

**Statement delivered by Rory Montgomery, Second Secretary General,
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ireland
OSCE Ministerial Council Vienna 7 December 2017**

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank the Austrian Chairmanship for your stewardship over the past year, and for hosting us here in Vienna.

Ireland is happy to associate itself with the statement of the European Union.

The OSCE plays a crucial role in European peace and security and continues to provide an important platform for dialogue and cooperation. This must be based on the core principles and commitments we have all agreed to.

Regrettably, the European security order has been, and continues to be, seriously challenged by events in Ukraine, including Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol, and its involvement in the conflict in the Donbas. These actions constitute a flagrant breach of the Helsinki Final Act and of international law, and thus of this organisations core principles and commitments.

The principle that all states are fully sovereign and have the right to make their own foreign and security policy choices must be upheld.

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We are proud that the OSCE has been at the forefront of efforts to resolve the conflict in eastern Ukraine. I wish to pay tribute to the brave men and women of the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, including those from Ireland, and, in particular, we remember the sacrifice made by Joseph Stone earlier this year.

The full implementation of the Minsk peace agreements is critical in reaching a sustainable political solution in accordance with OSCE principles and commitments, and in full respect of Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty, unity and independence.

We also need to make a determined effort to resolve protracted conflicts in the OSCE region. Until they are settled, they risk reigniting at any time. It is heartening to see the recent progress in Transnistria and we urge all parties to continue their efforts.

The concept of comprehensive security has at its core respect for democracy, rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The deteriorating human rights situation in some participating States is a cause of grave concern, and a threat to that comprehensive security. We must not tolerate situations where fundamental rights are violated and the space for civil society is allowed to shrink or is deliberately limited. The involvement of civil society in upholding OSCE commitments in this field is indispensable.

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Ireland remains a staunch supporter of the work of the OSCE's three autonomous institutions. We wish the new leaders of each body well and pledge to support them in the pursuit of their mandates.

As Germany leaves the Troika, we acknowledge in particular its invaluable contribution to the structured dialogue process. Recent military developments have underlined the need for functioning conventional arms control regimes and confidence building measures which reflect lessons learned and the new politico-military realities.

In our efforts to ensure greater security, for us all, trust and mutual confidence are not optional extras but basic requirements. Ireland joins in committing to doing all we can to support their renewal in all the dimensions of our work, and particularly those which most affect our citizens: the rights and freedoms which are their birthright, and their right to live in peace and security. We look forward to working with the new Secretary General and the incoming Italian Chairmanship.