



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Secretary General Thomas Greminger

Report to the Ministerial Council

Vienna, 7 December 2017

Mr. Chairperson, Minister Kurz,

Thank you for your warm welcome, and thank you for your dedicated leadership of the OSCE this year. I would also like to thank your teams in Vienna headed by Ambassadors Raunig and Koja.

Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to begin my first address to the Ministerial Council by thanking all of you for the confidence you have placed in me. I will make every effort to meet your high expectations. In return, I am counting on your commitment, on your support and on your active engagement in guiding the Organization.

Security begins with trust—and trust begins with dialogue. This is the impulse that drove the Helsinki process. It is high time that we revive it today.

I believe we all would like the OSCE to be a space where real progress can be made in reconciling differences and enhancing co-operation. I am convinced that the OSCE has the flexibility, the tools and the expertise to be an effective force for stability and peace in today's increasingly complex and volatile security environment. And I am eager to work with all of you to ensure that our organization is well prepared to tackle both challenges and opportunities.

We must recommit to the principles and commitments our organization stands for. At the same time, we must be pragmatic and find common ground where interests coincide, and build a unifying agenda for the OSCE. Small but steady steps will produce incremental progress. But this requires you, the participating States, to recommit wholeheartedly to genuine dialogue and co-operation.

We already work together effectively to combat transnational threats like terrorism, violent extremism, and trafficking in drugs, arms and people. Our joint efforts to create confidence-building measures to prevent crises stemming from cyber and ICT threats show how well an incremental approach can work.

The Structured Dialogue, our flagship dialogue initiative, is a critical example, in today's increasingly unpredictable security environment, of constructive engagement in the politico-military dimension. Eventually I expect this informal process to produce results, including military risk reduction and confidence- and security-building measures. And further down the road, it should lead to renewed focus on conventional arms control.

Economic connectivity and environmental co-operation are increasingly acknowledged as areas where the OSCE builds trust and adds value, in line with the Sustainable Development Agenda of the UN. They also have great unifying potential.

I hope progress in these dimensions will also bring participating States together to reaffirm and strengthen our shared principles and commitments to human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law.

Dear Ministers,

No other regional organization has such a sophisticated toolbox for preventing and resolving conflicts as the OSCE. We have fantastic instruments in our Institutions, field operations and the Secretariat. And we are keen to contribute to resolving the protracted conflicts in the OSCE area. The Organization is well equipped to respond to crises – as we demonstrated in our rapid reaction to the crisis in and around Ukraine.

Working toward a sustainable resolution of this crisis remains the Organization's top priority. The OSCE will continue to de-escalate tensions through our missions on the ground, and facilitate political efforts to achieve a peaceful settlement.

I am deeply concerned by the intensified military activity and the worsening humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine. We all need to push harder to break the political stalemate, and for full implementation of the Minsk Agreements by all sides.

Recent discussions about a possible UN peace operation in eastern Ukraine have spotlighted the OSCE's added value as a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, and as a longstanding partner in conflict management, conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation. We are ready to co-operate with the UN on any concrete proposals that emerge from the Security Council, and the OSCE should be closely involved in planning from the outset.

Recalling the tragic death in the line of duty of one of our colleagues in the Special Monitoring Mission, I call on the sides to fulfill their obligation to guarantee the safety of OSCE monitors, and to grant them full and unhindered access throughout the conflict zone.

Dear Ministers,

The OSCE needs to be ready to respond to crises quickly and effectively, but we also should be prepared to seize opportunities.

A new, co-operative spirit in Central Asia; transformations in South East Europe; positive developments in Moldova, which I hope will accelerate progress toward a peaceful settlement; and broad recognition of the need for co-operation on shared security concerns on both shores of the Mediterranean—in all of these developments, I see great potential—and

growing expectations—for the OSCE to do more. With modest additional resources, we could respond in a meaningful way to all of these opportunities, enhancing security for us all.

I have already mentioned the critical role of dialogue. My own efforts will focus on bringing together key stakeholders to find a way forward on specific concerns, and introducing fresh perspectives on critical issues.

I will also pursue pragmatic, result-oriented partnerships, and ensure that our efforts to address common security challenges are complementary and mutually reinforcing. I will work closely with the Troika to develop medium-term strategies for our Mediterranean and our Asian Partnerships. I aim to revitalize the Platform for Co-operative Security, our well-established but under-utilized mechanism for engaging with regional organizations both east and west of Vienna. And I will also continue to strengthen and further operationalize our relationship with the United Nations, for the benefit of our organization and our region.

Dear Ministers,

The OSCE is the world's largest regional security organization, working in all three security dimensions and covering an area with over 1 billion people. We run 16 field operations, including a large-scale mission in a conflict zone. We do all this, and so much more, on assessed budgets totaling less than 220 million euros.

The Organization is lean, but it also needs to be fit for purpose. I will strive to make the Executive Structures more responsive to the needs of participating States, to maximize our collective impact, and to ensure that the funds you put at our disposal are put to the best possible use. I intend to strengthen the Secretariat's strategic planning capacities; enhance cross-dimensionality, coherence of action and internal synergies across the Organization; and mobilize synergies among our gender instruments.

I will also focus on revamping personnel policies, including the secondment system; and budget reform, which will increase transparency, enable us to do multi-year strategic planning, and introduce a more methodological approach to reprioritization and efficiency.

Ultimately the OSCE can only be as effective as the participating States enable it to be. It is up to you to provide the Organization with the resources we need to close the gap between what you expect us to do, and what we are currently able to do.

I am well aware that many participating States face financial constraints. But if you believe in the OSCE, as I do, then I urge you to strengthen the Organization by supporting moderate growth in all three dimensions.

For my part, I pledge to be transparent and cost-conscious.

Organizational issues can and should be used to unite rather than divide. So I call on all of you to take greater ownership of the Organization. Adopting a sensible budget for 2018 by year-end would send a strong signal that you take the OSCE seriously and are committed to its work. On a practical level, it would provide the Organization with planning security and ensure that we can deliver the results you expect.

In closing, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the entire OSCE staff. I have been extremely impressed by their commitment and by their hard work. They deserve our thanks for enabling the Organization to do so much with its limited resources to promote security, stability and co-operation across our region and beyond.

Next year the OSCE will continue to grapple with serious challenges, and I hope it will also seize new opportunities. I look forward to working with the incoming Italian Chairmanship, and I offer you my assurances of the Organization's steadfast commitment to support the implementation of your decisions.

Thank you.