



**Statement by Mr Bogdan Benko, State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign
Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia
20th Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council, Kyiv, 5–6 December 2013**

Mr Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

— Slovenia aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the European Union.

I would like to thank and congratulate the Ukrainian Chairmanship for hosting this Ministerial Council meeting in Kyiv and for the commendable work it has performed as the Chair of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe this year. A special responsibility lies on the Chair in implementing a range of OSCE commitments. In the context of the present situation we expect the Ukrainian government to uphold the freedom of assembly and freedom of expression. We call upon all parties to refrain from violence and to engage in a constructive dialogue in order to design the vision of the future of the country.

Slovenia adds its voice to those who believe that a number of important ministerial decisions and declarations, as proposed by the Chairmanship and elaborated on by the speakers today, will be adopted. This will show again our united approach to the challenges we face in the politico-military, economic-environmental and human dimensions, as well as to issues of a cross-dimensional nature. The security community is not only an ideal towards which we strive, but should be a reality, and we look forward to working now and in the next years to strengthen its already existing parameters.

Approaching the 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, Slovenia sees this Ministerial Council as another opportunity to reflect on where we are, and to intensify dialogue on where we want to go. We should spare no effort to move towards an effective, efficient OSCE, well-equipped for old and new challenges. With this common overall goal in mind, we should be able to further the great potential of this organization.

Slovenia continues to value highly the OSCE as a unique organization, with its vision and practice of a comprehensive approach to security. We see its focus on early warning, conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and its strengthened emphasis on mediation, and post-conflict rehabilitation, as very much in accord with our own foreign policy priorities.

Respect for human rights is a pivotal founding principle of Slovenia. Based on this deep commitment, Slovenia has presented its candidature for membership of the United Nations Human Rights Council for the period 2016–2018.

We intend to contribute to international peace and security, which we see as attainable only through the wide promotion and protection of human rights. As fundamental freedoms and human rights are interdependent, interrelated and mutually reinforcing; none of them should be questioned or limited.

We must properly address the role of education in preserving and promoting the values of a democratic society and empowering the young generation. Human rights education can be a long-term investment in conflict prevention and in building a tolerant, stable and prosperous society.

It is our strong view that for the meaningful work of the organization, the OSCE institutions – the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Representative on Freedom of the Media – must be given the necessary political and operational support to continue to fully exercise their mandates on the basis of professionalism and autonomy. We take this opportunity to congratulate the Office of the Representative of the Freedom of the Media on its 15th anniversary and commend the outstanding job the Representative has been doing.

Meanwhile, we, the participating States must continue to improve our own performance in implementing commitments we adhered to, and use the invaluable expertise of these institutions, and field operations.

Cooperation with our Mediterranean and Asian partners in this interdependent world is of paramount importance for security and stability for the benefit of all. We support the readiness of Libya to work closer with the OSCE, and we hope that we will soon be able to welcome Libya into our midst as a seventh Mediterranean Partner for Cooperation.

In conclusion, I would like to wish the incoming Swiss and Serbian Chairmanships every success. We are convinced that the next two years under the guidance of both will bring us even closer to creating a security community. We look forward to working with you to achieve this ambitious and necessary goal.

Thank you.