

**Statement by H.E. Mr.Edgars Rinkēvičs,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia,
at the 22nd OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting
Belgrade, 3 December 2015**

Mr. Chairman,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to start by conveying my sincere congratulations to the Serbian Chairmanship for its dedicated and professional work this year and to thank our hosts for the hospitality here in Belgrade.

Mr.Chairman,

The past two years have witnessed an erosion of the core principles of security that the OSCE is built on. In this 40th anniversary year of the Helsinki Final Act it is disheartening to see the Decalogue of Principles repeatedly violated. This needs to be said clearly – the main issue is a lack of implementation of core commitments, and we need to strive towards it first and foremost.

The crisis in and around Ukraine has provided a tragic example of failing to respect the principles of the OSCE. Russia has repeatedly ignored its commitments including arming the separatists and sending its armed forces across the border. The increase of exchanges of fire since October is worrying.

We are also deeply concerned by the serious human rights violations in eastern Ukraine and further deterioration of the situation in the illegally annexed Crimea in particular of Crimean Tatars. We call on Russia to abide by its international commitments and to fulfil the Minsk agreements. We would like to reiterate Latvia's unwavering support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine.

Mr. Chairman,

The OSCE has valuable tools instrumental to solving crises.

The OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission has played an important role throughout the crisis. I would like to commend the work of SMM and its monitors' dedication, professionalism and bravery, as well as the role of the Secretary General and the Secretariat to ensure its successful functioning. We must support the Mission in any

way we can, as it has proven the role of the OSCE as an important actor in a moment of crisis.

The Vienna Document 2011 (VD11) being one of the most prominent tools, it has been recognised that it needs to be further modernised. Hopefully we will be able to agree to compromise on substantial modernisation of the VD11.

It is important to continue work on confidence building measures in cyber domain in order to share on voluntary basis best practice to increase cooperation in the OSCE framework in this area.

Mr. Chairman,

We must not forget about other continued conflicts in Moldova, Georgia and over Nagorno-Karabakh. Mediation and facilitation of dialogue must remain another priority and we hope that this issue will continue to be high on the agenda of the next OSCE Chairmanship.

Today we are also facing an ever growing global threat posed by terrorism. The recent barbaric terrorist attacks carried out in Paris are an act of war against France and Europe and our common values. We fully support the efforts of the international community in fighting against terrorism, along with other countries that are part of the Global Coalition to counter ISIL/Da'esh.

It is important not to forget that the refugee crisis is growing in intensity and with no end to the conflict in Syria and the surrounding region in sight, looks set to continue. We must ensure that the OSCE uses its existing institutions and mechanisms to full effect to help participating States react to the crisis and ensure that the rights of asylum seekers, refugees and other persons in need are fully respected.

Mr. Chairman,

Central Asia plays an important role in connecting Europe to Asia and we highly appreciate the role and engagement of the OSCE in this region. Border management and prevention of transnational threats, especially terrorism, are of utmost importance. We should aim at further enhancing of cooperation with the Central Asia and we hope to see this question on the agenda of the next chairmanship.

Finally, I would like to welcome Germany, as the incoming Chairmanship. I want to thank you for taking on such a responsibility during these challenging times and I am confident yours will be a successful Chairmanship. We look forward to working closely with you.

Thank you!