

STATEMENT
by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine
H.E. Mr. Volodymyr Ogryzko
at the 16th Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council

(Helsinki, 4 December 2008)

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Finnish OSCE Chairmanship which so successfully navigated us through the dangerous reefs of politics to this highly symbolic meeting in Helsinki.

Indeed, the year 2008 has been very challenging and witnessed a number of critical trends in the world politics. Almost all OSCE participating States have suffered from the world financial crisis which threatened our economies.

However, the major challenge came from the security domain and lies in the alarming erosion of the OSCE fundamental principles, which were inscribed in the Helsinki Final Act here in Helsinki 33 years ago. The conflict in Georgia was indisputably one of revealing cases.

Non-use of force as a means of settling disputes, respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of internationally recognized borders have always been at the heart of my country's foreign policy. This is why Ukraine will never compromise on the question of territorial integrity of Georgia.

In our view, to facilitate resolution of the Georgian issue, we should focus our joint efforts within the OSCE on implementing the following crucial steps.

First, the mandate of the OSCE Mission in Georgia should be extended and the Mission should be vested with the capacity to perform its functions fully and properly. We cannot accept the suggestion to amend the Mission's mandate due to "the new realities" as well as any other amendments of the kind that imply indirect recognition of independence of the breakaway Georgian regions.

Second, the OSCE military monitors should have full and unimpeded access to the territory of South Ossetia.

Third, the OSCE should provide all necessary support to ensure complete implementation of the cease-fire agreement.

Fourth, the OSCE should implement projects aimed at economic and environmental rehabilitation of the war-affected Georgia, including assistance in ensuring safe and dignified return of refugees and access of the affected population to the humanitarian aid.

Finally, the OSCE should maintain its role as an instrumental tool in settling the conflict in Georgia.

Mr. Chairman,

It is obvious that the top priority of the European security agenda now is to restore respect for the cornerstone principles of international politics such as non-use of force or threat of force for settling disputes, respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of internationally recognized borders.

Respect for these principles had guaranteed peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area over past decades, even during the Cold War confrontation.

The question we are currently facing is whether we need a new security architecture.

While approaching this issue, we have to address two overriding questions: how will a new system of European security differ from the present security arrangements, and how will the new mechanism of guarantees, if any, be shaped?

As the matters currently stand, we do not have answers to these important questions.

However, we are prepared to look at and react to the recently announced proposals as soon as they are tabled for our common consideration.

Indeed, my delegation has no doubt that Europe critically needs a strengthened security dialogue.

The existing arms control regime can and should be modernized and the OSCE can serve as an all-inclusive platform for this dialogue.

Our work in this direction is seriously undermined by the current status of the CFE treaty, a cornerstone of European security.

The established arms control regime is not working, which in turn has ruined mutual confidence and gave rise to the return of bloc-based thinking.

Ukraine is convinced that the focus of our present efforts should be on creating the necessary conditions for a progress in the security sphere. We remain optimistic that reinstating the system of collective security based on a regional balance of forces is an achievable task.

Mutual monitoring and control, verification and information exchange – and not suspension of obligations or unilateral removal of existing limitations – are the only way to achieve such a balance.

However difficult and unrealistic this task may appear today, we call on all sides to reaffirm their readiness to resume and strengthen implementation of their OSCE and CFE commitments and obligations, to start the move towards ratification and entry into force of the Adapted CFE Treaty and to reduce mutual mistrust.

A roadmap on conflict resolution has to be a part and parcel of the overall efforts within the security dialogue.

Only then we can be confident that we will be able to make progress on new arrangements on European security.

As far as my country is concerned, we share the view on the importance of a strict adherence to the principle of indivisibility of security, according to which the States will not strengthen their security at the expense of security of other States. We wish to reconfirm that this principle is equally applicable to all States, and my country expects that other states' security will not be strengthened at our expense.

We believe that the European security architecture should not determine areas of "privileged interests" but take into account the interests of all participating States and respect their free choice of applicable security arrangements, in particular through integration into the EU and /or NATO.

Let me restate that no matter what bloc or collective security system Ukraine joins in the future, our absolute priority is to ensure that no threat, military or otherwise, to our neighbours or third countries comes from the territory of Ukraine.

This is a paramount condition of our own security, and we are ready to work on this issue with our OSCE partners.

I would also add to that that strict compliance with the existing commitments in the sphere of human rights, democracy and the rule of law are among the most important aspects of any security architecture.

Let me conclude by thanking again the outgoing Finnish Chairmanship for its fruitful work at the helm of our Organization and for the hospitality in Helsinki.

Availing myself of this opportunity, I wish to congratulate the friendly people of Finland on the occasion of its forthcoming National Holiday.

Finally, I would like to warmly welcome the incoming Chairman-in-Office, Foreign Minister Bakoyannis and to wish every success to her new important mission.

I thank you.