



Buantoscáireacht na hÉireann
don Eagraíocht um Comhoibriú agus Slándáil san Eoraip
Permanent Mission of Ireland to the
Organisation for Security and Co-Operation in Europe
Rotenturmstrasse 16-18
1010 Vienna
Austria

National Statement as delivered by Minister of State for European Affairs Thomas Byrne at the OSCE Ministerial Council on 4 December 2020

Mr Chairperson,

Firstly, I wish to thank you and the entire Albanian Chairpersonship team for your leadership and tireless efforts throughout this difficult year.

Ireland fully aligns itself with the statement made by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union.

We look forward to the incoming Swedish Chairpersonship, who will have our full support as they take the baton from Albania. Similarly, we extend our appreciation to Poland. The OSCE is well served by such participating States, willing to tackle the profound challenges in the years ahead. Equally, we look forward to resolving the leadership crisis that has undermined our shared organisation and we fully support the four candidates proposed.

Mr Chairperson,

Tirana 2020 marks the anniversary of several pillars of the security and dialogue architecture of the OSCE, not least the 45th Anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act. A comprehensive approach to security demands that we address security issues in their full complexity, and do not seek to limit ourselves to outdated concepts of what makes our societies secure.

In Ireland's experience, such agreements are the beginning, not the end, of efforts to consolidate and expand security. We must all refocus our efforts towards the implementation of these principles and commitments of the OSCE, as agreed by each of us. Key to this is ensuring the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women and girls, and a demonstrable commitment to gender equality.



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Mr Chairperson,

COVID-19 has affected us all in 2020, but we must also be mindful of significant conflicts which have been before us for considerably longer, and which have given rise to the loss of life and destruction of homes and livelihoods.

The illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia, the violation of the territorial integrity of Ukraine, the violence in and around the Donbass, the protracted conflicts in Georgia and Moldova, and the recent war in Nagorno-Karabakh, continue to affect the lives of millions of people and represent significant challenges to OSCE's governing principles and commitments.

The situation however, is not without hope. The Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine continues to record a dramatic reduction in violence since the agreement of additional measures to strengthen the ceasefire in place since July. A clear demonstration of the positive effects of political will, similar resolve is needed to fully implement the Minsk agreements in order to achieve a sustainable political solution to the conflict in line with OSCE principles and commitments.

Equally, the cessation of violence in Nagorno-Karabakh is an encouraging development. Building on this first key step, Ireland fully supports the OSCE Minsk Group, led by the Co-Chairs, as the only established format, to pursue a negotiated, comprehensive and sustainable settlement of the conflict, including on the status of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Mr. Chairperson,

Democratic values are inseparable from the OSCE concept of security. We commend ODIHR for maintaining its election observation activities throughout this challenging year, and for offering invaluable assistance to participating States in their efforts to ensure full and free participation by their citizens in national elections.



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Regrettably, Professor Benedek's report through the Moscow Mechanism on the situation in Belarus demonstrates that challenges to democracy persist in the OSCE area. The widespread, peaceful demonstrations have sadly been met with violence, and instances of arbitrary arrest and mistreatment of detainees. Without credible and active participation by citizens, there is no fully realisable concept of security. Across the OSCE area, we must each recommit ourselves to our shared principles which include the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and democratic principles of government

Mr Chairperson,

Ireland's national experience with conflict means that we can testify to the transformative effects of sustainable peace and reconciliation

We remain committed to multilateralism as an instrument for international cooperation, and for the resolution of conflict. To this end, Ireland sought election to the United Nations Security Council, and was elected in June of this year. We believe this to be a strong endorsement of our commitment to collective action. As a Chapter 8 organization of the United Nations, the OSCE is an integral part of this commitment, and we encourage the development of further meaningful links between the United Nations system and the OSCE.

I conclude by thanking you once more for the real commitment to this organisation that Albania has demonstrated throughout 2020.

Thank you Mr Chairperson.