



32nd OSCE Ministerial Council meeting
Secretary General Feridun H. Sinirlioğlu's Report
Vienna, 04 December, 2025

Distinguished Ministers,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We meet at a **critical moment**. A few months ago, we marked the **50th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act**. We celebrated its transformative impact on our continent. We reminded ourselves of the decalogue of principles it enshrined. And we recalled that the main legacy of Helsinki is that “**dialogue is always possible**”.

We are reminded of that in this room, today. Countries currently at war with each other sit in front of each other. Countries who have been at war for decades and are now building peace sit close to each other.

This is because, despite harmful attempts at dismissing dialogue as “useless”, despite deliberate attempts to sideline this Organization and relegate it to history, **the OSCE is and remains today the place we need once again to rebuild the shattered security architecture in Europe**.

No other table has this inclusive membership. No other table has this history. No other table has this potential. And seize this potential we must.

Excellencies,

ladies and gentlemen,

The European security architecture our forefathers and mothers have built over decades of hard work has crumbled before our eyes. It simply no longer holds.

And in no other place is this more visible than just a few hundred miles away from here – in **Ukraine**. The ongoing war remains an open wound in the heart of our continent. It has caused immense suffering, it *must* end. Thanks to renewed diplomatic efforts led by President Trump in recent months, I am confident it *will* end.

And when it ends, two things will be clear.

First, it will be **in everyone's interest** that, whatever agreement between the sides emerges, it should be implemented so that **it holds**. To hold, it will **need to be just and credible**. And for it to be credible, it will need to **be monitored**. If that time comes, and if the sides need us, **the OSCE will be ready**.

Second, we will need to address what this war has laid bare. The **overall security architecture in Europe no longer holds**. It will be in everyone's interest to build **a system that endures**, and that can prevent us from falling into the abyss of arms race and endless escalation management, fraught with the risk of new confrontation.

We will need **a new dialogue** - honest, inclusive and forward looking – about how to **rebuild the European security architecture**.

To achieve this, we must be willing to ask the hard questions. When a system crumbles in the manner that we are witnessing right now, all participating States need to do some **soul searching**. A meaningful security discussion would need to include an **honest assessment** of what went wrong; what we condoned, which we should not have; and, what we underestimated. We need to go through that together, and listen to each other. Just like we did in the early 70's.

For these tasks, I believe **the OSCE is a key forum**. It has the inclusivity, the legitimacy, the experience and the historical memory – to show that **dialogue, engagement and co-operation** are still possible, even and especially in the darkest times, even and especially with adversaries. And that is the only way to ensure **comprehensive security** for all.

OSCE staff in the Secretariat, Field Operations and Institutions are **showing this every day**, in their work – be it in support of political dialogue, be it by bringing your State officials together across borders, to learn from each other, and to develop common approaches to shared challenges. We continue to embody the spirit of “**cooperative security**” every day.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

This Organization is ready to once again serve its historic mission. But we are not in the 70s or 90s any more. We need to equip it with the **tools and flexibility** it needs to be an agile and efficient actor, in the fast-moving world of the XXI century.

In short, we need reforms. Substantial, courageous, and effective reforms. To cut our costs, and redirect our efforts and resources to what we do best and where we bring added value.

I am ready to play my part, and to put on the plate, for the Secretariat alone down the road, a 10% reduction in costs – staff and other costs. It will be very difficult, but it will be done - by streamlining the internal structure, clear prioritization, merging what can be merged and cutting what is redundant.

We closed the Minsk Structures in just three months – we know how to be efficient and effective. But the current rigid rules around budgeting and human resources simply do not allow us the flexibility to move resources internally. So I need to ask for your support: to decouple the post table from the budget, which will enable us to cut costs.

You would retain the authority to determine the number of posts and at what level, but we need the authority to determine, within the Secretariat, within the Institutions and within the Field Operations, where to deploy our staff.

That's all I ask, and this is not just my request: all Heads of Field Operations and Institutions have asked the very same, as they face the same challenge. This simple decision alone will unlock the reform potential of this Organization. It will result in lower costs and more efficient structures, with the flexibility to deploy resources where they are needed the most, and where the added-value is greater. This is already a very cost efficient and lean Organization, and the present fiscal challenge **may, paradoxically, make us stronger**, if provided with the tools to seize the opportunity.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am not suggesting the path before us will be easy. What I am saying is – **it's possible**. *It is possible* to bring an end to the war in Ukraine. *It is possible* to sustain and support the implementation of the agreement the sides may reach. And it is possible to relaunch a proper dialogue on the future European security architecture.

We faced another moment of **global existential threat** – in the early 70s' that led to the Helsinki Final Act and the framework we still work within today. We may be at a threshold of another such moment.

Let us recall that this Organization was born at a time when the threat of mutually assured destruction was at the forefront of everyone's mind. Frankly, these capabilities have only increased since 1975. In recent years, we have seen irresponsible nuclear rhetoric. That is unacceptable. Let us not forget – '*a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought*'. Let us not play with fire.

Distinguished Ministers,

Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Security cannot, and will never be, guaranteed by military deterrence alone. Deterrence is essential, but alone it can lead to an arms race with destabilizing consequences for all. **Security and peace must be ensured also through co-operation, which requires dialogue,** to reduce risks, to manage crises, to ensure military transparency, verification mechanisms, and arms control.

That is the living legacy of Helsinki. And our **historic responsibility**.

I thank you.