



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **U.S. Statement for the Forum for Security Cooperation: Opening Statement**

As delivered by Ambassador Michael Carpenter  
January 18, 2023

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

Thanks, dear Siniša, and welcome to you, Deputy Foreign Minister Brkić. Welcome to the Forum for Security Cooperation. I, too, would like to express my condolences for the loss of life in the tragic helicopter accident that occurred in Brovary, Ukraine. Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims and their families. I welcome Bosnia and Herzegovina's assumption of the Chairpersonship of the Forum for Security Cooperation at such a critical juncture in this body's history. Given its own recent history of war and conflict, including large numbers of civilian deaths and displacements, the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina can appreciate better than most the fragility of our European security architecture. We therefore look to you, Mr. Chair, to guide this forum through these challenging times with compassion, candor, and commitment to our shared principles.

For better or worse, one of the responsibilities that falls to members of this forum is to shine a light on the security situation across the OSCE region, and to sound the alarm and expose aggression whenever and wherever it happens. None of us has the luxury of looking away.

Today, we meet at a time when one participating State has twisted, transgressed or obliterated every last vestige of the European security architecture that this body has been tasked with upholding. Just days ago, we witnessed this fact yet again when Russia deliberately fired missiles at the main entrance of a residential apartment block in Dnipro, killing at least 45 civilians in one of the worst single losses of civilian life since February 24. Forty-five unarmed civilians – men, women, and children who were just trying to go about their lives and get by – are now dead because Russia deliberately targeted them. The youngest was just three years old. And this was the destruction caused by just *one* of the 38 missiles that Russia fired at Ukraine on January 14.

Mr. Chair,

Russia's brutal war against Ukraine casts a dark shadow over everything we do here at the OSCE. Even Vladimir Putin finally acknowledged this on December 22, when he admitted that his so-called special military operation is, in fact, a brutal war.

I appreciate all calls for dialogue. Dialogue is how most civilized nations resolve their differences. But I would also caution against the cliché that, "Dialogue is always possible in every context," particularly when one party rapes, tortures, and kills the other party that would participate in that dialogue.

As we move through the Chair's agenda this trimester, we must always remember that Russia has contravened every single one of the principles of the Helsinki Final Act. Every single one. This is the context in which we are meeting today. Let us recall that the Act's final directive commits all participating States to not use their "armed forces to limit the peaceful and lawful exercise of ... human and civil rights by persons as individuals or as representatives of groups nor to deprive them of their national, religious, cultural, linguistic or ethnic identity." We must remember that Russia uses not just small arms and light weapons, but ballistic missiles and tanks and kamikaze drones to attack Ukraine's civilians. We must remember that at one point, almost 50 percent of Ukraine's territory became contaminated by Russia's unexploded ordnance and mines and that even now, nearly 30 percent of Ukraine's land remains contaminated. We must remember how thousands of Ukrainian women stepped up to defend their country, even in the face of the vilest abuse and sexual violence that awaited them if captured by Russia's forces. And we must not forget that one year ago tomorrow, Russia opened the FSC's winter trimester with an indictment of its own actions, saying quote, "Contrary to fundamental OSCE principles, there continue to be attempts to use force to impose one's interests and to strengthen one's own security at the expense of the security of others." How ironic.

President Vladimir Putin's statement on New Year's Day underscores that Russia continues to flaunt its blatant disregard for the OSCE's founding principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity by relentlessly trying to subjugate a free and democratic Ukraine. In Russia's world, or should I say the *Russkiy Mir*, where "might makes right," there is no room for security or cooperation. The only principle is the sheer brutality of violence.

Mr. Chair,

This trimester will undoubtedly be a challenging one for you and your team. You likely will be tested, pressured, and maybe even bullied to ignore Russia's ongoing, blatant contraventions of OSCE principles and values and to resume "business as usual," to talk about *anything* other than what is happening in Ukraine. But Bosnia and Herzegovina knows better than most that ignoring war and turning one's back on war crimes does not make them go away. That doing so only encourages more violations and more violence. This forum must therefore stay the course and continue holding Russia to account for its war of aggression against Ukraine and its forces' war crimes against Ukraine's population, as well as Belarus' complicity in this war. And we must continue to demand that Russia cease its operations and withdraw its forces from Ukraine's internationally recognized territory, including Crimea.

In closing, it has often been said that the only thing necessary for evil to triumph in the world is for good people to do nothing. Standing up to bullies and facing down evil is never easy, but it is critical that we do so, and it easier done when we stand together. You can count on my full support and that of the United States, and I am confident that our troika partners Belgium and Bulgaria will be there as well to support you every step of the way.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.