

Check against delivery

**2023 OSCE CHAIRPERSONSHIP OF NORTH MACEDONIA
ADDRESS BY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
H.E. BUJAR OSMANI
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL 12 JANUARY 2023**

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I feel privileged to serve as OSCE's Chairman – in – Office in 2023. This is a distinct honor and concurrently a heavy duty.

I would like to pay tribute to all those who walked in these shoes before. Particular tribute goes to Minister Rau as he led our Organization during unprecedented times.

Together with his able team, the Polish Chairmanship demonstrated genuine willpower and prowess in times of deep crisis for the OSCE region.

This is worthy of our praise, just as it is the commendable leadership of SG Schmid and the determination of all institutions and structures of the OSCE network.

The year ahead will not be less challenging. Therefore, we count on your energy and continuous support.

Excellencies:

Unfortunately, not much has changed since September, when I presented our framework priorities.

The war of aggression against Ukraine continues to rear its ugly face. Peace is shattered.

People continue to die and suffer.

They are the first to feel the plight of today's geopolitical turmoil. Those, directly exposed to war and conflict suffer the most. Those afar, feel the insecurity and uncertainty. Their way of life is at stake, every-day life is disrupted. They need to be freed from fear of war.

Our mutual trust is deeply undermined. However, I believe that our hopes for better future of our Organization, nations we represent and people we serve are high.

It's about them, it's about people. This is our motto and driving force for the year ahead.

The OSCE needs to deliver in difficult times.

“Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today. Let us begin.” These words sound familiar to all of us. Uttered by Gonxhe Bojaxhiu, Mother Teresa, a native of Skopje, our capital, citizen of the world, an epitome for peace and empathy.

Let her legacy, word and deed inspire us. It's our duty to react today. For the people. They look for our support.

That's is the fundament of our Organization.

In fact, OSCE was created for this particular reason and the vision of our Chairpersonship practically lies at the heart of the OSCE mission.

The signatory states of the Helsinki Final Act were “motivated by the political will, in the interest of peoples, to improve and intensify their

relations and to contribute in Europe to peace, security, justice and cooperation...”

This is a commitment that we all pledged to. The OSCE has the obligation and capacity to safeguard peoples’ interest. The question is: do we have a strong and unequivocal political will to overcome the challenges for the sake of peace, stability and prosperity? The answer to this question should come from all 57 participating States and it goes far beyond any term of service at the helm of this Organization.

Excellencies:

Our plan in 2023 is to reinvigorate this spirit. Despite all difficulties, our Organization has proven its potential.

We must provide additional support to the OSCE to rise to the occasion. This means a swift adoption of the unified budget. Principles and commitments shall not be only blank phrases. On the eve of the 50th Anniversary of the Helsinki, the history will remember us by the deeds not by our promises, deliberations and statements.

We must translate words into action to ensure OSCE functionality.

Ukraine will remain our top priority. The aggression must stop. Civilian death and devastation are unacceptable. It is distressing to see how people suffer. The consequences and the cost of this war for the OSCE Region and beyond is deplorable and unbearable.

We are aware that there are other crisis settings across the OSCE region. Regional instability and the potential for new conflict will require our continued attention. We need to maintain the essential functions and operations of the Organization, ensuring that it is able to support vulnerable regions and remain flexible to address challenges.

Ladies and gentlemen:

I presented our priorities on September 1 and they are now part of the Programme you received.

They will largely depend on the security developments.

However, in the upcoming year, we will work to:

1. Support a functional and flexible OSCE, offering a versatile toolbox to help restore peace and security, prevent conflict and promote co-operation across the OSCE region.
2. Promote human security through support for sustainable economic growth and environmental co-operation
3. Uphold basic human rights and promoting tolerance and non-discrimination as prerequisites for comprehensive security.

The OSCE has a proven track-record across different regions. I am here speaking from our own experience. As a host country of an OSCE field mission, we can testify firsthand to the benefits of OSCE's field presences. I believe that other host countries share this opinion. Therefore, it is not surprising why it is our priority to focus on the people.

The Chairpersonship will strive to reinforce the attention on the ground, which is a crucial prerequisite in empowering people as the final beneficiaries of the OSCE's activities. North Macedonia will promote, support and boost the OSCE's work on the ground, look to improve co-ordination and joint ownership, as a prerequisite for positive change.

Excellencies,

Today, our Organization is needed more than ever. I am echoing your voices from Lodz and calls for support for the OSCE and its values. This encouragement will help us lead this Organization in the upcoming year.

On this road, we count on the support of the participating States and the broad OSCE structure: the OSCE Secretariat, OSCE field missions, autonomous institutions, the OSCE PA and the special representatives working on important portfolios.

Challenges will continue to emerge, but we are here to persevere. On this occasion, I would like to inform the Permanent Council of our plan to inaugurate a Special Representative of the Chairman-in-Office on Civil Society as a testament to our commitment to be responsive to the needs of the people. There is no healthy democracy without a noisy, vibrant and resilient civil society.

Also, I would like to use this opportunity to inform you about our intent to invite Finland to join the Troika format. This way, we will continue working together, producing sustainable initiatives and solutions, until we find solution for the Chair in 2024.

Ladies and gentlemen:

In conclusion, let me rephrase what I said at the Ministerial Council in Lodz.

North Macedonia stands ready to assume its share of the responsibility, being privileged to serve as a Chair of this Organization. On this road, both, our successes and failures, will be yours too. Today's hard times require wisdom, accountability for our actions and commitment to the principles of the Helsinki Final Act.

They are our beacon of light and hope, but also a signal fire that these principles are non-negotiable. They will be our Code of Value and Conduct.

Finally, I will end my statement as I started, with a quote by Mother Theresa. "We fear the future because we are wasting today."

Let us not fear the future and waste today but work for better tomorrow. For the future of our Organization. For the future of the people. I thank you.