



United States Mission to the OSCE

Closing Statement 30th Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council

As delivered by Ambassador Michael R. Carpenter
Skopje, North Macedonia, December 1, 2023

First of all, Ambassador Djundev, dear Igor, thank you. Thanks to you and Foreign Minister Osmani for your exceptional leadership and, I think it's no exaggeration to say – herculean efforts to keep this organization focused on its foundational principles and to your insistence on not losing the forest for the trees. You said at the beginning of the year that it's about people. That is absolutely right and – with all due respect to everyone in this Council – it is not just about us diplomats. It is about people like Tatyana and Oleksander. I wish everyone in this Council would have taken the time to listen to them at yesterday's side event. Oleksander described the inhuman conditions of his detention by Russian authorities – the humiliation, abuse, and violations of his dignity. The irreversible pain that has been permanently seared into his memory and that he will never, ever be able to wipe out of his mind. Or the fact that Tatyana's son is still languishing somewhere in Russia's filtration gulag. Disappeared and torn away from his family.

Every minute we spend debating rules of procedure or technicalities of this organization is a minute less that we devote to talking about the suffering of people like Oleksander and Tatyana. It's not abstract. It's real and it's happening right now as we speak, in Ukraine. Filtration, torture, enforced disappearances. All happening right now. Yes, it's about the Helsinki Final Act and the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the inviolability of borders. But it's not just about abstract principles of international law. It's about the lives and real-time suffering of children, women, and men who are being targeted simply for being Ukrainian.

Now, I believe the stronger our organization is, the more we can contribute – in our own way – to supporting Ukraine. We've proven we can make a real difference, by using the Moscow Mechanism to document war crimes in Bucha. By having the victims of filtration camps come and speak at side events. By providing psychological support to children and families, and by telling their stories every week at the Permanent Council. Bilaterally, our countries can support Ukraine militarily; in this Council we can support it morally. In the long run we will also support Russia, because the principles we agreed to in Helsinki and Paris will in fact benefit every citizen of the OSCE region, regardless of their nationality.

To our friends in Malta, we thank you for agreeing to take on the enormous responsibility of defending our values. We have faith in your leadership. We pledge to support you in every way we can. There is so much work to be done: encouraging peace in the South Caucasus between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the de-occupation of Georgia. Supporting democracy and rule of law in Moldova and the Western Balkans. Advancing connectivity and trade in Central Asia. Combating anti-Semitism and islamophobia. We know you will take all of this on and more.

To Secretary General Schmid, dear Helga, we so greatly value your leadership of this organization and your ability to bring leaders together to advance bold new initiatives, like the High-Level Event on Climate Change.

To Director Mecacci, dear Matteo, your organization is at the heart of our common values – defending human rights and strengthening democratic institutions.

Dear Representative on Freedom of the Media, dear Teresa – Your voice on freedom of the media is vital to supporting democracy in our region.

Dear High Commissioner, dear Kairat – You know how essential national minority rights are to peace, stability and democracy and we will continue to support the work of your organization.

Colleagues, we have a lot of work to do. Count on the United States to work with you to defend our core values. The more united we are, the stronger we are and the more we can do to support the principles that all of us – at one time – pledged to uphold.

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