



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Opening Address by the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland Zbigniew Rau

As delivered by Ambassador Michael Carpenter
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
January 13, 2022

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Foreign Minister Rau, the United States warmly welcomes you to the Permanent Council as OSCE Chair-in-Office for 2022. We welcome your clear statement of priorities for the OSCE in the coming year and look forward to working together on these critical issues. As you eloquently articulated, the first priority is to safeguard a comprehensive security order by defending the principles of the *Helsinki Final Act*, the *Paris Charter*, and the *Charter for European Security*. We look forward to an OSCE under your leadership that demonstrates an unshakeable commitment to these principles, which form the very bedrock upon which we all pledged to build the lasting security of our region and are the basis of a rules-based international order. Flowing from these fundamental principles are our commonly adopted commitments to OSCE mechanisms that promote conflict resolution and de-escalation. Never have they been more relevant.

We welcome your proposal to use the OSCE as a venue for a revitalized discussion on European Security. We view Russia's unprovoked actions towards Ukraine as an immediate and urgent challenge to peace and security in the OSCE region. We have a desire and preference to pursue diplomacy and de-escalation building on conversations here and elsewhere this week. Only at the OSCE can we sit together at the same table, all 57 participating States' voices equal, to discuss ways to strengthen security in keeping with fundamental principles and commitments, including respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of participating States, the inviolability of one another's borders, and the non-use or threat of force.

Let me also be clear about one thing: as we prepare for an open dialogue on how to strengthen security for the benefit of all, we must decisively reject blackmail and never allow aggression and threats to be rewarded. We must resolutely defend, not dilute, our foundational principles and commitments. There are many topics we can and should discuss, and we must listen to every voice around this table. We must relentlessly search for workable solutions. But we must never stand for the flouting or erosion of our bedrock principles. That means no tolerance for overt or tacit spheres of influence, no restrictions on the sovereign right of nations to choose their own alliances, no privileging one state's security requirements over those of another.

We believe that the OSCE is the most inclusive venue for discussion of concerns about conventional military forces and of enhancing military transparency, deconfliction, and confidence building. We also need to focus on adherence to OSCE principles that advance conflict prevention and resolution. This is also the right venue to discuss the non-military aspects of security, including the indivisible

link between respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals within states and achieving peace, prosperity, and cooperation among states. These three broad topics are ripe for a robust discussion and for creative proposals that would enhance the security of all states sitting around this table.

The United States strongly appreciates the Chair's initiative to leverage the unique advantages of the OSCE to promote dialogue and de-escalate tensions. We are committed to expressing our frank concerns about Russia's actions, notably its threats against Ukraine, but also to looking for areas where we could have overlapping interests with Russia. We are engaged in a discussion within the framework of the U.S.-Russia bilateral Strategic Stability Dialogue. We re-engaged yesterday in the NATO-Russia Council. And we are ready to begin engaging here at the OSCE. We come prepared for a serious discussion, even though – or perhaps, precisely because – we see Russia's recent actions in Ukraine, and its purported annexation of Crimea, as inherently dangerous and destabilizing. Russia's unwanted military presence on the territory of Georgia and Moldova continues to contradict fundamental principles. The bottom line is this: we need a serious discussion about what we can do to reduce insecurity and build trust, and we are ready to get down to work.

Engagement within the OSCE is also critical because it is founded on a comprehensive approach not only to political-military security, but also to human, and economic and environmental security. So, as we prepare for a revitalized European security dialogue, we must keep a vigilant focus on the OSCE's vital work in the Human Dimension of security, not least on the Helsinki Final Act principle of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as the Charter of Paris commitment to democracy as the only form of government for our nations. Nowhere are our efforts on these principles more visible than at the OSCE's annual *Human Dimension Implementation Meeting*, or HDIM. It is a core part of the work we do, and HDIM must be held this year. In addition, we need to ensure undiminished civil society participation in HDIM and other OSCE fora.

The United States strongly supports the work of the OSCE in the Second Dimension and believes it has much untapped potential to advance the goals of security, stability, and prosperity in the OSCE area. We therefore look forward to cooperation in the Second Dimension, including on combating corruption, advancing pandemic recovery, and implementing our notable new commitment regarding climate change that was approved at last year's Ministerial Council.

Lastly, all these efforts require sufficient resources. Consistent with the goals and principles that we have reiterated regularly, the United States strongly supports the Polish Chair in its efforts to pass the 2022 Unified Budget as soon as possible.

Mr. Foreign Minister, the United States will work closely with the Polish Chairmanship to ensure that we find solutions to today's challenges that are rooted in our commitments and principles. No one foisted these principles and commitments on any other state. No state was coerced into signing the Helsinki Final Act. We all freely committed to uphold its principles and have confirmed and re-confirmed that commitment on multiple occasions over the last half century. Applying these principles, particularly as we grapple with our most daunting challenges, remains the only way to ensure the security of our region.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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