

MISSJONI PERMANENTI  
TAR-REPUBBLIKA TA' MALTA  
GHALL-ORGANIZZAZZJONI GHAS-SIGURTÀ  
U L-COOPERAZZJONI FL-EWROPA



PERMANENT MISSION  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALTA  
TO THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND  
COOPERATION IN EUROPE

**Address by the Hon. Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Malta  
H.E. Dr. George W. Vella  
at the 1056<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council  
4 June, 2015**

Mr Chairman,

Excellencies,

Distinguished colleagues,

It is my pleasure to be here today and to have been given the opportunity to address the Permanent Council. At the outset, I would like to commend the Serbian Chairmanship who is ably steering this Organisation at such challenging times. I would like to ensure the Serbian Chairmanship in Office of my delegation's full esteem and cooperation.

Malta is one of the smallest States that form part of the OSCE family. Despite our size, which often comes with limitations, Malta has been active within the OSCE since its very beginning, back when the OSCE was still known as the CSCE. We believed in the OSCE then, and remain confident in the unique role that this Organisation holds in the realm of European security.

Mr Chairman,

Over the past months we have witnessed developments within the OSCE which have not been consonant with the traditionally shared norms and values that this Organisation is built upon. I recall that Malta was chairing the Forum for Security Cooperation when the crisis in and around Ukraine erupted, triggering a series of unprecedented challenges to the OSCE. Neither did we foresee the full force of this crisis nor did we envisage its direct impact on this Organisation. Having said this, Malta remains optimistic that a sustainable long-term solution can be reached, as long as the Minsk Agreements are implemented in full by all parties. It is in everyone's interest to ensure that the basic principles and commitments of the OSCE are safeguarded - a prerequisite to the security of Europe and beyond. I take this opportunity to commend the excellent work being done by the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission under difficult circumstances in the Eastern regions of Ukraine. I also reaffirm Malta's unwavering support to Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence.

Whilst it is undisputed that the crisis in and around Ukraine has had a substantial impact on this Organisation, other security challenges and threats to our common security remain, the latter of which have been somewhat overshadowed by the Ukraine crisis.

Mr Chairman,

In my initial remarks, I mentioned that Malta has been active within this Organisation ever since its inception. It is opportune to recall Malta's call during the negotiations that led to the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975 that 'without peace in the Mediterranean, there can never be peace in Europe'. Four decades later, our conviction remains as strong as ever. The 2010 Astana Declaration has reiterated the security link between Europe and the Mediterranean and recent developments in the Southern OSCE region confirm that the Mediterranean was, and remains a major concern to the security of Europe. That is why Malta remains so adamant towards maintaining an open dialogue on the security concerns emanating from the Mediterranean.

My delegation has been consistently working towards raising Mediterranean issues of concern in different fora, including in the Permanent Council. Evidently more needs to be done. We cannot close our eyes to the security challenges that are just at the southern border of this Organisation. There is too much at stake, not only for countries like Malta which are Mediterranean in nature and fall geographically within this part of the OSCE region, but for the entire European security and beyond. As our Prime Minister said in his address to the UNGA last year, "Today's unprecedented levels of interconnectivity lead us to believe that peace in the Mediterranean is a pre-requisite for global stability."

Mr Chairman,

If you allow me, I wish to share with you some thoughts by presenting -some challenges that I feel the OSCE needs to face up to and address urgently and in a concrete manner.

The first challenge is the increasing threat of terrorism and extremism. We are still shocked with the attacks that took place in Paris, Copenhagen, Tunis and elsewhere earlier this year. This was a direct attack not only on the individual countries but on the collective security of all. We are living in a period of increased interconnectivity, where youths are being radicalized through the use of social networks, a development which is difficult to address. No country is immune to this global threat to peace and stability and hence there's a greater need to work together to combat this phenomenon.

The Arab Spring did not just bring about a hope for a brighter future but in places where the uprising did not have the desired results, it created a vacuum for extremism and terrorist cells to operate freely in some parts of the Mediterranean region. Our collective efforts, coupled with those of our Partners for Cooperation, are today needed more than ever to address this threat which no country on its own can fully combat comprehensively. As I announced in my statement in Basel last year, Malta is actively working towards the promotion of good practices in the field of counter-terrorism. In this regard, the proposed setting up in Malta of an OSCE Centrex-Med to serve as an OSCE Command and Senior Staff Centre for Excellence in Justice and Security would further contribute in the fight against terrorism and extremism.

This brings me to another major challenge, - that of irregular migration. Irregular migration in the Mediterranean received global attention following the tragedies which occurred earlier in April, and in which Malta together with Italy played a central role in the rescue operations that ensued. Whilst media attention has since shifted to other challenges, the threat of irregular migration has not subsided and remains a very real challenge to countries that like Malta are placed at the receiving end of this phenomenon. Illegal migration is not just a

Maltese or a European Union problem. It is a challenge that affects the entire OSCE region. The OSCE can play a vital role in combating irregular migration in a comprehensive and cross dimensional manner. Together we may avoid further human tragedies from unfolding.

Mr Chairman,

Last but not least, I would like to address the security situation of our Southern neighbour - Libya. The Arab Spring had brought along hope of stability and security in the Southern region of the OSCE. This was not the case for our neighbour Libya as it remains a country still struggling for freedom. Malta has been calling for political dialogue and reconciliation among the different factions in Libya in order to address the political, economic and social upheavals tainting the country. We commend and support the efforts led by the UN special envoy Bernardino Leon in this regard. It is our honest view that only mediation, which is one of the OSCE's powerful tools, could bring about positive change in Libya.

Libya is also a country which is prominent in both the challenge of migration to the OSCE region and the rise of terrorism and extremism. It would therefore be a grave missed opportunity for this Organisation to not embark on a discussion regarding the security threats emanating from this country. We are fast witnessing a descent towards Libya becoming another forgotten conflict which has a direct impact on the security of the OSCE region. We cannot risk having another failed state - a State which could easily become a haven for extremists and which is so close to our borders. It is in this regard that Malta calls on the Chairmanship in Office to consider appointing a Special Representative for the Mediterranean region who could be tasked with updating the Permanent Council and propose ways on how the OSCE can increase its role and raise its visibility in the OSCE's southern region.

Mr Chairman,

My country enjoys excellent relations with all the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation. It is with this premise of trust and mutual respect that I venture to comment on the way that the OSCE has been addressing the Mediterranean region as seen through the eyes of the Mediterranean Partners. The Helsinki Final Act describes the Mediterranean as a "region as a whole" and therefore we should not limit the security discussions as if they were discussions between "two sides" - between "us" and "them" – the Mediterranean partners. We need to do more, to move beyond this approach and address collectively Mediterranean security challenges to the OSCE.

The Mediterranean is, after all, part of the OSCE region. It is based on this principle that we call on all the Participating States to include the Euro-Mediterranean dimension as an integral part of the OSCE framework together with the Euro-Atlantic and Euro-Asiatic dimensions.

Mr Chairman,

This year is a special year for the OSCE as we commemorate the 40th anniversary of the landmark Helsinki Act. The Helsinki plus forty process should not only serve to reaffirm the principles and commitments agreed upon in 1975 and later endorsed in Astana, but it should offer an opportunity to build upon these commitments and take into account new and emerging security challenges. Such proactive dynamism would ensure that the OSCE remains equally relevant in the coming years. It goes without saying that as the Mediterranean region featured in the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, Malta remains convinced that the

Mediterranean continues to retain its importance and relevance as a cornerstone for security and stability in Europe as I have already highlighted earlier in my speech. To mark this momentous occasion, my Ministry is teaming up with the Mediterranean Academy for Diplomatic Studies in Malta, and the OSCE itself to organize an event, in November 2015, entitled “Helsinki Plus Forty: The Mediterranean Chapter of the Helsinki Final Act – A Critical Evaluation”.

As I reach my concluding remarks, allow me to once again reaffirm Malta's belief in the excellent work of this Organisation. As a Mediterranean and European country, Malta cannot but call for the attention of all Participating States to the growing challenges for the OSCE region emanating from its southern border. Malta's political vocation stems from its geographical location at the centre of the Mediterranean. One of our major assets is our historical and natural vocation for peace, security and stability in our region and beyond. During such testing times, our determination and our resolve grow stronger every passing day.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.