

ENGLISH only

24th OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting

Statement by H.E. Ms. Emilia Kraleva, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria

Let me begin by expressing gratitude to Minister Sebastian Kurz as well as to the whole team of the Austrian Chairmanship.

I join previous speakers in wishing Secretary General Thomas Greminger all the success. You can rely on our full support.

In a time of increased challenges to the European rules-based security order, the OSCE is called to reiterate its core principles enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act. Diverging threat perceptions can only be bridged through full respect for territorial integrity, sovereignty and inviolability of international borders.

In this context, the ongoing crisis in and around Ukraine, with its increasing numbers of civilian casualties, continues to be the most serious challenge to European security. The OSCE effective engagement in addressing Ukrainian crisis, as well as other protracted conflicts in the OSCE area should be praised and strengthened. We strongly support the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine and advocate for personnel safety and full access on the ground.

Here I would like to extend our condolences to the family of the American paramedic Joseph Stone, who lost his life exercising his duty.

It is essential to ensure military predictability and verifiable transparency in order to reduce military risks. The Structured dialogue is a good opportunity to renew meaningful exchange in the political-military area on the basis of existing commitments, together with the efforts to modernize the Vienna Document.

Security in Europe cannot be successfully guaranteed without genuine respect for the rule of law and the protection of fundamental freedoms and human rights in the OSCE area. It is indispensable to foster a broad consensus on core issues such as respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to national minorities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In less than a month time Bulgaria will take over the Presidency of the Council of the EU. This gives me the point to stress that the values and principles of the OSCE are strongly enshrined in the EU policies and activities. The challenges we will strive to effectively address in the EU largely overlap with those of the OSCE agenda such as migration and security, good economic and environmental governance, digital economy, enhanced citizens' participation.

We find it important for the EU to further strengthen the OSCE focus on preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism. Priority should be given to activities involving young generations in meaningful ways, promoting their economic participation and improving their social conditions.

This is even more valid for the societies in the region of the Western Balkans, which brings me to reiterate this region is a key priority for our upcoming EU Presidency. We have managed to ignite the attention to our neighbouring region and we do hope that the Sofia EU-Western Balkans summit in May next year will be a true success.

We also think that the OSCE presence in the Western Balkans is instrumental for the countries in the region to better deliver in areas such as rule of law, human rights, economic reforms, political dialogue, good neighbourly relations, freedom of speech. From that point of view, supporting strong and well- funded OSCE missions in the Western Balkans is crucial.

As EU presidency we will work closely together with the Italian Chairmanship-in-Office in ensuring synergies between the two organisations.

In conclusion, I wish to once again express appreciation for the valuable work of the Austrian Chairmanship throughout the year and to wish every success to Italy as the next Chair-in-Office of the OSCE.