

Check against delivery

**Closing Remarks of H. E. Ambassador Vuk Žugić,
Chairperson of the OSCE Permanent Council
at the 2015 Annual Security Review Conference
Vienna, 25 June 2015**

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Colleagues

Good afternoon and welcome to the closing session of the 2015 ASRC.

I would like to use this opportunity to outline some of the key findings and conclusions from the different sessions. But before doing so, please allow me first to express the sincere gratitude of the Serbian Chairmanship to everybody who contributed to the organization of the conference.

I would like to thank specifically colleagues in the Secretariat for their immense support and tireless efforts in turning this year's ASRC into a successful event. In addition, I would like to thank our colleagues from Conference Services and of course the interpreters for their dedicated work and support. Your performance has been flawless and deserves the highest praise.

Furthermore, I would like to express my gratitude to the moderators, rapporteurs and, not to forget, to all our keynote speakers for their insightful and through-provoking contributions.

Please allow me now quickly to take you back to the Opening Session of the conference on Tuesday morning. Our keynote speakers reminded us right at the beginning of the conference that despite all differences between us on certain topics, most importantly with regard to the crisis in and around Ukraine, the OSCE remains a key platform for constructive and inclusive dialogue. In that context, the ASRC has certainly fulfilled the expectations of the Chairmanship.

Due to its history, composition as well as to its comprehensive approach to security, our Organization is extremely well equipped to bridge dividing lines. As stressed by State Secretary Ninčić, restoring trust and confidence among participating States while respecting our shared principles and commitments will take time but is without alternative. I would like to underline this crucial point again.

Our exchanges during the Special Session on ‘Ensuring Security and Stability in the OSCE region in light of developments with respect to Ukraine’ made it clear once more that we are faced with a profound crisis, impacting on European security and beyond. As pointed out by Secretary General Zannier, it is not a crisis of the OSCE but a crisis deeply affecting the Organization.

The crisis in and around Ukraine must be resolved through peaceful means in line with full respect for OSCE commitments and principles as well as for international law. There is no other way out, and I think that there was unanimous support for the role that our Organization plays with regard to international efforts at conflict resolution.

The Minsk Agreements and the Package of Measure constitute the path towards peace and we will continue to throw the full weight of the OSCE’s comprehensive toolbox behind their implementation. This is particularly important with regard to the dire humanitarian situation in the conflict zone, which requires co-operative approaches from all involved parties, to include first and foremost the full and unconditional respect of the ceasefire.

The SMM’s work, based on the dedicated performance of its staff and the support provided to the Mission from all parts of the OSCE family, is vital in terms of moving forward on the path towards peace. We must therefore continue to do whatever is required to strengthen the SMM’s capacities to fulfil its mandate.

The same accounts for our support to the Trilateral Contact Group and its working groups, charged with the challenging task to establish an inclusive and sustainable political process on the basis of the Minsk Agreements.

Turning now to the working session on the OSCE’s conflict cycle toolbox: We heard from keynote speakers that we are living in a world faced with a wide array of conflicts - old and new. There is growing complexity, with multilevel crisis requiring our relentless attention. Accordingly we cannot take any respite in our efforts to further strengthen our toolbox.

Conflict prevention through early warning and preventive diplomacy was mentioned as the top priority. This includes additional efforts to promote the OSCE’s capacities in the field of dialogue facilitation and mediation.

In terms of early action, there was agreement that the swift deployment of the SMM has shown that the OSCE can deliver fast. At the same time, we also discussed the fact that the complexity of today’s conflicts requires ever increased preparedness for the deployment of peace operations with tailored assets and multidimensional mandates. Co-operation with partner organizations such as the UN is indispensable in that regard. In addition, we have to further strengthen the OSCE’s capacities for strategic analysis and integrated planning.

Specific attention has to be paid to gender-sensitive aspects whenever promoting the Organization’s capacities along the conflict cycle. There were a number of delegations calling for renewed efforts at adopting an OSCE Gender Action Plan in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

While increasing our preparedness to address new challenges and crisis, we will not lose sight of the existing ones. The protracted conflicts in the OSCE area were highlighted by many speakers as a thorn in the side of the Organization's efforts at promoting peace and security. We should and will not accept this thorn. Hence, we need to increase our work towards solving existing conflicts, to include through tangible progress in agreed formats.

During the working session on transnational threats and challenges, participating States discussed a number of key issues, most importantly terrorism in relation to violent extremism and radicalization. High priority was given to the issue of foreign terrorist fighters.

Addressing such serious challenges demands not only co-operation between participating States but also between the OSCE and partnering organizations. That being said, several delegations reminded that the fight against violent extremism and terrorism should not come at the expense of OSCE commitments in the area of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Growing links between terrorism and organized crimes in many conflict zones around the world were also highlighted. With a view to organized crime, we discussed in particular various forms of trafficking, to include narcotics and human trafficking, with the latter being closely related to the field of migration governance. Finally, our discussions referred to the need to further strengthen the OSCE's footprint in the field of cyber security. The adoption of the first ever set of regional CSBMs was mentioned as a milestone, with many delegations calling for the adoption of a second set of CSBMs.

Moving to the working session on the OSCE and its neighbourhood, which showed that more than ever the principle of indivisible security is not only applicable within the OSCE area but also refers to the OSCE and its regional neighbours, with their security affecting our own and vice versa.

Transnational threats such as terrorism, violent extremism and organized crime were only a few of the common challenges mentioned. All of them demand multi-dimensional, multi-faceted and multi-lateral approaches, based on increased co-operation between the OSCE and its partners.

The Mediterranean region and the Middle East were addressed as regions with highly volatile security environments. The war in Syria and the situation in Libya were specifically mentioned, not the least in regard to irregular migration flows as well as the growing threat emanating from violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism.

Efforts by militant groups to derail the on-going security transition in Afghanistan and related threats remain high on the agenda of participating states, especially in neighbouring Central Asia.

The OSCE will remain committed to assist Afghanistan in meeting its security challenges, while working with participating States in Central Asia to strengthen their capacities to address actual or potential spill-over effects.

The working session on arms control and CSBMs showed overall agreement between participating States that our existing mechanisms and structures continue to be of crucial importance for security throughout to OSCE region. Some delegations have pointed out that this significance had even increased in light of the current situation, demanding further transparency and predictability.

With a view to this, there was widespread support for the OSCE's role as an inclusive and comprehensive platform for dialogue. As such, the OSCE can and should be at the forefront of revitalizing, updating and substantially modernizing relevant instruments, starting with the Vienna Document.

This is first of all relevant with regard to lessons learned in the context of the crisis in and around Ukraine, which shows the significance of compliance with the principles and obligations stemming from these documents. However, updating and modernizing our arms control toolbox is also required in light of rapid technological changes, bringing about new risks and challenges.

We have heard some interesting proposals today that would deserve the merit of further consideration. The same accounts for the Organization's activities with regard to Security Sector Governance and Reform, which have been highlighted during several statements.

Our Special Session this afternoon has allowed us to take a closer look at the OSCE and its role in terms of European security. We have heard from keynote speakers a variety of suggestions on how to best employ the Organization's capacities in the service of the full implementation of the principles set out in the Helsinki Final Act.

There was agreement among participation States that the OSCE's contribution to European security and beyond is pivotal, in particular with a view to overcoming existing divides, restoring trust, and rebuilding a co-operative approach to common security concerns.

In order to strengthen the OSCE's role, we need to learn lessons from the past, distant as well as not so distant. We also need to expand our toolbox by adapting it to new challenges and making our Organization fit for future tasks and endeavours. The Panel of Eminent Persons was mentioned several times in terms of providing us with important food for thought.

The core requirement for the effective and efficient application of our toolbox remains trustful co-operation between participating States, which relies on the implementation of our shared commitments. This remains the basis for the strength of the OSCE as the world's largest regional security organization.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Colleagues

After collecting all your suggestions and recommendations on the different topics covered during the past three day, it is now time to reflect on them carefully.

The Chairmanship looks forward to working closely with all delegations in the coming months in order to see how to make use of the main findings of this conference in order to allow us all to move forward. A first opportunity for this will be the high-level meeting in Helsinki two weeks from now. I do hope that we will be able to follow up there on many of the issues raised during this conference.

With that I have come to the end of my remarks. However, before I close the 2015 Annual Security Review Conference, I would like to thank all delegations for their active participation, constructive engagement and high-level involvement in this event.

I wish all of you a pleasant evening and a safe journey to those of you who are travelling back to your capitals after this meeting.