

**Address by the incoming Chairmanship and  
Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of Austria**

**H.E. Mr. Sebastian Kurz**

**1108<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Permanent Council  
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*(Check against delivery)*

Mr. Chairperson,  
Secretary General,  
Ambassadors,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

[Introduction]

I belong to a generation who did not experience the Cold War first-hand and in truth know of it only from history books. I was three years old when the Iron Curtain fell 27 years ago.

I belong to a generation who grew up in Europe in a time of hope and new possibilities.

This continent appeared finally to have found its focus. For me and my generation, security and stability were always things we took for granted – not least thanks to the OSCE.

And we were confident that more and more people would come to enjoy freedom, security and stability.

But this expectation has not been fulfilled.

It is almost as if our continent has fallen back into old times and old thinking.

Bloc thinking is once again on the rise. Mutual reproaches are being heard in a language and tone that young people like myself know only from history books.

However, not only border conflicts and military confrontations but also the growth of radicalization and terrorism and an increasing erosion of confidence, also among this Organization's participating States, are leading to rising uncertainty and growing fears in our society.

People today are no longer satisfied with placatory explanations and resolutions; they expect concrete solutions, and they deserve security and stability.

Especially in this difficult phase, the OSCE, which represents 1.2 billion people, is of key significance.

We must all make a contribution to restoring security and stability.

[Security]

It is against this background that we decided two years ago to apply for the OSCE Chairmanship in 2017. We want to make a commitment in the OSCE to help increase security.

We are currently faced with three central threats to security and stability but also to our common values in the OSCE area:

1. A further intensification of military confrontations that have already caused thousands of victims, displacement and destruction. We want to help defuse existing conflicts.
2. The increasing threat to internal security through growing radicalization, particularly of young persons, and terrorism in its wake. We must therefore fight radicalization and extremism together.
3. And the increasing loss of confidence between States and also by citizens towards State institutions and organizations that are meant to safeguard peace and our values. We must therefore restore confidence together.

This crisis of confidence can also be felt in the OSCE. We have to address it together because we can only resolve it together.

[Conflicts]

The outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine is the clearest illustration of the crisis in confidence. But it has also shown how necessary the OSCE is.

With its Special Monitoring Mission in eastern Ukraine and the Trilateral Contact Group, the OSCE makes an important contribution to crisis management. We are particularly grateful in this regard to Special Representative Martin Sajdik and Chief Observer Apakan.

The resolution of the conflict in eastern Ukraine on the basis of the Minsk agreements will remain one of the priorities of the Austrian Chairmanship.

We are relying on dialogue in this matter. Co-operation with the Normandy format is therefore essential, and I thank the German Chairmanship for its great commitment.

This also applies all the more to the other existing conflicts in the OSCE area.

- The renewed massive escalation in April in Nagorno-Karabakh has been curbed again through the mediation of the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group and with the energetic support of the German Chairmanship and Russia, but there is still a need here as well to continue dialogue to come a step closer to reaching a solution;
- The same applies to the resolution of the conflicts in Transdniestria and Georgia.

Our Chairmanship will be open to collaboration with all parties, and I am counting on your support.

Ladies and gentlemen,

[Radicalization/extremism]

The increase in radicalization and terrorism presents us with enormous challenges.

Even if our sights are focused mainly on Syria and Iraq, the OSCE area is anything but a safe haven. Tens of thousands of people from the OSCE area have joined Islamic State in order to rape, kill and attempt to exterminate religious minorities in other parts of the world.

It is not only the fact that we cannot just look on as our citizens cause unimaginable suffering in other parts of the world. When they return, they pose a massive threat to our society.

We are not safe from terror in the OSCE area either. The chain of terrorist attacks extends from Aktobe in Kazakhstan to Istanbul, Paris, Brussels and as far as Orlando.

We need to close ranks against terrorism.

Above all we need preventive measures to combat radicalization at an early stage.

We must focus in particular on young people. We will therefore be organizing a series of regional workshops with the participation of young people.

We shall also actively involve our Mediterranean partners. Combating radicalization will therefore be a priority in the conference with them on 5 and 6 October in Vienna.

It is vital in dealing with this that fundamental and human rights are also respected at all times.

In that context, it is also important to improve living conditions worldwide, to prevent illegal migration and to ensure the integration of immigrants as much as possible.

Ladies and gentlemen,

[Confidence/co-operation]

One thing is clear: greater security is possible only with greater trust.

Security is possible in the long term only by working with rather than against one another. The basis for our activities must be in respect of the human and fundamental rights of each individual.

The OSCE has the necessary bodies and institutions, and its field mission in particular are a unique instrument.

The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Representative on Freedom of the Media and the Parliamentary Assembly make an important contribution in this regard to protecting and preserving the OSCE's basic values.

We must use these instruments well and in a targeted fashion so as to create more confidence again through more co-operation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In conclusion, I should like to thank the German Chairmanship for its outstanding work in the Organization's many dimensions and areas of activity.

I am looking forward with my team, headed by our Permanent Representative Clemens Koja, along with the head of the OSCE Task Force Florian Raunig and our Special Adviser Christian Strohal, to working with you all and with the OSCE Secretariat.

Austria, which is situated in the heart of Europe, has always maintained good contacts with both East and West. Its geographical bridging function also encourages us to build political bridges as well

Thank you for your attention.