

Statement by H.E. Mr. Linas Linkevičius
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“Addressing the Crisis of European Security, the Way Forward“
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Mr. Chairperson,
Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I convey my sincere congratulations to the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship for its dedication and leadership of our Organization throughout the year and to thank our Swiss hosts for the generous hospitality extended to us all here in Basel.

This year has been extremely challenging for the entire OSCE community. We are dealing with conscious and deliberate disregard of all OSCE norms and principles, which were caused by military aggression not only against the fellow member of the same Organization, but also against the very foundations of European security and values that this Organization stands for.

Let me extend my heartfelt condolences and sympathies to the bereaved Ukrainian families. Lithuania continues to strongly condemn the illegal annexation of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by Russia, in blatant breach of international law as well as fundamental OSCE principles and commitments, and will not recognise such annexations. Lithuania remains a principal supporter of Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

Mr. Chairperson,

The OSCE response to the severe crisis by swiftly deploying monitors on the ground and by directly engaging in facilitation of the dialogue between Russian and Ukrainian sides was correct one and we support it. However, these OSCE efforts alone cannot bring about desired results as they are being systematically stifled by one party to the conflict. International community still cannot get access to all parts of the territory of Ukraine that are under the brutal control of armed separatist and their political masters. In Crimea, the rights of national minorities, first of all Tatar community, are being under vicious assault: people are being forcefully pressed into adopting Russian citizenship, discriminated, there are reports about rampant torture, disappearances and murders of those who do not agree with the policies of the occupying force.

What should be done by the OSCE and its Participating States under these circumstances?

Mr. Chairperson,

I'll make three focused and concrete suggestions, some elements of which coincide with proposals of other colleagues.

Firstly, Russia must stop threatening its neighbours, accept the spirit and letter of the Minsk agreements and enable unhindered international monitoring of the Ukrainian-Russian state border. It must also withdraw its military equipment, weapons, and troops from the Ukrainian territory and seal its borders to the movement of arms and mercenaries into the separatist held areas.

Secondly, the values, principles and norms of OSCE have not lost even the slightest bit of their validity as a result of the current crisis. We do not need new ones. And we do not need new European Security architecture. If somebody goes by car against the traffic and hits on purpose other cars, it would be absurd to demand to reverse the entire traffic. Rather one would be expected to stick to the established rules and most basics norms of decency and civilized behaviour.

We should not waste our time in initiating other fruitless discussions. What we need most - is the political will to uphold the letter and the spirit of the Helsinki Final Act and other OSCE documents. Restoration of confidence among OSCE participating states is possible only by recommitting ourselves to the constitutional foundations of the OSCE and respecting its values and truly fulfilling OSCE commitments. By deeds, not words.

Thirdly, the OSCE could not continue business as usual when people in Ukraine die every day. The outside world is awaiting from our meeting here in Basel concrete decisions and actions, which could contribute to the alleviation and hopefully resolution of this conflict.

Therefore, the decision should be taken that would stop aggression and bring to an end the bloodshed in Ukraine. We must ensure that suffering of the people living in the zone of the armed conflict and in the Crimean peninsula ends, and that the most basic human rights are protected. But this is not possible without change of current policies of one country. We call on Russia, as a signatory of the Berlin declaration and Minsk agreements, to take steps in fulfilling its taken obligations.

Post-Basel legacy will define the OSCE work for the upcoming years. Therefore, it is necessary to set the OSCE political agenda for 2015-2016 and where concrete steps should be identified on how to address current European security crisis and how to enforce compliance with the OSCE obligations.

I would like to emphasize that the OSCE stands and falls together with European political order and its principles of which this Organization has been visible embodiment. If we fail to address aggression against Ukraine, we will lose the OSCE, as this Organization will be deprived of any relevance in a new European geopolitical reality.

When it comes to the question, what kind of political consensus with regard to the ongoing assault on Ukraine we could reflect in the Ministerial document, I would like to be absolutely clear: no document at all would be a much better outcome than any declaration void of real substance or shamefully silent on the breach of fundamental values and principles this Organization is built upon.

In conclusion, I would like to wish all success to the incoming Serbian OSCE Chairmanship. I understand we have another difficult year before us. There is only one way forward – no matter how big a challenge we face or how deep the crisis we always should remain committed to our shared values and principles that make the backbone of this Organization.