



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Annual Security Review Conference

Vienna, 29 June 2021

Opening Session

“Back to basics: our commitments, our security, our OSCE”

EU Statement

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1. The European Union would like to start by thanking the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Minister Ann Linde, her team and the OSCE Secretariat for organising this year's Annual Security Review Conference. We value this opportunity to review ongoing security challenges in the OSCE region with a view to reinforcing our collective efforts in the implementation of our commitments in the politico-military dimension of security.
2. The topic of this year's Conference, “*Back to basics: our commitments, our security, our OSCE*” is particularly relevant and timely. Today, the spirit and the letter of the principles enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris continue being seriously challenged. This is regrettable, as the EU strongly believes that preserving regional security and stability in “Our Europe” is in our common interest. This can only be achieved through a multilateral approach. Maintaining peace and security crucially depends indeed on respect for the rules the OSCE, which have been agreed by all 57 OSCE participating States.
3. The Helsinki Final Act in 1975 laid the foundation for a broad range of countries to come together in times of global antagonism and disagreement, and unite around a set of common principles and commitments. This was a historic achievement. Fifteen years later, we succeeded in deepening and strengthening our joint commitments through the Charter of Paris for a New Europe. The Helsinki Final Act's concept of *comprehensive security* contributed to the change of attitude towards security through commitments on politico-military, economic and

environmental as well as human rights issues. These values and commitments have shown their lasting importance. They are not abstract ideals: we see the concrete and detrimental consequences on the ground when they are not respected.

4. Today, we are collectively confronted with acute **challenges**: use or threat of use of force to change internationally recognised borders; violation of sovereignty and internationally recognized sovereign rights; conflict situations including protracted conflicts; terrorism; excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons and conventional ammunition; violent extremism and organised crime; malicious cyber activity; disinformation and other hybrid threats and violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms.
5. This conference is also taking place at the backdrop of the ongoing developments in **Afghanistan** which will have long-term consequences for the region. The well-being and security of Afghan citizens, political and human rights achievements, in particular those of women and girls, as well as regional and international security, are at stake. We must, as the international community, do the best we can to ensure a coordinated approach vis-à-vis whatever power structure emerges in Kabul. The EU aims to continue its support to the Afghan people and to democracy, good governance, human rights and social and economic developments in the country, including efforts to prevent and manage the risks associated with an unstable Afghanistan in continued conflict, resulting in regional instability, drugs trafficking and uncontrolled irregular migration. We must also mitigate the security risks and prevent Afghanistan from becoming a safe haven for terrorism.
6. Putting an end to unresolved conflicts in the OSCE area remains a top priority for the EU. We regret that Russia, for over seven years now, has continued to violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of **Ukraine** by its acts of aggression in eastern Ukraine and its illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, which we strongly condemn and will not recognise. We also regret that Russia is trying to advance a false narrative that it is merely a “mediator” of an “internal Ukrainian conflict”. In this context, we again urge Russia, as a party to the conflict, to act constructively within the Trilateral Contact

Group and the Normandy Format and to implement in full the Minsk Agreements, that it has committed itself to. The EU recalls its unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders.

7. The EU welcomes the ceasefire on the ground following the signature of the trilateral statement by **Armenia, Azerbaijan** and Russia on 9 November 2020. We support the call made by the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group to resume the high-level political dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan under their auspices as soon as possible. We strongly encourage the parties to jointly agree on the various parameters allowing the long-term implementation of a set of stabilisation, post-ceasefire rehabilitation and confidence-building measures. In addition, the EU recalls that the unresolved conflicts in the **Republic of Moldova** and in **Georgia** continue to fragilise peace and stability and can be resolved only if the parties involved agree to solve them in line with the OSCE principles and implement their respective obligations.

8. **Transnational threats** continue to pose a serious challenge to our collective peace and security. We appreciate the specific focus on the **prevention of organised crime** by the Swedish Chairmanship, in line with the OSCE Ministerial Council Declaration on transnational organised crime adopted in Tirana in December last year. The linkages between organised crime and terrorism continue to be a particular concern for the EU. Organised crime transcends national borders. It threatens governance, peace, development and public health and it has become one of the main challenges to the stability of States and regions. It represents a direct threat to the security and safety of citizens, fuels conflict, corruption, money laundering and triggers violence. Preventing opportunities that facilitate organised crime and their potential harmful effects on individuals and society is key in that regard. We stress the importance of addressing transnational organised crime as well as other transnational threats and their root causes through building strong societies and effective institutions based on the rule of law, but also through a gender-sensitive and human-rights based approach.

9. We highly value the **Structured Dialogue**, as a transparent, inclusive process, owned and driven by participating States, without a predetermined outcome and of high relevance for the EU and the OSCE as a whole. We once again emphasise the obligation of all participating States to fully implement the existing commitments in the politico-military area in letter and spirit as well as the need to work towards creating an environment conducive to reinvigorating Conventional Arms Control and CSBMs. We remain committed to the substantial modernisation of the **Vienna Document**, as well as the further development of Conventional Arms Control, CSBMs and other instruments in the politico-military area. Following the withdrawal of the United States last year and the recent notification by Russia of its withdrawal, we are concerned about the situation regarding the Open Skies Treaty, which is one of the three pillars of our arms control architecture and serves as a vital confidence and security building measure.
10. The question of how to preserve peace and strengthen security in the OSCE area and beyond remains crucial to the EU and its citizens. When appointed, President of the European Commission Ursula Van der Leyen stated her ambition for a “*geopolitical Europe*”, giving ourselves the means for our ambitions. For instance:
- (1) over the past year, Member States have taken further steps towards developing the full spectrum of defence capabilities needed for our common security and defence, within the EU framework. This ranges from capabilities to operations, and we also invest more in civilian crisis management;
 - (2) we are cooperating more than ever with our partners and neighbours to address common challenges such as hybrid and cyber threats, arms trafficking, terrorism, and to enhance our cooperation in the areas of energy, transport and trade. We see many examples of such cooperation: enhanced co-operation with the OSCE; strengthened partnership with NATO; reconfirmation of the European perspective for the Western Balkans; an ambitious Eastern Partnership policy which includes comprehensive agreements with Eastern Partners: the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia and Armenia; new EU Central Asia Strategy; and ambitious agreements with partners such as Canada and Japan;
 - (3) we promote democracy, human rights, development, peace, and resilience to support States and societies undergoing change;

(4) we also continue to advance the "Women, Peace and Security" agenda. The role women play in safeguarding peace and security is crucial and we need to harness their contributions.

11. In conclusion, the EU is confident that the OSCE remains the key forum and instrument to address our common security challenges, both specific conflicts in our region, but also emerging and transnational threats that impact us all. What was valid 45 years ago still holds today: the European security architecture can be defended only by respecting international law and OSCE principles and commitments. Thank you.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.