



Permanent Representation
of the Republic of Cyprus
to the OSCE, Vienna

FSC



Chair of the
OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation
Cyprus 2024 January - April

**Opening Statement by H.E. Dr. Constantinos Kombos,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus
On the Occasion of the 1066th Plenary Meeting of the Forum for Security Co-operation
Chaired by Cyprus**

17 January 2024

Madame Secretary General,

Distinguished Ambassadors,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am deeply honoured to address the Opening Session of the Forum for Security Cooperation under the Chairpersonship of the Republic of Cyprus.

At the outset, I would like to thank Canada, for all its important work, in this role, in such demanding times.

Cyprus is assuming the Chair of the Forum, with a deep sense of responsibility and with a strong commitment to further promote and advance the knowledge that has emerged from the previous Chairs, always in close cooperation with the members of the Troika, as well as the Chairpersonship of the OSCE, our good partner Malta.

We are also fully aware that our term coincides with a period of turmoil, coupled with an undeniably extended period of deep reflection. Russia's war of aggression has a devastating impact on Ukraine and its people, while simultaneously gravely affecting the security and stability of our continent and beyond.

Cyprus, having experienced itself the devastating effects of an unjustified war of aggression, is adamant that the use of force cannot and should not replace the rule of law. Respect for international law and the international legal order must both guide us and prevail. Therefore, Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, within its internationally recognized borders, must be respected. Revisionist policies and the use of force, have no place in the 21st century.

While taking due consideration of the situation in Ukraine and the consequences of the war, our Chairpersonship aims to bring into discussion at the Forum for Security Cooperation, important issues relevant to the FSC's mandate. We aim, during this trimester, to contribute to the extended reflection in our Organisation, while building upon the established practice and the constructive discussions already held during the previous Chairs.

In this respect, **Women Peace and Security agenda** is incorporated as a cross cutting priority and in all our thematic discussions. Gender equality is a fundamental foundation for peace, security and stability. Our starting point is that the effects of conflict are disproportionately impacting women and girls. Ensuring gender equality is not only a target, but also a means to implement the mandate of our Organisation, for meaningful and inclusive security and cooperation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to elaborate a bit more on the individual elements of our Programme:

Already next week, we plan a discussion on **Humanitarian Mine Action with a special focus on Victim Assistance**. We are therefore, aiming to raise awareness and share best practices from different stakeholders on assistance to victims of Landmines and Explosive Remnants of War. The aim of humanitarian demining is to restore human security at the community level. It thus, exceeds, by far, the operational purposes of demining during conflict.

In addition, a dedicated meeting will be organized in March with the aim to promote the **integration of gender perspectives when implementing politico-military commitments, and to elevate gender-monitoring as a yardstick for activities conducted in the political-military field of our Organisation**.

Moreover, in early February, we aim to focus on the significance of **human security in times of armed conflict through the application of International Humanitarian Law principles to protect civilians against gender-based violence**. As we mark the **30th anniversary of the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security**, we aim to recall our relevant obligations under international law, including the Charter of the United Nations and our commitments enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act, the Charter of Paris, and the Helsinki Document of 1992.

Along with the Maltese Chair, we also plan a **joint meeting aiming to explore the evolving role of military forces in responding to natural and man-made disasters. We will also look jointly into ways to reduce the impact of military activities, including in conflict situations, on the environment and climate change**. We share the Secretary General's conclusions, following the High-Level Conference on Climate Change organized last year, calling for change and collective action to reverse the dire situation. In this light, we will explore the development

of an OSCE integrated approach, that draws on our experience with conflict and crisis management, while incorporating a climate and environmental perspective.

Esteemed colleagues,

Despite the grave challenges, our Organisation remains the most important regional platform of dialogue and cooperation. It was created with the aim to prevent war and build bridges relying on a comprehensive and unique conceptualization of security. Sometimes, we will fail during implementation. But we have no choice other than insisting on working for peace. The alternative we have experienced, and the dark past cannot be our future. This is our collective compass and what brings us here today.

In **conclusion**, and as a general message of our Chairpersonship, I want to recall not only the importance of OSCE but also the need to preserve multilateralism and our values, upon which the Rules-based order is founded.

In this respect, we will exert all efforts to stand up for our values and preserve the effective functioning of our Organization, in full respect of the UN Charter and the OSCE principles and commitments. **This is our collective responsibility.**

We look forward to your constructive cooperation this trimester and beyond.

Thank you.