



Deutschland 2016

**Chairperson-in-Office and Federal Foreign Minister  
Frank-Walter Steinmeier**

**Briefing to the United Nations Security Council  
On the OSCE Chairmanship 2016**

**New York, 29 February 2016**

Mister President, Excellencies,

It is an honor for me to address the Council today as Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the largest regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations.

First of all, allow me to pay tribute to the late UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali. His Agenda for Peace not only set a milestone for the international order after the Cold War. It was also Boutros-Ghali who recognized the important role of regional organizations in conflict settlement. He laid the foundation for the strong relationship between the UN and the OSCE - a relationship we would like to strengthen even further in 2016!

Nobody will deny that the challenges we are facing are enormous. And speaking for a European organization, I have to start with our own region.

You know, Excellencies, that violent crises and conflicts surround us - even on our own continent in Europe, and it's not only about Ukraine. The Russian annexation of Crimea has brought concerns about our common European security back on our agenda - in a fundamental way.

At the same time, violence has spiked in regions of the Middle East and Northern Africa. Oppression, terror, religious radicalism and regional rivalries have led to immeasurable human suffering, especially in Syria.

The brutal conflicts in the Middle East have reached the European continent. Hundreds of thousands of people have been forced to flee their homes and are seeking shelter in Europe – many of them in Germany.

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All of these developments are challenging our common security more fundamentally than we long thought possible.

“Maintaining international peace and security” - that is what the UN Charter holds. A “new era of democracy, peace and unity in Europe” – that was the vision in the Charter of Paris.

However, this vision of a Europe “whole and free” has not yet materialized. And even worse: principles of international law as stipulated in the UN Charter and in OSCE documents seem to be coming under more and more pressure.

How should we respond? What should our guiding principles be in these uncertain times?

Firstly, let’s face this world with a realistic look, with the look of today not of yesterday. We are not reliving the Cold War, and we shouldn’t talk as if we were. The world of today is different, its conflicts are of a new kind - more complex, with more actors, more conflicting interests. So yesterday’s arguments are, from my point of view, not only inappropriate, they are counterproductive.

Secondly, I am convinced that the principles to which we have all agreed in the UN and the OSCE - such as territorial integrity and sovereign equality of nations - must still form the bedrock of how we live together as nations. These commitments still form the basis for overcoming divisions– provided that all states muster the necessary political will!

Thirdly, we need strong multilateral organizations to help safeguard and implement these principles, to give us tools for conflict resolution, and to provide us with opportunities for debate to overcome our differences.

The United Nations were created to do exactly that! And the same holds for the OSCE! I firmly believe that these two organizations continue to give us the best tools we have to shape the future of a rules-based international order. - And to prevent the fragility of our time from turning into perpetual disorder. That is why these two institutions are so important, particularly in our turbulent times!

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We want the OSCE to help us overcome the fragile security situation - in close cooperation with the United Nations. Let me highlight some focal areas of our Chairmanship.

First of all: Ukraine

The developments in and around Ukraine have shown how indispensable the OSCE is, when it comes to “uniting our strength to maintain international peace and security”, as the UN Charter says.

Without the OSCE and particularly the courageous men and women of the Special Monitoring Mission we would not have made the progress we have seen on military de-escalation and -at least partial- withdrawal of weapons.

However, we remain deeply concerned over the continuing violations of the ceasefire and the restriction of access for the SMM.

I strongly believe that implementing the Minsk agreements is the only way towards a sustainable political solution. And I call on both sides present in this Council to live up to their responsibilities. Together with our French colleagues we remain committed to

supporting this process within the Normandy format and I count on the support of this Council in this regard.

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Secondly, I would like to highlight conflicts which are often referred to as “frozen” or “protracted conflicts”. I believe we should not adopt this kind of fatalism!

For many years, these conflicts have brought hardship to the people affected and stagnation to the regions involved. During our OSCE Chairmanship we want to make every effort to return to more constructive approaches: to stabilize ceasefires, to rebuild trust by building confidence in small but tangible steps.

In the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, we are concerned about the high number of deadly incidents along the line of contact and the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan. We need to intensify efforts under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group. We must find ways to reduce the number of casualties quickly. And we should not be disheartened to find a lasting solution to the conflict on the basis of the principles of territorial integrity, the right to self-determination and the non-use of force!

In Georgia, we have seen at least some progress on practical cooperation between the sides. I want to commend the efforts undertaken by the UN jointly with the OSCE and the EU in the “Geneva International Discussions”. We want to underpin this momentum with more confidence-building measures and humanitarian action.

We will also use the Chairmanship to revive the 5+2 negotiations on the Transnistria conflict.

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My third point concerns security- and confidence building measures.

Whether you look at Ukraine, Russia, Turkey - we are currently seeing increased military activities and a high risk of military incidents between OSCE member States. In these times, confidence and security building measures are more important than ever.

One important element is the Vienna Document. The Ukraine conflict has revealed that it needs to be updated substantially. Progress will be difficult, of course, when confidence is low. But I am convinced that the proposals we have made would lead to better crisis prevention and risk reduction.

On the basis of these confidence-building measures, I do hope that we will eventually return to a broader dialogue on European security. We should adhere to the long-term vision of renewed arms control and cooperative security in Europe.

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Excellencies,

The OSCE and the UN share the task of preventing armed conflicts. I believe we should make every effort to strengthen the OSCE’s capabilities in this field– from early warning to crisis management to post-conflict rehabilitation. We will also address the role of women in conflict

management and the protection of women in violent conflicts, in line with SC Resolution 1325.

The experience of the UN in all these areas can enrich this process! I believe that we are more likely to be successful if we work closely together and combine our toolboxes.

The same is true when it comes to addressing the many other global challenges we face - from terrorism and extremism to organized crime. I believe the pressing issue of migration should figure more prominently on our agenda. I welcome the UN Secretary General's initiative to organize a global summit on migration in September. The OSCE has a lot of expertise in this field: from human rights standards and best practices in labor migration to combatting human trafficking.

That is why we want to discuss how the OSCE may contribute to the international efforts - in line with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Human rights and fundamental freedoms are top priorities of our Chairmanship. I believe that we need to intensify the fight against discrimination, racism, xenophobia and intolerance throughout Europe, including in my own country! In Germany, people's overwhelming readiness to help arriving refugees has recently been overshadowed by xenophobic assaults. These are despicable acts that we must not and will not tolerate!

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Finally, I would like to highlight that security within the OSCE area is intrinsically tied to the security of its neighbors. The OSCE is a unique organization. But my hope is that its principles can provide a glimmer of hope to other regions – particularly in the Middle East.

Let us remember that the road to Helsinki

began when the Cold War was at its coldest. At the start of the negotiations, who would have dared to hope that at the end of it, the Berlin Wall would fall?

Of course, you can't transfer a security architecture to another region. But perhaps our experiences can highlight useful principles and processes. And maybe they can encourage the parties in the Middle East to live up to their responsibility and explore new paths to political settlements.

This is a discussion that we started at the OSCE conference in Jordan last year and which we would like to build on.

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Mister President, Excellencies,

Germany is fully aware of the responsibility attached to assuming the OSCE Chairmanship in these turbulent times.

I am convinced that we have to remain firm on our principles. At the same time, I believe that we need to promote dialogue and a co-operative approach: to overcome our differences and to put us back on track towards restored security.

We should remind ourselves of the “spirit of Helsinki”: persistent dialogue and a cooperative approach can pay out in the end.

This very hope is expressed in our motto for 2016: “renewing dialogue, rebuilding trust, restoring security”.

This, ladies and gentlemen, embraces the spirit of the UN Charter.

Rebuilding trust will not be easy and there is no quick fix. But if we want to be able to look future generations in the eye and say that we did everything possible to return to peace in Europe we have to work on it – together - in the OSCE and the United Nations!