



United States Mission to the OSCE

Closing Statement 31st Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council

As prepared for delivery by Chargé d’Affaires Katherine Brucker
Valletta, Malta December 6, 2024

This Ministerial Council has focused rightly on the importance of respect for the fundamental principles of this organization – the very principles Russia blatantly and brutally disregards with its illegal war against Ukraine. As we have done since the beginning of Russia’s war, speaker after speaker at this Ministerial Council has stood with Ukraine in defense of the OSCE’s bedrock principles and against Russia’s aggression. Speaker after speaker has condemned and rejected Russia’s attempts to impede the work of this organization in order to avoid accountability for its malign actions in pursuit of the Kremlin’s territorial ambitions and designs to control its sovereign neighbors.

To Chairperson-in-Office Borg and your fantastic team led by Ambassador Meli Daudey, thank you for taking on the responsibilities of the Chair in 2024. Your principled leadership has kept the organization focused on Russia’s war against Ukraine while also advancing OSCE’s vital work across the region in all three dimensions. You had a daunting agenda and despite some disappointments Malta has done a great service to this organization with your successes.

First of all, congratulations on bringing us to consensus on the top 4. We now have four senior leaders appointed for three years. There is still work to do on future Chairs-in-Office. We hope we will get movement on a 2026 Chair before too long, and we welcome and fully support Cyprus’ bid to chair the OSCE in 2027.

Mr. Chair, it is deeply regrettable that the lack of a unified budget since 2021 has forced the OSCE – in particular the field missions – to maintain operations day-to-day and respond to urgent needs without predictable resources that enable effective planning. We urge all participating States to negotiate in good faith on the Finnish Chair’s proposed 2025 UB, and as others have noted, there might still be a chance for 2024. At present, unfortunately, lack of good faith on the part of one participating State has prevented agreement in Malta, and has contributed to the non-functioning of our organization.

To Finland, you have the United States’ full support for what we are confident will be a consequential chairpersonship marking 50 years of the Helsinki Final Act. We know that you will take this organization forward, confident in the continuing relevance of its founding principles which will guide our work as we tackle ongoing challenges in all three dimensions and new ones the future is sure to bring.

Mr. Chair, many times during the Helsinki Final Act’s 50 years, my country and other participating States have rallied to the defense of its core principles whenever they were under siege. Our collective resolve in defense of the Helsinki principles has given the OSCE

important political and moral weight to channel change peacefully when historic opportunities have opened.

The need for the OSCE never has been more acute. We need the OSCE's capacity, its flexibility, its platform for dialogue, and its credibility to work with governments and civil society from North America to Europe and Central Asia in building peace, creating conditions for prosperity, advancing democratic governance, and promoting respect for human rights. Together, we must strengthen the resilience of this unique organization so that it will continue the work that no other international organization is positioned to attempt.

As we look to the future, we should sharpen our focus on the political-military and economic and environmental dimensions and on issues like border security and transnational threats, as well as hybrid concerns.

Looking to the future, we should all aim to sustain our assistance to Ukraine. The OSCE and its Support Program for Ukraine can play a key role in responding to the problems caused by Russia's war and fostering reforms that will help Ukraine along its chosen democratic path and toward integration into the Euro-Atlantic community. Beyond Russia's abuses and atrocities against the people of Ukraine, we also must continue to address the challenges for democracy and human rights elsewhere in the OSCE region, such as the proliferation of undemocratic laws that restrict civil society and independent media, and the continuing unjust detentions of individuals in multiple countries just for, as the Helsinki Final Act puts it, "knowing and acting upon their rights."

Progress between Armenia and Azerbaijan in negotiations means a peaceful and prosperous South Caucasus is in closer reach than ever. The OSCE must be ready to support good faith, participating State-driven efforts to build mutual trust in the region. We encourage the parties to seize this historic opportunity and not let disagreements outside the scope of an agreement slow this move toward peace. A binding peace agreement is the strongest guarantee for the region's future and should be signed as soon as possible.

We see emerging opportunities for greater cooperation with Central Asian states, particularly on second dimension priorities, including water security.

The Helsinki Final Act at 50 is an opportunity to increase the visibility of the OSCE field missions. Every day, the missions' work helps to defuse tension, improve governance, and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms. They need to be adequately resourced.

We can deepen cooperation with OSCE's partners for cooperation, including partners in the Indo-Pacific. As Russia's growing reliance on the DPRK has demonstrated, developments in the Indo-Pacific region directly affect the OSCE region – and vice-versa. OSCE's partnerships for cooperation will be crucial to addressing these and other shared and interconnected security challenges.

And we will continue to value the essential role and substantial contributions of civil society in promoting implementation of the rich body of commitments that all participating States have made. We appreciate the recommendations put forward at the parallel civil society event earlier this week. We look forward to discussing ways to further strengthen civil society engagement with the OSCE.

The United States remains dedicated to the OSCE and advancing our shared goal of a secure, peaceful, and prosperous region where the human rights and dignity of all are respected. We are ready and willing to partner with all those who share that goal. Let us all support this organization and the incoming Finland Chair-in-Office so that the 50th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act testifies to our powers of innovation as well as our passion for freedom.

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