

Delegation of Belarus

**STATEMENT BY THE PERMANENT DELEGATION OF THE
REPUBLIC OF BELARUS TO THE OSCE AT THE 1108th MEETING
OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

14 July 2016

**In response to the address by the Federal Minister for Europe, Integration
and Foreign Affairs of Austria, Sebastian Kurz**

Mr. Chairperson,

We join in welcoming the Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of Austria, Sebastian Kurz, and thank him for his presentation of the basic priorities of the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship next year.

We share the distinguished Minister's view that the settlement of conflicts, particularly the crisis in Ukraine, will continue to be the main task of the OSCE in the near future. There is no alternative to the negotiations in the Trilateral Contact Group and its working groups in Minsk, the political support to this process in the Normandy format and the scrupulous fulfilment of the Minsk agreements under the aegis of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. For its part, Belarus is willing to continue to provide all possible assistance to the Minsk peace process with a view to resolving the situation in Ukraine as rapidly as possible.

Mr. Chairperson,

Today we are witnessing an increase in threats to destabilize the already shaky security architecture throughout Europe. The crisis of confidence, intensified by the tragic events in Ukraine, has meant that once again the winds of the Cold War are blowing in the Euro-Atlantic area. Differences in approaches to safeguarding European security are increasingly turning into a real build-up of military capabilities, which in turn is leading to the growth of politico-military tension against the background of the continuing erosion of arms control mechanisms and confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs).

In the current circumstances, equal and indivisible security cannot be achieved by "flexing military muscles" by any military blocs. There is a need to modernize and revitalize the arms control regime and CSBMs, which are intended to ensure predictability and transparency in the military sphere and to increase the security of participating States.

Joint endeavours to counter common challenges, be they terrorism, drug trafficking, trafficking in human beings or illegal migration, remain the unifying focus for participating States. The positive potential accumulated in this sphere needs to be increased.

The future, stability and security of our region will depend on how effectively economic and environmental security questions are resolved. It is also important to strengthen mutual trust and understanding through economic connectivity and the development of dialogue and collaboration between the different integration structures and processes in the OSCE area. The building of a dependable, fair and stable commercial and economic architecture in Europe and in the Euro-Atlantic region as a whole with account taken of the interests of all participating States is the key to pan-European security, in which there should be no place for sanctions and dividing lines. We believe that this theme should be duly reflected in our Organization's agenda, not least in view of the vision of a common economic space from Vancouver to Vladivostok that was already shared by the founding fathers of the Helsinki process.

A revival of confidence and dialogue, particularly in the human dimension, is a central task for the future, without which it will be barely possible for the OSCE to function effectively as a whole. In our view, this could be achieved through promotion by the Chairmanship of issues demanding our attention of common interest, such as the protection of the rights of children and people with disabilities, gender equality and combating domestic violence.

We have always said that crisis not only presents new challenges but also opens up additional possibilities for updating the OSCE and increasing its relevance in the modern world. It is important not to waste this chance for finally turning the OSCE into a fully fledged international organization with its own charter and legal personality and for carrying out some reforms necessary to improve its effectiveness and viability.

Mr. Chairperson,

We highly appreciate the growing dynamism of the relations between Belarus and Austria, whose quality in recent times have reached a new level, and the personal contribution of Minister Kurz to their development and intensification. We should like to take this opportunity of wishing the Minister every success as he completes his preparations for the forthcoming Chairmanship and of assuring him of the support of Belarus in his efforts to strengthen security and stability in the OSCE area. For our part, we are willing to co-operate closely with Austria, particularly in the light of Belarus's Presidency of the Central European Initiative in 2017.

Thank you for your attention.