

The OSCE Secretariat bears no responsibility for the content of this document and circulates it without altering its content. The distribution by OSCE Conference Services of this document is without prejudice to OSCE decisions, as set out in documents agreed by OSCE participating States.

MC.DEL/72/25
17 December 2025

ENGLISH
Original: GERMAN

STATEMENT BY
H.E. MS BEATE MEINL-REISINGER, FEDERAL MINISTER FOR EUROPEAN
AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA,
AT THE THIRTY-SECOND MEETING OF THE
OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

Vienna, 4 December 2025

Madam Chairperson,
Dear colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

As every year, we are once again coming together today to show our commitment to international co-operation and to support the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. But we have to ask ourselves honestly: what does the world out there really look like?

International co-operation is under enormous pressure. Human rights are disregarded in many places. The environment and the economy are becoming unbalanced. The arms race continues. And a dangerous principle is returning: the principle of might. We are increasingly living in a world where it is once again the law of the stronger that counts and not the strength of the law. We must not ignore this reality. It is a wake-up call.

For that very reason, we need now to stand up together for civil liberties, fundamental rights and democracy. Because peace does not come about on its own but by joining forces.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This year is particularly significant. We are meeting today exactly 50 years after the signing of the Helsinki Final Act.

The Final Act was more than a diplomatic document. It was a promise: to respect the inviolability of frontiers, to settle conflicts peacefully and, above all, to protect the dignity of every individual. It was a milestone on the way to a Europe that is not divided by walls but united by co-operation.

And the experience of these decades shows us that without human rights, without freedom, without respect, there can be no lasting peace. That was the case then, and it remains so today. The OSCE is therefore more than just an organization. It is the cornerstone of our European security order. And it is the one platform that we need more urgently today than ever before.

The Russian aggression against Ukraine has shaken this foundation of peace in Europe. Trust has been destroyed, borders violated, lives destroyed. That is why we need an immediate ceasefire now.

A ceasefire is not an end point, but it is the prerequisite for everything else: for negotiations, for security, for peace. A lasting and just peace must guarantee the full integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, its capacity for self-defence, and the reconstruction of destroyed towns and villages.

But in addition to the end of the war, we already have to think now about the order afterwards, because lasting peace does not come about by itself.

This is where the OSCE can play a prominent role. It is the only platform that brings all stakeholders together. It can accompany political processes, implement non-military aspects of a peace treaty, ensure the protection of people along a ceasefire line and rebuild trust. In short, the OSCE is the best basis for creating a stable post-war order in Europe.

Ladies and gentlemen,

If the OSCE is to fulfil this task, we must strengthen not weaken it. But all too often we slow ourselves down with endless debates about Chairmanship issues, through disputes over budgets and through political blockades that lose sight of the Organization's actual mission. Now is not the time for institutional battles. Now is the time to prioritize what we have in common over what divides us. Against this backdrop, it is hard to understand why the participating States do not gratefully accept Cyprus's offer and return to their substantive tasks.

I am convinced that people throughout Europe do not expect us to pursue a blocking policy. They expect us to work together for peace.

That is why I should like to emphasize that, despite all the obstacles, the OSCE is already showing on a daily basis today what it can achieve: for example, through its field operations in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe and Central Asia, through the Support Programme for Ukraine, and through its institutions and its Secretariat, which work tirelessly to promote security, democracy and human rights.

Madam Chairperson,

I should like to thank you very much for your dedicated leadership in these difficult times. And I wish the incoming Swiss Chairmanship and Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis every success. Austria will stand by your side.

Thank you for your attention.