis in and around Ukraine, which has at the same time underlined the importance of the OSCE as a forum for political dialogue on important security issues. Successful because it has witnessed numerous formal and informal

meetings organized by the Serbian Chairmanship with the participation of the Mediterranean Partners.

I am therefore pleased that the OSCE is contributing its share to relevant international efforts in tackling current challenges. The Organization has a proven track record of fostering international coalitions to achieve common goals. The Alliance against Trafficking in Persons is a case in point. Since 2004, it has offered a forum for international, non-governmental and inter-governmental organizations to join forces in preventing and combating human trafficking. We hope that this initiative will gain even further traction and see a close involvement of our Partners.

Similarly, our efforts to counter violent extremism and radicalization are based on the principle of co-operation and exchange of lessons learnt. This is why the Serbian Chairmanship convened an OSCE-wide Counter-Terrorism Expert Conference in July this year, which allowed for an exchange of good practices on *Countering the Incitement and Recruitment of Foreign Terrorist Fighters*. Let me also mention in this context the OSCE conference on *Working with Youth for Youth: Protection against Radicalization* we hosted in Belgrade on 3-4 September 2015, where we discussed how young people can play a key role in the fight against radical ideologies that lead to violence. Not only as a result of these two events, but as a result of the comprehensive efforts of the OSCE in the fight against terrorism, the Serbian Chairmanship will propose adoption of the Ministerial Declaration on *Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization That Lead to Terrorism* at the forthcoming OSCE Ministerial Council in Belgrade.

I would be remiss not to mention the OSCE-wide campaign that we launched to send a unified message against violent extremism. Under the common slogan “OSCE United in Countering Violent Extremism”, this campaign highlights the OSCE’s comprehensive approach to preventing terrorism. Since its launching, we have reached some two million people on social media. Let me take this opportunity to welcome the participation of the Mediterranean Partners in this important initiative.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since its inception, the OSCE has offered tools and a platform for dialogue to decrease tensions, correct misperceptions, and promote a culture of tolerance across the OSCE area and beyond. It is true that lately our Organization has been focusing on addressing the current crisis in and around Ukraine, proving its operational flexibility and the relevance of its mission. But engagement in Europe has not lessened a bit our attention for the Mediterranean. As this high-profile gathering demonstrates, we remain convinced that the OSCE needs to invest further in its Mediterranean Partnership because its experience bears lessons for the increasingly interdependent Euro-Mediterranean region. Our Conference should allow us to reaffirm and renew this assessment and provide a high-level political forum for highlighting common challenges as well as opportunities for co-operation. The ideas and recommendations that will emerge from our debates will provide an essential basis for furthering dialogue and concrete co-operation with our Partners on important issues of mutual interest. The upcoming Ministerial Council in December in Belgrade represents an excellent opportunity for continuation of discussions.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairperson, let me express my sincere hope and expectation that we will have fruitful deliberations here and to wish all of us a successful Conference.

Thank you.