

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Vadym Prystaiko,
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine,
at the 26th Meeting of the Ministerial Council of the OSCE
(Bratislava, 5 December 2019)**

**Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I wish to thank Chairperson-in-Office, our good friend and colleague Miroslav Lajčák and Slovak OSCE Chairmanship's team for their tireless efforts throughout the year. We appreciate personal engagement of the Chairman-in-Office on the situation in and around Ukraine, his numerous visits to the conflict affected areas, as ongoing armed aggression against my country continued to be the biggest threat to European peace and security.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to begin my intervention with good news in order to try to pave the way for some critical points I may touch upon further in my statement.

The first good news is, as you already know, the Normandy Four summit is coming on Monday, December 9.

We are carefully optimistic and believe that Summit's outcomes should include securing long-lasting and sustainable cease-fire and release of detainees and political hostages. Also, the local elections could take place there in accordance with the Ukrainian law and in line with OSCE democratic standards only after all security conditions are met, including the withdrawal of all illegal troops from the region and restoration of control over Ukraine-Russia state border.

The second good news is the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, which is certainly one of the most successful operations of our Organization. The scale of responsibility, the challenging tasks, the degree of dedication of the contributing countries and at the level of each and every monitor is unprecedented. We, Ukrainians, are deeply grateful to brave people of the Mission and we are in debt to those who unfortunately paid an ultimate price helping our nation to regain its independence and sovereignty.

Therefore, if there are voices critical of the OSCE, and sometimes justifiably so, that the OSCE has not been able to defend its fundamental principles, the SMM is doing its best to save the OSCE mission and purpose. SMM should be further supported to be able to fully execute its mandate and adapt it to the changing environment.

The next good news is the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. ODIHR's internationally recognized election monitoring methodology remains a credible instrument in ensuring democratic elections across the OSCE area. This was attested by the ODIHR's election observation reports on this year's presidential and parliamentary elections in Ukraine. We see a lot of future in ODIHR's role and stand ready to continue cooperation with this institution and with its dedicated Director Ingibjörg Gísladóttir.

Speaking of the OSCE autonomous institutions in general, and the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities in particular, we must do everything possible to safeguard their independence, professional standards and relevance for all participating States.

We cannot but praise the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and its President George Tsereteli for their strong voice in support of the OSCE fundamental principles and commitments.

Promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms remains part and parcel of the OSCE's concept of comprehensive security. There can be no lasting security and stability without respect for these core values. We must not tolerate situations where fundamental rights are violated, because such abuses are highly likely to lead to internal oppression and external aggression, bringing about conflict and insecurity.

Mr. Chairman,

We are entering the sixth year of discussion how to address clear, gross and uncorrected violation of the key principles, which have provided a solid foundation of European security since the Second World War, and to which all OSCE participating States have subscribed to. We welcome the statements contained in the Bratislava Appeal, that these OSCE principles and commitments, including respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-use of force and peaceful settlement of conflicts, are not open for re-negotiation and cannot be subject to compromise.

Blatant disregard for the norms of international law, the UN Charter and the OSCE core principles by the OSCE participating state has led to the situation, in which parts of Ukraine's territory remain occupied, violence along the contact line in Donbas continues, leaving 14,000 people killed and as many as 30,000 wounded. In addition, industrial capacities and infrastructure remain damaged, trade links disrupted, hundreds of thousands of people forced to flee from hostilities and occupation.

The occupying power in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol continues to pursue policies of intimidation, discriminatory practices and human rights violations towards residents of the occupied Crimea, including the Crimean Tatar community. Along with these actions, the occupying power implements the transfer of parts of its own population into the territory of the occupied Crimea, in violations of its legal obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law, as testified in the latest report of the UN Secretary General.

Growing militarization of the occupied Crimea represents a mounting threat to security in Europe and far beyond.

Distinguished colleagues,

In few days in Paris at the Normandy Four Summit we will try to achieve progress in resolving the biggest active conflict in Europe. We hope that progress on this track could contribute to peaceful resolution of protracted conflicts on the territories of Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Republic of Azerbaijan with full respect for their sovereignty and territorial integrity within the internationally recognized borders.

Having known through its own experience how difficult are the Chairmanship's tasks, we fully support the incoming Albanian OSCE Chairmanship in the fulfilment of these responsibilities next year. Equally, we would welcome the courageous decisions of Sweden and Poland to present their bids for OSCE Chairmanships in 2021 and 2022. You can count on Ukraine's support in your endeavours.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.