

Fourteenth OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting
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ENGLISH only

Statement by Mr. Urmas Paet, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia

Mr. Chairman,
dear colleagues

As Estonia fully subscribes to the statement delivered by Finland on behalf of the European Union, let me briefly highlight some aspects of the OSCE activities to which we attach great value.

Throughout the year, the OSCE has been engaged in **discussions about strengthening and reform**, to the extent, that it has almost overshadowed the organization's main activities. Estonia still believes that any change should be based on continuity, and that the way ahead can only be based on the groundwork established by previous decisions and earlier commitments. In this sense, the success of this reform effort will be measured by the concrete results, yet to be achieved, in the priority areas of early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation.

But in this sphere, unfortunately, this year's track record is hardly satisfactory. The challenges ahead of us remain immense.

First, the failure to resolve the so-called **frozen conflicts** is seriously undermining the credibility of the OSCE. We have seen some positive developments but also some worrying signs of de-freezing.

The situation in **Georgia** is of increasing concern. Estonia welcomes the agreement on the withdrawal of Russian bases from Georgia, and expects this to be completed on time. But, the OSCE cannot turn a blind eye to the actions taken by Russia, against her neighbour, for the mere reason that the latter has opted for a Euro-Atlantic future. Unilateral sanctions and blockades are not the political tools of today. Instead we should strive to build confidence and support the reforms in Georgia whole and free.

Mr. Chairman, the credibility of the OSCE is also at stake today in **Moldova**. The presence of foreign troops, without the consent of the host country, is a major source of instability. Little headway has been made towards a political settlement, which would pave the way for a durable and lasting peace, thus creating conditions for the political and economic revival of the Moldovan nation. We need a solid agreement that would enjoy the support of both the Moldovan people and the international community. And we need to respond to Moldovan calls for a truly international peacekeeping operation. Especially, since the current setup only serves to stall the resolving of the conflict.

To cut it short, Georgia and Moldova need the clear support of the OSCE.

Second, the OSCE has a commendable record of **promoting tolerance and non-discrimination**. It has been instrumental in enhancing multi-cultural and inter-religious dialogue and has contributed to defusing tensions stemming from prejudices and stereotypes. But unfortunately some participating states are doing the opposite. Rounding up people of a particular ethnic group and deporting them should not belong in the 21st century. Against this background, it is obvious that the mission of the Personal Representatives of the Chairman in Office, to address these issues, is far from being accomplished. The retaliatory acts against national minority groups should also be a matter of concern to the High Commissioner on National Minorities.

Third, the situation in the field of **human rights and freedom of the media**, in particular, continues to raise concerns. The OSCE and its Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights should make full use of their potential and expertise to reverse the negative trend and to promote respect for democratic values throughout its area of operation. We commend the ODIHR for its excellent report to the Council and agree with the conclusion that we need a more focused political will to implement all human dimension commitments. A vibrant civil society and human rights defenders play a vital role in this context and merit our full support and where needed, protection. The unique strength of the OSCE is the expertise it has acquired in **election monitoring**. Estonia has, in the past, benefited from the advice and assistance of the ODIHR in this field, and fully trusts the Office in its impartial and effective conduct of observation activities. We therefore welcome the measures to further enhance the OSCE's election-related activities in general, and capacity building on the use of information technology in particular.

Fourth, the OSCE, like other international organizations, is faced with the challenges of a globalizing world. This is marked by a shift in its focus from a traditional hard security agenda to the topical issues of soft security such as human and drug trafficking, human smuggling, illegal migration, corruption and now also organised crime. While Estonia recognises the need to address these emerging threats within the OSCE framework, we would like to underscore that this should be done in close coordination and cooperation with other players in the field.

Finally, I would like to thank the Belgian chairmanship for guiding us through this year and wish Spain the best in the coming year.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman