

MC.DEL/70/13  
30 December 2013

ENGLISH only



**Statement by the Hon. Dr. George W. Vella**  
**Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Malta**

**At the 20<sup>th</sup> OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting**

***Kiev, 5-6 December 2013***

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

As with previous speakers, I heartily congratulate the Chairperson-in-Office, Minister Khozara, and his hardworking team for the excellent organisation of this conference, and for their warm hospitality.

Dear colleagues,

Since its inception, this Organisation's main goal has been quite straightforward: to lessen the likelihood of conflict. And it has sought to achieve this through a comprehensive understanding of security. One built on common commitments and agreed basic principles.

The new Maltese Government takes these commitments very seriously and is working tirelessly to implement them.

Malta is also keen to see that the rights of others beyond our shores are respected and protected. We are thus firm believers in the respect for the rule of law and respect towards democracy, and in the multilateral system which fosters collaboration.

But while we work towards these aims, we note that there is still quite a lot of unfinished business for the international community.

The concept of a pan-European area of security, the so-called Vancouver-to-Vladivostock area, still resonates to this day, but other modern day threats are demanding our collective focus and attention.

Malta notes that we cannot talk of a vision of security that is solely limited to the Euro-Atlantic or Euro-Asian region, for there is also a Euro-Mediterranean

dimension that deserves our attention. We need to integrate the Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation further. We need to truly widen the concept of the OSCE's regional integration processes.

When speaking of the OSCE we are accustomed to say that it covers from Vancouver to Vladivostock.

I think we would be more accurate were we to describe the OSCE as covering from Vancouver to the east beyond Vladivostock and to the south beyond Valletta.

The OSCE must ensure that the Mediterranean partners can access its working methods and structures. Malta wishes to see more engagement at this level, particularly now following the upheavals that have taken place in North Africa. We will continue to stress that the Mediterranean is not Europe's backyard. The OSCE has to give the region greater and more tangible attention, if it really means to have a comprehensive view of security.

Although the Arab Spring brought much promise, for many it has still not brought peace and freedom. We are deeply concerned by the protracted conflicts and sectarian strife that continue to present a threat to our common security.

It is also with this in mind, that Malta is strongly supporting the integration of Libya into the family of the Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation. It is the only missing link in the North African chain. As a neighbouring state, we are concerned by the situation in that country. But we also believe that the OSCE can help Libya build its democratic institutions. It can help it foster the respect for human rights and the rule of law. It can also help it address the problems associated with the proliferation of small and light weapons and to have democratic control of the armed forces. The OSCE has the right tools, credentials and experience to push

for stability in that country. Overlooking the situation will however not make it go away.

Dear colleagues,

Stability and security also mean giving due attention to another issue that is affecting the Mediterranean region: human trafficking. Malta experiences the effects of this scourge first-hand through irregular immigration and is doing its utmost to assist primarily the victims.

But this modern form of slavery also effects most of your countries. It is an affront to human dignity that must be combatted forcefully. This Organisation has to do more to see that laws are enforced and criminality controlled. More also needs to be done on the prevention side of human trafficking. Political commitments are good but not good enough. Those commitments must be implemented through a concrete action plan that is results-oriented and thematically focussed. A plan that cannot be implemented without the full cooperation of the North African Partners for Cooperation, including Libya – countries through which most of the irregular migrants reaching the Mediterranean pass, before reaching our shores, if they manage to make it.

Dear colleagues,

Malta's vocation has always been that of a peace-maker and a catalyst for cooperation in the Mediterranean. We have consistently promoted the stability of the region. We believe in good neighbourliness because for us security will

always revolve around the basic notion of trust which results from working closer together.

As new countries struggle to grasp the realities of democracy, Malta believes the OSCE should step in to help build institutions and to instil a culture of trust. The OSCE should develop a mechanism that applies best-practice knowledge for confidence-building. It should ensure that cultural misunderstandings are no longer the reason behind 'frozen conflicts'.

Dear Colleagues,

In a month's time, Malta will take over the Chairmanship of the Forum for Security Cooperation, an onerous task and a challenge we are looking forward to meet.

We shall be giving particular attention to the issue of the democratic control of the Armed Forces. We believe that armed forces should remain subordinate to democratically-elected civilian authorities and subject to parliamentary oversight, the media and civil society organisations. Recent events in the southern Mediterranean have shown how delicate and fragile this relationship is. The Mediterranean region in particular should be governed by these principles which ensure that the armed forces contribute positively to the stability of the country.

Dear colleagues,

Our Organisation also greatly values the importance of media freedom. The media contributes to transparency and accountability of governments and civil society. This concept also includes cyberspace – that space which we inhabit

constantly and over which there has been so much debate. We appreciate the importance to monitor this space and to be vigilant so that it remains a safe and secure environment. But at the same time, we fully support the privacy of cyberspace as an important aspect of the right to private life. This sensitive issue contributes to our confidence building steps. Freedom on the internet is key to maintaining free societies in the world and we call upon all to respect OSCE commitments in this respect.

Malta remains committed to the goals and principles of the OSCE. We welcome and urge all efforts to strengthen this Organisation and to enhance its relevance. The OSCE can push forward the frontiers of human rights and dignity to bring peace, security and prosperity to our citizens and to the wider world in full compliance with the aims and objectives of the Helsinki+40 process. It is our duty to see that results are achieved and that people enjoy the fruits of such noble policies.

Thank you.