

**Co-operative Security in Europe – Priorities of the new OSCE Secretary  
General (Lunch Discussion)**

**Secretary General's Opening Remarks**

**Munich Security Conference**

**17 February 2018**

- Excellencies, colleagues, thank you for coming.
- There are so many interesting events at this Munich Security Conference. I therefore appreciate that you have taken the time to discuss co-operative security.
- I don't take this for granted. Indeed, at such security conferences I often feel that the very idea of co-operative security is regarded as exotic, passé, or naïve.
- The main focus is usually on deterrence. Projecting strength. That's the message we've been hearing from many participants at this year's conference too.
- As the Romans used to say, "if you want peace, prepare for war".
- Fair enough. A suitable military capability can maintain a balance of forces. That seems to be the logic of NATO on one side and Russia on the other.
- But in a highly unpredictable environment, where will this end?
- Think of the dangers of an incident or accident between aircraft – there have been plenty of near misses.
- Or an escalation triggered by a snap exercise.
- Or a real skirmish in the Donbas spinning out of control.
- Or a new nuclear arms race.
- Where will this end?
- I am not advocating appeasement.
- But détente and dialogue should be a complement to deterrence.
- This is not an original argument. Just over 50 years ago (in 1967) the Harmel Report stressed that NATO has two key functions: deterrence, and détente.

- As the report says, “Military security and a policy of détente are not contradictory but complementary...The way to peace and stability in Europe rests in particular on the use of the Alliance constructively in the interest of détente.” (unquote)
- Where is that second pillar today?
- Back then the CSCE did not exist. Today the OSCE is an ideal place for dialogue.
- It is inclusive: all countries of Europe, plus the United States and Canada participate – as equals.
- It takes a co-operative approach.
- And it considers security in a broad context: not only hard security issues (like arms control, and confidence-building measures), but also economic and environmental issues, as well as human security.
- Furthermore, the OSCE is rooted in a set of commonly agreed principles that provide a normative framework – the rules of the game.
- But let us be frank. It is obvious that the dream of a Europe whole and free that was declared in the 1990 Charter of Paris has not been realized. And we are a long way from the vision of a Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community that was proclaimed at the OSCE Astana Summit in 2010.
- Yet the breakdown of trust and the increase in tensions between states shows what happens when cooperation fails – it does not undermine the idea of co-operative security. In fact, it demonstrates the need for cooperation rather than confrontation.
- Again, what is the alternative? You can’t choose your neighbours. States have to find a way to get along, or at least coexist peacefully. This not altruism, it is self-interest. Realpolitik.
- Furthermore, in an increasingly inter-connected world, even the most powerful countries need to work with others to cope with transnational threats and challenges. Therefore, multilateral cooperation is more needed than ever.
- Colleagues, I think by now you can tell what my main priority is: Dialogue. We need to talk.

- There are competing narratives between Russia and the West on how we got into this dangerous situation. But surely we have a common interest to get out of it.
- The OSCE can help.
- Look at our response to the crisis in and around Ukraine. Against the odds, in 2014 we managed to deploy a mission – with a mandate adopted by consensus – to monitor the situation in Ukraine. Today that mission of almost 700 monitors is the only independent source of information about what is going on in the Donbas.
- Or look at the OSCE’s work in Moldova that is slowly but steadily working with the parties to normalize the situation on both sides of the Dniestr river.
- Or our rapid support to the crisis in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia last year that helped to de-escalate tensions.
- Colleagues, we need to lift this kind of inclusive dialogue and joint action to a higher level – to address the causes of the malaise that Europe is now in.
- That is why a process of Structured Dialogue was launched in the OSCE last year, focused in particular on the political-military aspects of security. This is a vital process that deserves your attention.
- De-escalating tensions, rebuilding trust, and seeking common ground is a major effort. That is why my second priority is to leverage partnerships, for example between the OSCE and the UN and the EU, but also with regional and sub-regional organizations, development actors, civil society, and parliamentarians.
- Working together plays to our respective strengths, makes the most of our comparative advantages, and shows the added value of pragmatic, results-oriented partnerships.
- Another priority is to seek solutions to common challenges rather than just arguing about the things that divide us.
- That is why I am calling for a positive unifying agenda. The aim is to identify issues where interests converge, and to build on these ‘islands of cooperation’. Think of issues like violent extremism, terrorism, organized crime, cyber threats, and large flows of refugees and migrants.

These challenges are common to all OSCE participating States and can only be tackled together.

- Let me be clear. Basic principles cannot be sacrificed for the sake of finding common ground. And major issues, like Crimea or the Donbas, cannot be ignored.
- But repeating the same positions over and over again and expecting a different outcome is not working. And increasing tensions increases risks.
- We need to replace the cycle of belligerent rhetoric and destructive tit-for-tat actions with positive reciprocity and confidence building measures.
- We should also try to integrate into the positive unifying agenda politico-military elements. I believe this is possible by refraining from an all-or-nothing approach where everything is linked, and therefore everything is blocked. Instead, states should take trust-inducing steps, for example through implementation of the Vienna Document, agreeing to substantively revise the Vienna Document, and other CSBMs. This could generate good will that could create openings that are important to the other side.
- We need to help states get out of the dilemma of increasing their security at the expense of others, and return to a rules-based system of collective security.
- My final priority is to ensure that the OSCE is “fit for purpose”. Earlier this week in Vienna I presented some ideas on the need for reform in the OSCE. The major themes are the ones that I have just outlined to you. More internal business is about possible reforms to strengthen the effectiveness of the organization’s executive structures. I am happy to go into more details if you are interested.
- Mr. Moderator, I will stop there. I hope that I have given you some ideas about my priorities. More importantly, I hope that my remarks can provoke a discussion on the need for dialogue and co-operative security at this dangerous time in Europe.