



**Utrikesdepartementet**

*Tal av utrikesminister Carl Bildt  
OSCE Ministerial Meeting, 2013-12-05*

## **Statement by Mr Carl Bildt, Minister for Foreign Affairs**

### *Check against delivery*

Mr Chairman, Mr Secretary General, Ministers, Excellencies

Sweden fully subscribes to the EU statement.

Let me start by thanking the Ukrainian Chairmanship-in-Office for its efforts during the past year, for achievements made and for hosting us here today.

This Chairmanship, however, will not be remembered for how ably it handled negotiations, or how well it led the ministerial discussions.

It will be judged by the respect – or non-respect – for OSCE commitments and values shown by the Ukrainian authorities in the critical situation the country now faces.

We are meeting here in Kiev at what might very well be a defining moment for Ukraine.

This organisation that we are members of is an organisation created to respect and promote fundamental rights and freedoms, and the right of self-determination for all countries.

And it is precisely to exercise and defend these very rights and values that the people of Ukraine have made their voice heard in support of European integration.

There have been unacceptable instances of violence and provocation surrounding these protests.

The violence on the part of the police last Saturday was a breach of OSCE values and principles – principles that all of us have agreed to uphold.

I therefore call on the President, the Government and the authorities of Ukraine to ensure freedom of assembly and freedom of expression, and to stay true to the fundamentals of the OSCE. I call on each and every one to avoid any violence.

The Helsinki Final Act is clear: there can be no lasting security without respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Disputes between nations should be settled peacefully; the threat or use of force is no way to resolve conflict.

We must respect the right of every nation to make its own choices, and threats should have no place in our Europe.

As we are gearing up to celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, it might be worth recalling what then US President Gerald Ford allegedly said during the signing in 1975: "History will judge this Conference not by what we say here today, but by what we do tomorrow – not by the promises we make, but by the promises we keep."

Helsinki was followed by the Charter of Paris, and by the Copenhagen and Moscow Documents.

The notion of "internal affairs" ceased to be part of the vocabulary in the OSCE Area, and adherence to commitments, notably in the areas of human rights and fundamental freedoms, became the legitimate concern of all.

Today, we are witnessing a concerning and deteriorating trend in a number of OSCE States when it comes to respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy and rule of law.

We have seen it in the streets of Kiev, and at the polling stations in Baku.

And we hear it in testimonies from activists and NGO representatives, such as those attending the OSCE Parallel Civil Society Conference. Human rights defenders and civil society are facing increasing limitations, pressure and intimidation.

LGBTI persons exercising their human rights are often discriminated and harassed.

Elections fail to meet the standards of being fully free and fair.

And there is continued repression against political opposition and use of selective justice to harm – and sometimes jail – political opponents.

In all of this, the institutions designed to stand up for rights and freedoms – to counter these worrying trends – are themselves sometimes attacked.

Sweden would like to see strong institutions that are given the resources and opportunity to carry out their mandates.

We commend ODIHR for its work in promoting democracy and for providing independent, impartial and professional election monitoring missions, an international gold standard.

We welcome the new High Commissioner on National Minorities, who enjoys our full support in the extremely important work this institution does.

We recognise the critical role played by the OSCE field presence, and regret that some states wish to downgrade or close field missions.

And we congratulate the Representative on Freedom of the Media for 15 years of devoted work, and agree with the current office bearer on the need for increased focus on Internet freedom.

Freedom of the media is at the very heart of any democratic state.

Still, there are restrictions on freedom of expression and the media, with attacks against journalists and news outlets.

We call on all states to take action to bring the perpetrators of these acts to justice and to ensure that journalists can work free from fear of violence or harassment.

And we want to see a clear and strong decision on the safety of journalists at this ministerial meeting.

A decision that also clearly recognises that the Internet is a key channel for traditional as well as new forms of journalism – often carried out by human rights defenders or bloggers – and that the same rights apply online as offline.

This core principle was affirmed – by consensus and with 87 co-sponsors – by the UN Human Rights Council in Resolution 20/8.

We hope it will be possible to reach consensus here as well.

Lately, issues of surveillance of electronic communication have come to the fore in our debates.

At the Seoul Conference on Cyberspace in October, I outlined seven fundamental principles, which I believe should be observed by all states to fully assure the legality and legitimacy of any surveillance, while safeguarding the rights of individuals.

Sweden will continue to seek a dialogue with stakeholders based on these principles.

The aim is clear: to safeguard a free, open and secure Internet and support a global multi-stakeholder model for Internet governance.

The consequences of failure would be severe: a serious risk of fragmentation of the Internet, potentially reversing a core driver of globalisation, prosperity, democracy and a free flow of information and ideas.

Sweden therefore welcomes the agreement on cross-dimensional confidence building measures in cyberspace.

And while we readjust to meet the challenges and reap the benefits of the interconnected world, we must also seek to address the more traditional issues.

The lack of progress in modernising arms control regimes and confidence and security building measures in the area of conventional arms control over time risk weakening security in the OSCE Area.

The protracted conflicts in Moldova, Nagorno-Karabakh and Georgia must be resolved in a peaceful manner, through negotiations within agreed formats, and with full respect for international law.

In all of this, it is important to remind ourselves of the vision of a free, democratic, common and indivisible security community, rooted in agreed principles, shared commitments and common goals.

This vision is not compatible with either selective adherence to the universal norms, values and standards, or the idea of competing spheres of influence and threatening and bullying one's neighbours.

In less than two years, we will mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act.

There are still a few promises to keep in order for that commemoration to be a true celebration.

Thank you.