



**Speech by Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier
at the close of the OSCE Ministerial Council in Belgrade
04.12.2015**

I've sought to talk directly to many of you at this Council in order to hear your concerns and suggestions. I intend to continue doing this as OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, for we'll only be able to master the challenges facing all of us if we listen to each other and take each other seriously – as different as our positions are.

We live in turbulent times. The challenges facing us are huge. Much has been discussed here during the last two days: the terrorist attacks in Paris, the crisis in eastern Ukraine, the other conflicts in the OSCE area which continue to fester, the influx of refugees into Europe and many issues relating to human rights, the rule of law, tolerance and non-discrimination.

Even though I find it very regrettable that we couldn't reach agreement on many draft statements:

I had the feeling that we engaged with each other more openly and in a more conciliatory manner at this Ministerial Council.

I very much welcome that, for we can only tackle our challenges together.

I'm convinced that the OSCE can help us because it has a range of instruments and dialogue formats at its disposal which we should use and strengthen.

I pointed out yesterday that I consider three fields to be especially important: First of all, I want to mention crisis reaction:

The OSCE should be able to react to crises sooner, more decisively and more effectively.

Therefore, colleagues, I'd like to repeat my appeal that we quickly give the OSCE planning certainty by granting it an adequate budget for 2016.

Secondly, confidence-building:

In 2016, we should talk more about reducing military risks, for our transparency and confidence-building instruments will be better able to prevent crises if we modernise them.

What's more, I want to emphasise how much I welcome the talks between our colleagues from Russia and Turkey on the margins of this conference to discuss the shooting down of the Russian aircraft at the Turkish-Syrian border.

Thirdly, the future of the European security order:

We have to consolidate the foundations of the OSCE area and talk about how we want to shape it together.

The OSCE can be the instrument and forum for all of this, and Germany will offer opportunities for dialogue in various formats during its Chairmanship.

Finally, I'd like to say that the German Chairmanship, and with it the OSCE, has to carry on focusing on resolving conflicts – in Ukraine as well as in the rest of the OSCE area.

Colleagues, we can only take advantage of the OSCE's strengths in these turbulent times if each and every one of us is prepared to do so.

I therefore ask for your support and your readiness to engage in dialogue and to compromise in 2016.

I assure you that Gernot Erler, the Special Representative of the Federal Government for the OSCE Chairmanship, and all of our staff, will be happy to listen to your concerns. That was the approach taken by Didier Burkhalter, the Chairperson-in-Office in 2014. He deserves the greatest respect and gratitude for his tremendous commitment to the OSCE beyond the Swiss Chairmanship.

Now Sebastian Kurz will join the OSCE Troika and I'm looking forward to working with him.

Ivica Dačić, I'd like to thank you most sincerely for the great work you've done as Chairperson-in-Office and for your hospitality here in Belgrade.

Navigation points to guide us are important in turbulent times. Looking ahead to the venue for next year's Ministerial Council, this nautical metaphor is appropriate: for it will take place in Hamburg.

We call Hamburg the "gateway to the world", and as a traditional Hanseatic City and port it is known for its outward-looking perspective and tolerance,

as well as its high regard for culture – values which should also characterise Germany's OSCE Chairmanship.

We want to help renew the dialogue within the OSCE, to re-build confidence step by step and to restore and strengthen our joint security within the OSCE area.

I hope we're all committed to this aim in the year of the 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act. However, I hope we won't just profess our commitment but let our actions be guided by these principles.

If we do that – then, and only then, will we live up to the expectations of people living in our 57 countries, namely to again ensure more security, stability and peace at a time of crises and conflicts. As varied and controversial as the positions adopted by governments may be sometimes, people everywhere are united in their desire to live together peacefully. Our shared goal must be to achieve this.