



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Remarks by OSCE Secretary-General Helga Schmid in Response to OSCE Chairman-in-Office and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland, Zbigniew Rau

OSCE Permanent Council, Vienna, 13 January 2022

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- *Thank you very much Ambassador*
- And thank you Minister Rau for joining us in Vienna to set out Poland's priorities as Chair of our Organization in 2022, which we stand ready to help implement.
- You and your team can count on my full support.
- *Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,*
- At the outset, let me echo Minister Rau's view on the urgent need to reinvigorate European security consultations. Because the situation in our region is indeed perilous.
- **It is imperative we find a way – through diplomacy – to de-escalate, and begin rebuilding trust, transparency and cooperation.**
- The OSCE is a unique place to do so.
- **We have done this before**, working to rebuild trust and reconcile divergences in security perceptions between East and West, starting with the Helsinki Final Act.
- **We can do so again.**
- The core principles enshrined in that landmark OSCE document remains the bedrock of security and cooperation in Europe. And as Minister Rau said, the Helsinki principles must be upheld. Any and all other discussions must be consistent.
- *Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,*

- **We also have the most inclusive membership of any regional security body.**
 - Every one of our 57 participating States has a seat at the table.
 - So nothing here gets discussed or agreed about Europe, without Europe.
 - The same goes for Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, or any other of our States.

- **We also have the relevant experience:**
 - Take our work conventional arms control and confidence and security building measures, helping to reduce risks, promote military transparency and build trust
 - The Chair rightly mentioned the Vienna Document in this regard.
 - Take our work on conflict prevention and resolution, including the substantial role currently played by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine
 - And I want to thank the Chair wholeheartedly for his focus on the the adverse impact of conflicts on civilians. They should always be at the heart of our work.
 - You will know by now that I am particularly exercised about the situation along the contact line in Ukraine, where civilian crossings are down 95% in two years – stopping them from accessing schooling, healthcare, pensions or even going to work. That trend and those restrictions need to be reversed.
 - We are also active across numerous other areas central to our security and stability – from cyber, to economic and environmental issues, to democracy, free media, human rights and the rule of law.
 - We are the only Organization that has a mandate encapsulating all of that, taking a truly holistic and comprehensive approach to security.

- *Dear colleagues,*

- There is also a wealth of other work that will occupy us this year, of which I will only offer a couple of examples.

- Following OSCE Minister's recent meeting in Stockholm, we have new impetus to address the link between climate change and security, and work is ongoing here in the Office of the Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Affairs.
- We are also following-up on Ministers' tasking to address the consequences across our region of the ongoing instability in Afghanistan.
- And this doesn't happen around the meeting table in Vienna. So I am pleased to be joined today – along with the Heads of the OSCE's Institutions - by our 15 Heads of Field Operations.
 - o They and their teams are the real frontline of the OSCE, delivering hundreds of projects supporting peace and stability for States across Eastern Europe, South Eastern Europe and Central Asia.
- Finally, I also welcome your focus, Mr Chair, on effective financing of our Organization.
 - o We can only deliver on our promise if we are adequately resourced.
- Thank you.