



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the Report on the Activities of the Chairperson-in-Office

As delivered by Chargé d’Affaires Courtney Austrian
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 8, 2023

As we have repeatedly noted, the decision by Russia, as a participating State of the OSCE, to wage an unprovoked full-scale war of aggression and territorial conquest against Ukraine is, to put it mildly, an unprecedented step. Indeed, since February 2022, instead of working to strengthen the OSCE, Moscow has given every impression of persistently working to destroy its actual foundations.

Yet thanks to the superb leadership of North Macedonia as Chair, and I feel the need to defend you as well, not only has Russia’s constant obstructionism failed, but the OSCE has continued to move many ground-breaking initiatives forward this year, including the Support Programme for Ukraine. In addition to these new initiatives, despite Russia’s obstruction, the OSCE continues to deliver on its existing mandates, notably successfully concluding eight election observation missions and four election assessment or election expert missions throughout the OSCE space in just the first five months of the year, which to me indicates support for what the OSCE does and recognition of its value.

The Chair has worked tirelessly and in good faith to fulfill the mandate we, the participating States, gave it over the last 48 years in countless MC and Summit decisions. As my EU colleague noted, at our PrepComm meeting today, took up the subjects of holding the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting and extending the mandate of the OSCE’s Mission to Moldova, it was Russia which impeded the function of this Organization as it stood completely isolated in obstruction of both issues. As noted in the PrepComm, the Heads of State and Government decided at the 1992 Summit in Helsinki that an annual HDIM would be held. The Chair has carried out its duties in the subsequent MC Decision 476 to present a draft agenda with topics which mirror those laid out in MC Decision 476 and those of previously agreed HDIMs. The language is consensual. The OSCE’s Mission to Moldova has been tireless in its efforts to advance its mandate to facilitate a comprehensive and lasting political settlement of the Transnistrian conflict in all its aspects. Yet Russia has also blocked agreement to the Unified Budget and Capital Investment Plan projects. The only participating State failing to live up to the spirit and obligations assumed by all participating States of this Organization is Russia.

Mr. Chair. Today marks my final appearance in the Permanent Council, and I fully expect this will be the last time I speak in this forum in my current capacity. This AOB gives me an unexpected opportunity to speak from the heart regarding this Organization that I have been privileged to be a part of for the past three years.

Today I am even more convinced of the value of the OSCE than I was when I arrived, at a time when the world seemed much less complicated. During my tenure I have been unfailingly impressed by the commitment of all the Chairs to helping us all uphold the values of this Organization as embodied by the Helsinki Final Act and the subsequent commitments that all 57 participating States have freely entered into. This was true with the Albanian Chair. This was true with the Swedish Chair. This was true with the Polish Chair. And, it is very much true with the North Macedonian Chair. These are indeed very challenging times and I venture to guess that if North Macedonia had known what was on the horizon, you might have been reluctant to take on the responsibility of guiding us through these uncharted waters. But instead, you have shown the courage and determination that we need, and fully deserve the support of all participating States. In closing, I wish all of you the very best as you continue your work on behalf of the over one billion people of the OSCE. You will always have my support.

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