



**Briefing
by H.E. Ms. Ann Linde,
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden and OSCE
Chairperson-in-Office
to the United Nations Security Council
10 March 2021**

Madam President,

Distinguished Members of the Security Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to brief the Council about the Swedish chairpersonship of the OSCE. As the world's largest regional security organisation under chapter VIII of the UN Charter, the OSCE plays an important role in many of the challenges on the Council's agenda. Our 57 members span three continents – North America, Asia and Europe: a diverse group of countries bound together by joint commitments dating back to the Helsinki Final Act of 1975.

Close collaboration between the UN and the OSCE remains essential, an example of the partnerships which the UN@75 declaration called on us all to strengthen. The Secretary General's vision for "networked multilateralism" gives new impetus to our partnership and provides a framework for how we can work together.

We have a security situation in the OSCE region that calls for more, not less, common solutions. Old rivalries continue to fuel conflicts and pose challenges to international peace and security. And new conflicts, crises and threats call for our increased attention – from climate change to cyber security.

We are in the midst of a historic and devastating pandemic which will have long-term effects on the world.

As Chairperson-in-Office, I will do my part to ensure that the OSCE can make a real difference on the ground and to defend the principles on which the organisation rests. Ultimately, our efforts aim to contribute to resolving the conflicts and improving the lives of people in our region.

My first priority is to focus on the basic commitments and principles on which the OSCE was founded - the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris for a New Europe of 1990. These documents clearly state the sanctity of sovereignty, territorial integrity, the freedom from threat or use of force and the right of all states to choose their own security policy path. Underpinning these documents are, of course, international law and the Charter of the United Nations. They are relevant not only to Europe, but globally. The participating States of the OSCE made commitments which constitute the foundation of the European security order and which remain valid and relevant to this day. Our task is to implement these commitments.

We will also seek to strengthen the OSCE's unique comprehensive concept of security, which makes a clear link between security and the respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. This is a link well-known to the United Nations. Through this concept we will contribute to conflict resolution in our region in accordance with international law. We know that societies where human rights are fully enjoyed by all are more secure and with better prospects for sustainable, resilient and prosperous development. This is why the Women, Peace and Security agenda is a guiding theme of our chairpersonship.

Excellencies,

One of my main priorities as Chairperson-in-Office will be to seek continued engagement at the highest levels towards sustainable solutions to

crises and conflicts in the region, in line with international law and with full respect for the OSCE principles and commitments

The crisis in and around Ukraine remains the most serious challenge to the European security order. It was therefore important for me to visit both Kyiv and the contact line in Donbass during my first trip as Chairperson-in-Office in January.

Seven years into the crisis, it is clear that efforts towards conflict resolution need to intensify. As Chairperson-in-Office, I fully support the work of the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group to achieve a full implementation of the Minsk agreements and will seek to contribute to a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE commitments and principles respecting the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders.

During my visit to the contact line, I saw first-hand the dedication and courage by which the women and men of the Special Monitoring Mission carried out their tasks on the ground. Their work is essential to the peace effort and must remain unimpeded throughout Ukraine.

The conflict also has dire humanitarian consequences and the cease-fire in force since July of last year should now pave the way for further steps to ease the burden on civilians. Recent violations of the cease-fire are deeply worrying. Respect for international law, including international humanitarian law is, of course, essential. As long as crossing points of the contact line remain closed, communities and families are separated, elderly struggle to receive care and access to government services is restricted for many citizens. I hereby reiterate my call to fully open the two new crossing points in Luhansk region on both sides of the contact line, as well as to re-open the existing ones. These were also some of my key messages during my recent visits to Kyiv and Moscow.

During my visit to Georgia in February I had the opportunity to meet President Zourabichvili and then-Prime Minister Gakharia and to reiterate the OSCE's full support for the Geneva International Discussions and related Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism formats. This dialogue process, co-chaired by the OSCE, UN, and EU, is another important example of UN-OSCE cooperation in conflict resolution.

In addition to meeting with leaders in both government and civil society, I also visited one of Georgia's administrative boundary lines in its conflict context, where I saw first-hand the need for increased contacts and communication between local communities. Together with the European Union, the UN and the OSCE should seek to step up our joint efforts to build the confidence necessary to bring the conflict closer to its resolution.

In my talks with President Sandu and other leaders in Moldova the prospects to move forward with talks in the 5+2 format and to continue building on the "Berlin plus" package were discussed. I also confirmed our readiness to hold 5+2 talks in Stockholm during the year.

This message was reiterated in my discussions with the representative from Transnistria and was generally well received. Although I remain realistic, there may be some cause for cautious optimism to make progress on the Settlement Process during the year. But to make progress – full support of all parties to the conflict is needed.

The unresolved Nagorno-Karabakh conflict remains a serious challenge to international peace and security. Last autumn, we witnessed a renewed outbreak of the armed conflict, resulting in thousands of casualties and immense suffering, including among civilians.

The cease-fire achieved in November with the assistance of Russia brought about a welcome stop to hostilities. Now we must seize this moment to renew efforts towards a lasting peace agreement. The OSCE has been given the international mandate to lead this process, under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs. As Chairperson-in-Office, I fully support their continued engagement in the peace process and I will use my visits to Baku and Yerevan next week to express my expectation that the sides recommit to talks on a sustainable political solution. We must also address a number of humanitarian needs, reminding us all of the need for implementation of international humanitarian law in this as in other conflicts.

Excellencies,

In situations where trust between States has eroded, confidence and security building measures play an important role to support transparency and predictability. As Chair, I call on all participating states of the OSCE to

comply with the measures that are at the heart of confidence and security building in our region, including the Vienna Document and the Open Skies Treaty. These measures must be kept up to date and fully complied with and comprise as many States as possible to ensure their continued functioning and relevance.

When crises erupt despite our efforts to prevent them, I remain ready to engage directly with the stakeholders involved to offer the OSCE's good offices to facilitate solutions. In line with this, the offer that Albania's Prime Minister Rama as Chairperson-in-Office and I extended last year to facilitate a genuine dialogue between the government and opposition in Belarus still stands.

Secretary General Guterres' call for a global cease-fire during the pandemic is much needed. The adoption of resolution 2352 on the 1st of July 2020 and the recent resolution 2565 on vaccine access in conflict areas shows the importance that this Council attaches to combatting the pandemic and resolving conflicts. It is my strong wish to see these resolutions implemented to support peace efforts in the OSCE region.

Unfortunately, the pandemic has added another layer of challenges by putting strains on open society. During this last year, we have seen a backsliding of democracy and respect for human rights in the OSCE region, as we have seen elsewhere. The Swedish Chairpersonship will emphasize the right to the freedom of expression and the freedom of media as well as other democratic rights which our states have committed to respect. As Chair, our efforts will be carried out in support of, and be complementary to, the important work done by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the Representative on Freedom of the Media, and the High Commissioner for National Minorities.

Excellencies,

As Chair, we will draw on the expertise of civil society to ensure that their contributions inform all aspects of security. Before this meeting, I met with civil society organisations from across the OSCE region, including from countries affected by unresolved conflicts, to exchange views on the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Key takeaways were that impunity for sexual and gender-based violence prevails, and that the pandemic's negative effects on women's economic and social rights are especially hard felt for

those in already vulnerable situations. The meeting reconfirmed my conviction of the need to involve civil society organisations in conflict resolution and peace building; to engage women in all parts of peace processes; and to address threats to civil society actors. Here, close cooperation between the UN and the OSCE in the field can make a difference.

Our strong focus on advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda will continue in the same spirit as during our tenure in this Council in 2017-2018. On this agenda we also plan to work together with UN Women, including on how to promote women's economic empowerment in our region. I have appointed an advisory group of experts on these issues, which held its first meeting at the end of February. Through their support, I hope that our work to mainstream the agenda will gain further momentum and continue long after we have passed the baton to Poland and successive OSCE Chairs.

Excellencies,

In the period ahead, I plan to visit OSCE field presences across our region from Southeastern Europe to Central Asia. I will continue to highlight the priorities outlined here today, while seeking common solutions to the challenges facing our region. We will continue to work for enhanced collaboration between the UN and the OSCE. Throughout the year, you can count on our commitment and efforts to defend and advance the OSCE agenda of peace, prosperity and respect for human rights.

Thank you very much.