



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Address by Foreign Minister of Serbia, H. E. Ivica Dačić

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 15, 2014

The United States extends a warm welcome to Foreign Minister Ivica Dačić of Serbia. Thank you for taking the time to speak to us today, Foreign Minister, and thank you for your insightful remarks. I know that Assistant Secretary Nuland had a chance to visit you in Belgrade two days ago, and I know that she appreciated the chance to engage there as well.

As you have described, the situation in and around Ukraine will dominate the agenda of this Organization for the foreseeable future. If we are to tackle this major challenge, we must be clear-minded about where it lies. Russia's violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, in breach of international law and fundamental OSCE principles and commitments, is at the root of this crisis. We have seen Russia's occupation and illegal attempted annexation of Crimea. We have seen the ongoing support Russia has provided separatists in parts of Donetsk and Luhansk in the form of money, heavy equipment and munitions, as well as Russian fighters. And we have seen the disinformation that Russia has spread in an attempt to justify its actions, which fly in the face of the OSCE's core precepts.

Russia's disrespect for the most basic commitments of the OSCE has raised questions for this Organization as well. The OSCE has developed an impressively robust set of commitments to strengthen the security of our region. But how do we address the serious lack of political will on the part of some participating States to honor and implement those commitments? This is the central problem that the Organization must grapple with. We need a robust dialogue at OSCE meetings that includes identifying where states are falling short on their commitments and pushing each other to do better. The OSCE also needs robust institutions and field missions focused on implementing OSCE commitments. And Serbia has, in many ways, shown how a government and civil society can work with an OSCE presence, even and especially on so-called sensitive issues, and this work reflects the confidence of the government – and good faith – as the government seeks to consistently improve its implementation of OSCE commitments. We should ensure that these critical components of the OSCE toolbox have the resources and mandates they need to do this important job. We look forward to discussing this further in the coming months.

Mr. Foreign Minister, while Ukraine is at the center of the OSCE's focus these days, we appreciate the decades of work this Organization and its field missions, together with the host governments, have committed to ensuring that the present and the future of the Balkans is one of peace, grounded in OSCE principles and commitments. We welcome the role and efforts of Ambassador Stoudmann as the Special Representative on the Balkans. We hope that progress in the region is consolidated and cooperation among OSCE field missions is enhanced under his leadership. We welcome the significant progress that has been made in the Balkans, including through the EU-facilitated Belgrade-Pristina dialogue, to which you personally have contributed greatly. I recall you telling me that the secret to success was

simple: it is just a commitment to make progress, no matter the political pressures or turns in the road. Thank you for your personal commitment to make progress. We look forward to continued progress and believe that the constructive dynamic that is emerging on the ground between Kosovo and Serbia should be reflected in Vienna: we look forward to the day when Kosovo has a seat at this table too.

We welcome your emphasis on supporting the existing negotiation formats to resolve the protracted conflicts. Concrete steps toward resolving the protracted conflicts need to be high on the OSCE's agenda. We should promote more dialogue, confidence-building measures, and people-to-people contacts to help parties build trust. This could be done through consensus agreements, extra-budgetary projects, or discussions among core groups of interested participating States. Mr. Foreign Minister, we look to Serbia, which knows the value of constructive political action and dialogue, to lead the Organization in moving these conflicts out of their protracted state and toward true resolution.

You rightly highlight the importance of strengthened and improved cooperation with civil society. Our civil society organizations play an important role in helping us to identify where we fall short on our commitments; we should involve them more thoroughly in our deliberations.

Mr. Foreign Minister, the United States applauds your determination to devote additional effort to implementing existing human dimension commitments in areas such as the protection of journalists, the fundamental freedoms of assembly and expression, and tolerance and non-discrimination.

Minister Dačić, thank you again for spending this time with us at the council today, and for sharing your vision with us. We look forward to your tenure as Chairman-in-office of the OSCE next year, and we wish you all the best.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.