



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Address by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Marija Pejčinović Burić

As delivered by Ambassador Michael Carpenter
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 9, 2022

Secretary General Pejčinović Burić, welcome back to the Permanent Council. It is unfortunate that your address occurs in the context of Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine. But the reality is the European security order has unfortunately been upended by Russia's trampling of the most basic norms of the international system that were enshrined in the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act. This assault on our shared norms affects the Council of Europe just as it does the OSCE.

One of our mutual goals in the near term is ensuring accountability for Russia's actions. And so, we welcome the Council's support for the War Crimes Unit of Ukraine's Office of the Prosecutor General as it investigates credible claims of atrocity crimes. And we commend the Council's efforts to facilitate and enhance Ukraine's coordination with the International Criminal Court.

We continue to support the Council's work to assist participating States to uphold their commitments, especially through regular meetings of the *OSCE-CoE Coordination Group*, which ensures our organizations take coordinated and mutually reinforcing actions in the key areas of protecting the human rights of members of national minorities, promoting tolerance and non-discrimination, and combating terrorism and trafficking in persons.

Russia's authoritarianism and intensified repression of independent voices have exacted a terrible cost on the people of Russia, including the near decimation of its civil society and independent media. As you rightly noted in your April 2022 annual report, *Moving Forward*, it is crucial that the Council of Europe continue its work to protect and strengthen the vital role civil society plays in promoting respect for human rights and democracy in Russia and in the region beyond. A 2020 Russian constitutional amendment authorized Russia's courts to disregard the decisions of international tribunals and enshrined the primacy of Russian law over international law, a move which was widely seen as undermining the European Court of Human Rights' authority in relation to judgments against Russia.

And so, given that Russia is no longer a member of the Council, how can our organizations support the efforts of civil society and human rights defenders in those countries that do not have access to remedies available through the ECtHR? I would be curious for your views on that question.

Madam Secretary General, we reiterate our support for continued coordination between the OSCE and the Council of Europe and reaffirm that the political will of each participating State to adhere to its freely adopted commitments remains fundamental to achieving peace, prosperity, and democracy throughout our region. You can count on the United States' continued support, as an OSCE participating State, but also as a *Council of Europe* Observer, for the complementary work of both our organizations, especially during these dark and challenging times.

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