

STATEMENT

by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden

H.E. Margot Wallström

at the Plenary Session of the 22nd OSCE Ministerial Council

3rd December 2015, Belgrade

Mr Chairman, Mr Secretary General, Ministers, Excellences,

I would like to thank the Serbian Chairmanship and the Chairperson-in-Office, Ivica Dačić, for your efforts over the past year, and for hosting us here in Belgrade.

Sweden fully subscribes to the statement of the European Union. In addition, I would like to highlight some areas of particular importance to Sweden.

First of all, the OSCE plays a crucial role in European peace and security and continues to provide an important platform for dialogue.

This dialogue must be based on the core OSCE principles and commitments we have all agreed to.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act and the 25th anniversary of the Charter of Paris. These documents, which laid the normative foundation of the European security order, are as relevant as ever.

Regrettably, the European security order as we have come to know it is now seriously challenged by Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine, its illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol, and its involvement in destabilising military acts in eastern Ukraine.

These actions constitute a flagrant breach of the Helsinki Final Act and international law.

The principle that all states are fully sovereign and have the right to make their own foreign and security policy choices must be upheld and any acceptance of spheres of influence rejected.

Sweden supports OSCE efforts in and around Ukraine, notably the Special Monitoring Mission, which must be given full access.

Full implementation of the Minsk agreements is critical in order to reach a sustainable political solution in accordance with OSCE principles and commitments, and in full respect of Ukraine's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity.

For Russia to put itself back on the path toward improved relations with the rest of Europe, it needs to demonstrate, in a tangible manner, its commitment to OSCE principles and international law.

Secondly, an essential feature of the European security order is the concept of comprehensive security, which has at its core respect for democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Therefore, the deteriorating human rights situation in parts of the OSCE region continues to be a cause for concern and a threat to our common security. We must not stand idly by while fundamental rights are violated and the space for civil society is shrinking.

The involvement of civil society in upholding OSCE commitments in this field is indispensable. I thank the civil society parallel conference for their valuable recommendations to the ministerial council.

Sweden remains a staunch supporter of the work of the autonomous institutions: the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the Representative on Freedom of the Media, and the High Commissioner on National Minorities. They are key assets in early warning and conflict prevention.

We welcome the ODIHR and HCNM report on the deteriorating human rights situation in the illegally annexed Crimea. A group of us discussed this urgent matter with the Crimean Tatar representative Mustafa Djemiljov this morning. His account underlined that the OSCE institutions must get access to the peninsula immediately.

Dear friends,

Let me be clear: sustainable development and peace and security can never be achieved if half of the population is excluded.

Promoting gender equality in all spheres of life does not only mean promoting the economic, political and social empowerment of women. It also means promoting development and conflict prevention. The OSCE needs to further develop its capacity in this regard.

Particular attention and resources need to be directed towards the full implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.

Thirdly, military developments from 2014 onwards have underlined the need for functioning conventional arms control regimes and confidence building measures.

Sweden advocates the updating of the Vienna Document to reflect lessons learned and the new politico-military realities.

Finally, as we move forward, our primary focus must be on re-establishing respect for the OSCE core principles and commitments and on how the implementation of these can be strengthened.

We must avoid a situation where the existing principles are allowed to be watered down.

We must withstand any attempts at new 'grand bargains' on European security.

If we give up on the core principles now, we will eventually have less security. Not more.