



United States Mission to the OSCE

Annual Security Review Conference

Opening Session

As delivered by Deputy Assistant Secretary for European Affairs John Heffern
Vienna, June 23, 2015

Good morning everybody - it is an honor to be here with you from Washington to share the conversation at this important conference these couple of days.

Last year, we had an intervention at this conference, and at that intervention we asked participating States to consider what we, as an international community, need to do to create a space where all countries enjoy security on equal terms, where countries and their people can freely choose their future. In other words, how do we together realize a Europe that is whole, free, and at peace? We argued then that the answer was for all participating States to live up to their Helsinki and other OSCE commitments.

Now a year later, we face the same question – but in bold letters – as a few participating States not only continue, but have intensified, actions that clearly violate the principles that we have all voluntarily agreed to uphold. In the OSCE space, blood is spilled every day in Ukraine. Three protracted conflicts simmer. Russia uses rhetoric not heard in decades. And in the south, chaos and war have yielded not only military insecurity, but also the challenges of unprecedented human displacement and migration. This continent, Mr. Chairman, held the admiration of the world at the height of the Cold War, when it adopted the Helsinki Final Act. Today, however, we see backsliding on the domestic protection of human rights, fundamental freedoms and democratic principles of government; and there is diminishing trust and military transparency among OSCE participating States.

This year – the fortieth anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act – we have the opportunity to reflect upon implementation of our Helsinki commitments and the impact that serious breaches of those commitments – particularly, but not exclusively, by one participating State – have had on European security. We don't need or want to reassess the principles themselves. The principles are just fine – and the current security architecture is not the problem. If we are to achieve security, the security community to which we all aspire, then each participating State, large and small, must fully implement the commitments and the principles enshrined in Helsinki and subsequent OSCE documents.

As we look around, we note the many violations in the OSCE space of each of the principles in the Helsinki Final Act. We see provocation in place of cooperation, open violation of international law, and the deliberate destabilizing use of force rather than instruments of stability and peace. Russia's military intervention in Ukraine, including its occupation of Crimea, is contrary to basic tenets of international law and the guiding principles of the Helsinki Final Act, including sovereign equality, refraining from the threat of or use of force, and respect for the inviolability of frontiers and the territorial integrity of states. We also see these principles and others violated in the context of the protracted conflicts, which represent some of the most immediate threats to European security.

Mr. Chairman, these are the challenges we face in this 40th year. But let us not lose sight of what this organization has accomplished since 1975. The OSCE's founders would not have

envisioned the scope of the OSCE's involvement in critical European-wide and region-wide challenges. The fact that we came together to establish the Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine is testimony to what we can achieve when we work together. We salute – and I'm sure all members share this – the energy, courage and determination of the SMM, its members and its monitors. In addition, the OSCE has missions and special representatives dedicated to advancing the philosophy of freedom that is the hallmark of this organization.

This conference is focused on first dimension issues, so I will not dwell long on others. But let me make clear that my government is seized with the multi-dimensional pressures faced by our participating States in the south, and our neighbors in the Middle East and the Sahel, as they deal with human, economic, environmental, as well as military, crises. No nation can manage these challenges alone; we need to stand together and together do what is right. In the third dimension, the Helsinki principle of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is under siege in the OSCE space, in states where journalists are attacked, members of minorities are persecuted, and civil society is threatened.

So what steps can the OSCE take to build security and stability in Europe? The bottom line is that each and every participating State must fulfill its commitments and uphold the guiding Helsinki Final Act principles. We, as participating States, and the OSCE, as an organization, can and should do more. We must hold each other accountable.

There are clear blueprints of how a state can respond to security challenges while still upholding its commitments and key international principles. In response to Russia's aggressive actions in Ukraine, for example, the United States has taken steps to reassure and reinforce our Allies, to deter aggression, and to stabilize the security situation in Europe. In these actions, we have been joined by all NATO Allies. All the steps that the United States and our NATO Allies have taken and currently envision are consistent with international law and with the NATO-Russia Founding Act. The United States is also careful to observe the CFE Treaty, which we continue to implement fully. We meet all our obligations under the Vienna Document and the Open Skies Agreement. The United States as a nation – and NATO as an Alliance – will continue to act in compliance with its international political and legal obligations and commitments, including those enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act and other key OSCE documents.

The OSCE itself has set another such example of appropriate action in response to violations of key international principles and commitments. As the people of Ukraine have fought for their sovereignty and territorial integrity, the OSCE has played a pivotal role. The Organization has proven to the world the value of its collective security and human dimension instruments, and underlined how important it is that these tools be allowed to work. The OSCE deployed the Special Monitoring Mission and used the Vienna Document to send inspection teams and monitors. The High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Representative on Freedom of the Media have supported civil society and have impartially documented abuses, including in Russia-occupied Crimea and other parts of separatist-controlled Ukraine. ODIHR and the Parliamentary Assembly organized the largest election observer effort in OSCE history; and, the list of OSCE actions goes on.

During the next few days, Mr. Chairman, I hope we together can discuss specific ideas for actions we can take together, and individually, to bolster security within the OSCE region. Our goal should be to demonstrate clear steps forward toward a more stable, peaceful Europe by the time of this year's Belgrade Ministerial.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.