



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Executive Briefing of the OSCE Secretary General Ambassador Thomas Greminger

“The OSCE as an Actor in Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian Security And its Contribution to SDG 16”

Geneva, 7 February 2018

**Director General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentleman,**

Let me start out by thanking Director General Michael Møller for his kind invitation. I am glad to be in your midst and grateful to all participants for making themselves available today. On this occasion I would like to reflect together with you on the state of play of Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian Security and the OSCE’s role in addressing current challenges, including in the context of implementing the landmark 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

I have taken up the position of OSCE Secretary General at a time when the global security environment has become extremely volatile and increasingly unpredictable. The security situation in Europe is no exception. Today we face a profound crisis of confidence within the OSCE, in particular among key stakeholders of European Security. The fundamental principles that the Organization stands for are increasingly being challenged. Our common rules-based security framework, which safeguarded stability in our region for decades, is under threat. Tensions are growing, and so too is the risk of conflict. And to make matters worse, our region faces a host of complex and interconnected transnational challenges, including violent extremism, terrorism and cybercrime.

The OSCE has two major assets: its comprehensive security concept and inclusive membership. Thanks to these it can offer a platform for reconciling differences and enhancing co-operation among its members, and I am convinced that the Organization has the flexibility, the tools and the expertise to be an effective force for stability and peace in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian space. And I am ready to work closely with our participating States to make sure that the Organization is well prepared to tackle challenges and capitalize on new opportunities.

However, the OSCE participating States must recommit to the principles and values our organization stands for. This is of paramount importance. At the same time, we must follow pragmatic approaches and find common ground where interests coincide in order to build a positive, unifying agenda for the Organization. Small but steady steps are likely to produce incremental progress. The OSCE community already works together quite effectively to combat transnational threats like terrorism, violent extremism, and trafficking in drugs, arms and people. Our joint efforts to create confidence-building measures to prevent crises stemming from cyber and ICT threats show how well an incremental approach can work.

Another encouraging step has been the establishment of the so-called “Structured Dialogue” launched by the 2016 Hamburg Ministerial Council. It offers an informal, open discussion platform on confidence-building, risk reduction and arms control that considers the security needs of all OSCE participating States. This flagship initiative is a critical example of constructive engagement in the politico-military dimension, addressing a number of security issues like close military encounters, threat perceptions as well as military force postures and doctrines. Eventually, I expect this process to produce results, including military risk reduction and confidence- and security-building measures. And further down the road, it should lead to renewed focus on conventional arms control.

Another promising field is economic connectivity and environmental co-operation. They are increasingly acknowledged as areas where the OSCE builds trust and adds value, in line with the UN’s Sustainable Development Agenda. They also have a significant unifying potential.

And I hope progress in these areas will also bring our constituency together to reaffirm and strengthen shared principles and commitments to human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law.

As Secretary General I have made it a priority to reinvigorate the OSCE’s role as *the* relevant forum for security dialogue in Europe, based on a positive agenda and striving for tangible common action. I want to promote a unifying role and encourage the restoration of genuine, results-oriented dialogue. I have been urging OSCE foreign ministers to make full use of the OSCE fora without preconditions. My other strategic priorities include strengthening and leveraging partnerships with relevant international organizations and development actors, and ensuring that the Organization is fit for purpose by putting in place a thorough review of the management and budget processes.

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The adoption of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda represents a milestone in the history of international co-operation. It translates legitimate aspirations for social justice into political commitments. It promises to re-energize international action to advance peace and development around the globe. The Agenda reinforces the interlocking relationship between

peace, security and development. This relationship is also at the core of the of the OSCE concept of comprehensive security. Already more than 40 years ago, the Helsinki Final Act recognized the importance of the nexus between the politico-military, economic and environmental, and the human dimensions of security. As the first international organization to pioneer such a comprehensive security concept, the OSCE offers effective tools to help its participating States foster peace and sustainable development.

One of the OSCE's major contributions to the implementation of the SDGs will be its enduring engagement in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation. The OSCE will continue to serve as a platform for inclusive dialogue and co-operation around hard and soft security issues, which have a direct impact on development. The Organization has repeatedly proven itself to be flexible and responsive in addressing security challenges before they escalate. Our swift and nimble response to the unfolding crisis in and around Ukraine is a prime example of the OSCE's ability to live up to its Chapter VIII responsibilities. Working toward a sustainable resolution of this crisis remains the Organization's top priority. The OSCE will continue to de-escalate tensions through our missions on the ground, and facilitate political efforts to achieve a peaceful settlement.

I am deeply concerned by the intensified military activity and the worsening humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine. In recent weeks, the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine has observed an active build-up of military equipment and personnel, heavy weapons in violation of withdrawal lines, new trenches, fortification of positions, and newly laid mines along the contact line, in particular around major hotspots. The risk of escalation remains high. The international community must push harder to break the political stalemate, and achieve the full implementation of the Minsk Agreements by all sides. It is clear that we need to progress at the same time with implementing both the security and the political provisions. The international community also has a key role to play in efforts to achieve peaceful settlements to the protracted conflicts in the OSCE area. Since the early 1990s, the OSCE has been active in their negotiating processes, working closely with international partners. This is most obvious in the Geneva International Discussions, which are co-chaired by the UN, EU and OSCE. In the Transdnestrian settlement process, the ability of the international community, including the OSCE and EU, to closely coordinate political messaging to both Chisinau and Tiraspol has been critical to fostering the current positive dynamic in the settlement process. The Minsk Process dealing with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has its own dynamics, with less institutional engagement by international organizations but no less significant and important cooperation among the co-chair countries, France, Russia and the US.

In each of these negotiating processes, success ultimately hinges on the political will of the parties to the conflicts. They must break out of their stalemates and take responsibility for resolving them. The recent agreement on concrete steps between Chisinau and Tiraspol shows that progress is possible even in a protracted conflict if the political will of the sides is there. I hope this positive dynamic will give renewed momentum toward achieving a peaceful settlement.

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The OSCE needs to be ready to respond to crises quickly and effectively, but we also should be prepared to seize opportunities, i.e. to respond to positive dynamics and developments

An amazing transformation in Uzbekistan is leading to a new, co-operative spirit in Central Asia; positive change in South East Europe; and broad recognition of the need for co-operation on shared security concerns on both shores of the Mediterranean—in all of these developments, the Sustainable Development Agenda can play a transformational role. And I see great potential—and growing expectations—for the OSCE to do more to support these processes.

Consider migration. International governance of large flows of refugees and migrants is a significant component of the new Development Agenda. The OSCE offers a forum where the complex but very real connection between migration and security can be constructively discussed in all its relevant dimensions. The OSCE's expertise, extensive field presence, and partnerships in the Mediterranean enable us to tackle a number of aspects, including the rights of migrants, integration policies, trafficking in human beings along migration routes and returning foreign terrorist fighters.

We also want to contribute to the debate on how to address unregulated movements of people by opening new pathways to regular labour migration. The real challenge is not to reduce migration, but to govern it through effective, co-operative approaches that can transform the drive to move into opportunities for growth and development. This is why labour migration policy should be addressed in a regional and cross-regional perspective. It is also why the OSCE fully supports UN efforts to achieve a Global Compact on Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The OSCE area faces an unprecedented buildup of transnational security challenges stemming from different sources and involving a multitude of actors. Within the framework of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, the Organization is stepping up its efforts to proactively address the root causes of these challenges, particularly in the economic and environmental dimension. The SDGs provide a roadmap for OSCE activities to advance environmental democracy, facilitate co-operation among riparian states with shared water resources, and promote sustainable energy and disaster risk reduction. We will also strive to identify security impacts of climate change in the local, national and regional context and to develop transboundary climate change adaptation strategies.

OSCE support for the implementation of the SDGs also includes activities fostering international economic co-operation, enhancing the climate for business and investment,

streamlining regulatory frameworks and countering corruption, money laundering and terrorism financing.

We are not alone in our endeavours. United in the common goal of ensuring peace and security, the OSCE is joining efforts with many partner organizations to forge effective responses to both traditional and emerging challenges. We will continue to nurture our valuable relationship with the UN by making full use of the potential of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, which remains underutilized. But we also need to build new coalitions that engage civil society, academia, the business community, women and young people. Co-operation creates new synergies, making our common efforts more effective and efficient, and bringing the fulfillment of the Sustainable Development Agenda ever closer.

Thank you for your attention.