

**Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Sweden**

**Statement by Margot Wallström, Minister for Foreign Affairs
OSCE Ministerial Council
Basel, 4th December 2014**

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Mr Chairman, Excellencies,

Let me start by thanking the Swiss Chairmanship and the Chairperson-in-Office, Mr Didier Burkhalter, for your efforts during the past year, and for hosting us here in Basel.

Sweden fully subscribes to the EU statement just made.

Next year, we will mark the 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act.

The Act was the result of several years of negotiations resulting in an agreement on a set of core principles fundamental to subsequent developments in Europe.

The objective was clearly spelt out: to promote better relations among the participating States and ensure conditions in which their people could live in "true and lasting peace free from any threat to or attempt against their security".

The Act was a significant achievement.

Also because it recognised that real security means respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Fifteen years later, we declared in the Paris Charter that the power of the ideas of the Helsinki Final Act had "opened a new era of democracy, peace and unity in Europe". We agreed that our relations would be founded on respect and cooperation.

And now, we are in the midst of a serious crisis.

The fundamental principles that we have all agreed are being challenged.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine, its illegal annexation of Crimea and its direct involvement in destabilising military activities in eastern Ukraine are serious breaches of international law.

If we do not defend the sovereign rights of each State and its people to make decisions about their own future, within the framework of international law, where will we be?

Violations of these core principles and commitments pose a threat to the European security order and are thus of fundamental concern to all of us.

We need to rebuild the spirit of common interest in common security for all participating states.

The OSCE and its tools have proven their value during the current crisis. The three autonomous OSCE institutions have shown their relevance. Their autonomy and mandates must be safeguarded.

We must also make sure that we provide field operations with the necessary political and practical support. Allow me in this context to highlight the important role of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine in monitoring and supporting the implementation of all OSCE principles and commitments and the full implementation of the Minsk Agreement.

Mr Chairman,

It is also time to revisit the confidence building mechanisms that we have agreed on. After the suspension of the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty, we have noted with concern attempts to undermine the Vienna Document and the Open Skies Treaty. To raise the threshold for the use of military force, it is important that these regimes are respected.

Mr Chairman,

The human dimension is at the very heart of the concept of comprehensive security.

I would like to highlight the importance of the right to freedom of expression - essential for the enjoyment of other human rights and freedoms. It is with concern that we continue to see restrictions on the freedom of expression, including many cases of violence against journalists in parts of the OSCE region.

Human rights and fundamental freedoms must apply equally, regardless of gender, religion, sexual orientation and ethnicity.

Gender equality must be an integral part of our security work. It is remarkable that we have not yet been able to mainstream UN Security Council Resolution 1325 into the work of the OSCE. The role of women in building peace and economic development is crucial. There are plenty of examples of women playing a key role in mediation, confidence-building and dialogue in various parts of the OSCE area. But there is still room for improvement. Foreign policy can never be smart if half of the world's population is excluded before, during and after an international crisis.

Mr Chairman,

We should mark the 40th anniversary of the OSCE not only by reaffirming the founding principles, but also by honouring them through the full implementation of these principles agreed by all of us, and by reconfirming the concept of comprehensive security. This must be the point of departure for a panel of eminent persons.

It is by respecting the principles underpinning this organisation, and by engaging in constructive dialogue, that we best build common security now and in the future.

Finally, I would like to thank the incoming Serbian, German and Austrian chairmanships for their willingness to shoulder the responsibility of chairing the OSCE in these challenging times.

Thank you.