



EUROPEAN UNION

21st Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council, Basel, 5 December 2014

EU Closing Statement

Let me thank the Chairmanship for the warm Swiss hospitality we have enjoyed these days in Basel. We would like to thank the whole Chairmanship team as well as the Secretary General and his staff for the excellent organisation of this Ministerial Council. 2014 has been a difficult year for the OSCE region. We wish to pay tribute to the efforts of the Swiss Chairmanship throughout the past twelve months.

We will of course reflect on the proceedings of the Basel Ministerial Council and study carefully the many statements that have been made around this table. In the meantime, we offer the following observations.

This year's OSCE Ministerial was very different from previous ones. Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol and destabilising actions in eastern Ukraine have seriously violated the basic OSCE principles and commitments, as enshrined notably in the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter. This is the larger issue we have to address.

Mr Chairman, the crisis in and around Ukraine as a result of Russian aggression has dominated the discussions and outcomes of this Ministerial Council. At the same time, the value of the OSCE as a platform for dialogue has been reaffirmed and we note the results achieved in Basel on a number of issues.

We are confronted with the most serious challenge to European security in decades. We need to start to restore respect for the fundamental principles upon which this organisation is based. From the discussions over the past days, it is clear that this goal was shared by nearly all participating States. We deeply regret that there was no agreement on a declaration on the crisis in and around Ukraine.

We all need to work towards a sustainable political solution to the crisis in and around Ukraine. Any solution must be based on respect for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. The EU strongly condemns the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol and will continue to pursue its policy of non-recognition. The Minsk arrangements are the only commonly agreed framework for de-escalation towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict in and around Ukraine. We reiterate Russia's special responsibility in this regard. The Minsk arrangements must be fully implemented without further delay. We welcome the announcement yesterday of steps towards a full ceasefire. The Ukrainian-Russian state border must be secured with permanent monitoring by the OSCE as envisioned in the Minsk protocol. Full and effective control by Ukraine of its borders is essential. We expect negotiations on a significant expansion of the OSCE Border Observer Mission to continue. We will support the continuation of an inclusive Ukrainian-led and Ukrainian-owned national dialogue in Ukraine. The OSCE can play an important role in facilitating this dialogue.

We reiterate our full support for the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) and pledge to continue our significant financial support. We pay tribute to the efforts of the Swiss Chairmanship and to Heidi Tagliavini personally

with regard to the crisis in and around Ukraine, including through the Trilateral Contact Group which must continue to play an essential role in the implementation of the Minsk agreements building on what has been achieved so far.

Progress in resolving the conflicts in Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and over Nagorno-Karabakh should remain high on our agenda in 2015. Efforts to find solutions must be redoubled since the risk of increasing instability is high. The OSCE, with the support of all of us, must step up its contribution in support of the established conflict resolution processes. In this context, we welcome today's Ministerial statement on the "5+2" process. In addition, commitments regarding the withdrawal of Russian military force should be honoured. We regret that a statement on the Geneva International Discussions was not adopted.

The OSCE's southern region – the Mediterranean – should be kept on our agenda in 2015 as one area of priority. Events in the Middle East and North Africa, including Libya, represent a major risk to security in the Mediterranean region and the OSCE area as a whole.

We regret that freedom of expression and freedom of association and assembly have not been on the agenda of the Ministerial Council despite the support of the large majority of participating States.

We commend the Civic Solidarity Platform for organising this year again a parallel civil society conference ahead of this Ministerial Council. We take good note of the participants' Basel Declaration on rising intolerance, discrimination, and hate crimes. We would have expected that civil society representatives would have been given the opportunity

to present their recommendations at the plenary. We also welcome the side-events organised by the OSCE Academic Network. We will study the network's report on the future of OSCE field operations.

Mr Chairman, 2015 marks the 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act. We remain committed to continue the Helsinki+40 process with the common objective of reaffirming our commitment to the concept of comprehensive security by recording practical results reflecting intensified efforts to fully implement OSCE commitments. We hope that the Panel of Eminent Persons can contribute to re-launching a genuine dialogue.

We welcome the decisions concerning the German and Austrian Chairmanships in 2016 and 2017. We look forward to working with the incoming Serbian Chairmanship-in-Office. We look to Serbia to lead in focusing the Organisation and all participating States on a return to respect for the fundamental principles of the OSCE. This will help us to ensure that the OSCE remains a key forum for dialogue on the significant challenges to European security we currently face. The European Union will do its utmost to contribute to this.

I request that this statement be attached to the journal of today's meeting.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ICELAND+ and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA and ANDORRA align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.