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**STATEMENT BY  
H.E. MS. ANNALENA BAERBOCK, MINISTER FOR  
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY,  
AT THE 1443rd (REINFORCED) MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

26 September 2023

Mr. Chairperson, dear Bujar,  
Madam Secretary General, dear Helga,  
Dear colleagues,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I want to say it clearly from the very outset.

What is at stake today is nothing less than the question whether the OSCE will still have any relevance in the future.

Since its foundation, the OSCE has experienced highs and lows. It was never a union of like-minded States – indeed, that is its defining feature.

However, Russia's war of aggression has not only brought immeasurable suffering upon the people in Ukraine. It has also destroyed trust between the OSCE participating States. And it has emphatically hindered the OSCE's work across all dimensions. The OSCE has never found itself in a crisis as existential as the one it is facing today.

In view of this bitter reality, we must all now ask ourselves: are we to allow our differences to gradually render the OSCE irrelevant and eventually even to destroy it? Or do we, the OSCE participating States, want to preserve this Organization of ours and the added value that it brings? I am convinced that, in spite of all the trust lost, in spite of all the blockades and conflicts, the OSCE is worth preserving. It is our Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

A great many participating States see it exactly the same way, as confirmed by my conversations over the past few weeks and also by our exchange just now. Others, meanwhile, should ask themselves whether they really want to stick to positions through which they are jeopardizing the OSCE's very existence.

For the OSCE remains a forum – the most special forum on account of its size and scale – in which the most diverse States, whether large or small, whether belonging to an alliance or neutral, sit together

around the table and make their voices heard. The OSCE is performing incredibly important work in Central Asia, in Moldova, in Ukraine and for the Western Balkans – it does this for the sake of implementing the commitments that we undertook together, for security and co-operation in Europe. Security and co-operation for us and for millions of people in the OSCE area. The OSCE makes a difference as far as millions of people in our Europe are concerned, through efforts ranging from those of its field operations to the fight against trafficking in human beings and organized crime.

That is why I thank you, Mr. Chairperson, dear Bujar, for having convened this meeting today, and I am pleased that so many other Foreign Ministers are taking part in person as well. What we now need are proposals for pragmatic solutions – and for there to be no blockades like the one against the Estonian candidature for the OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office in 2024, which is supported by 55 participating States.

This much is clear: if we want to keep the OSCE alive, then we all have to adopt the budget, select a Chairmanship for next year, that is, 2024, and decide on new mandates for the “Top Four”.

Here I want to extend my particular thanks to the Secretary General (to you, dear Helga Schmid), to the Representative on Freedom of the Media (to you, dear Teresa Ribeiro), to the Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (to you, dear Matteo Mecacci) and to the High Commissioner on National Minorities (to you, dear Kairat Abdrakhmanov) for the tireless and spirited work which you have been carrying out for the OSCE, that is, for us, since 2020 – and on a very challenging budget of late.

The vast majority of those in the Ratsaal and those in front of a screen – myself included – would gladly issue the aforementioned team of four with a mandate for a further three years. However, should it not prove possible to reach consensus on that, I would ask all four of you to indicate your willingness to remain in your posts for at least one more year.

I hope that all States back the solution proposed by you, Mr. Chairperson, dear Bujar, namely a rollover for a limited period. As far as Germany is concerned, we very much support that.

For if it is to retain a modicum of functionality, the OSCE needs people in leadership positions and a Chairmanship-in-Office that unwaveringly defends the Organization’s principles and values; and it needs adequate financial resources. The dramatic consequences of underfunding are something that you, dear Helga, have explicitly and vividly described time and again.

Mr. Chairperson, dear Bujar,

You have established a Group of Friends to work on a solution to the issue of the Chairmanship-in-Office. Germany supports that and is willing to follow the Group’s suggestions and yours. As the Chairperson-in-Office you can count not only on our support in this matter, but also – and I wish to emphasize this – on our trust. We know that the Chairmanship, acting in the interests of us all, is doing everything it can to find a workable solution.

Many international organizations manage to preserve their ability to act despite the ongoing wars and conflicts. It is now up to us to ensure that we, too – since we are the OSCE – can manage that. Even if, for the time being, it is only for a year. We have two months left before the Ministerial Council meeting.

The OSCE – to be more precise, the CSCE – was founded in the difficult and frosty days of the Cold War. In the present difficult and, to some extent, frosty times, it is up to us to preserve the existence and relevance of the Organization for security and co-operation. We are now called upon to play our part in making that happen.

Germany is ready to do so.

Thank you very much.