



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

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**Statement in response to the address by the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office,
Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the
Slovak Republic, H.E. Mr. Miroslav Lajčák**

As delivered by Ambassador Ihor Prokopchuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1211st meeting of the Permanent Council,
10 January 2019

Mr. Chairperson,

Ukraine warmly welcomes to the Permanent Council the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic H.E. Miroslav Lajčák. We thank him for presenting a comprehensive outline of the priorities set by the Slovak Chairmanship for 2019 and wish him success in steering the work of the OSCE in the course of the year.

The ongoing flagrant violation of fundamental norms and principles of the OSCE by one participating State makes performance of the Chairmanship's functions a very demanding and challenging task. We stand ready to support the Slovak Chairmanship in pursuit of its goal of preventing, mediating and mitigating conflict, which belongs to the core mandate of this Organisation. At this alarming and complex juncture for Europe and European security marked by the grave security crisis and blatant breaches of the rules-based order by the Russian Federation of a scale not seen since World War II, we should reaffirm through dialogue and action the *raison d'être* of the OSCE placing respect for the Helsinki Decalogue and the Paris Charter at the centre of our collective efforts.

There must be no mistake: it is not only that Russia poses an existential threat to Ukraine by pursuing aggression and using military force against my country, but Russia is a formidable threat to all countries in its neighbourhood and in broader OSCE space. The facts of the last few years speak for themselves and leave no doubt. This is what makes it imperative to focus on critical issues of common security, rather than dwell, as a few suggest, upon searching a so called "positive and unifying agenda" with an aggressor-state which targets and destroys the decades-long achievements of the OSCE and the rules-based security order in Europe. We are convinced that multilateralism can only be effective if agreed basic norms and principles are respected in full, not as a *la carte menu*. We can work for safer future for the forthcoming generations by ensuring a predictable and stable security environment, leaving no space for questioning territorial integrity, sovereignty and

inviolability of frontiers of states. As we continue to face clear, gross and uncorrected violations of these principles, we encourage the Slovak Chairmanship to explore ways to increase the OSCE's effectiveness in dealing with such cases and in employing all respective OSCE mechanisms and instruments to that end.

Mr. Minister,

We strongly welcome your decision to start the Slovak OSCE Chairmanship by making a visit to Ukraine next week. It will emphasize the high priority placed by the OSCE on putting an end to the ongoing Russia's aggression against my country and on facilitating peaceful resolution of the conflict instigated and driven by Russia. We must all force Russia to implement the commitments undertaken under the Minsk agreements, including the withdrawal of its forces from Donbas. We must all maintain pressure on Russia to make it move out from the illegally occupied Crimean peninsula, thus allowing for restoration of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. All illegally detained Ukrainian citizens, including political prisoners held in the territory of the Russian Federation, must be released without delay.

We count on rigorous persistence in seeking full implementation of the functions envisaged for the OSCE in the Minsk agreements. These specific roles continue to be fulfilled only partially or not at all because of severe impediments and restrictions set by the Russian side, including with regards to ensuring permanent monitoring and verification at the Ukrainian-Russian state border.

The OSCE has a variety of tools to implement its functions, first and foremost through the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, Trilateral Contact Group, Border Observer Mission at two Russian border check-points and the OSCE institutions. Enhancing effectiveness of monitoring by the two field missions must remain high on the agenda this year, in view of systematic denials and restrictions of access to the Russia-occupied parts of Ukraine. Russia's breach of the SMM's mandate, in particular on the freedom of movement, which was also agreed by the Russian Federation among 57 OSCE participating States, must not be left without due response.

We support the Chairmanship's intention to focus on improving people's safety and security. Ukraine encourages Slovakia to provide political guidance and every support to the respective OSCE institutions and mechanisms in monitoring, reporting and responding to the gross violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms which happen on a daily basis in the Russia-occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Sevastopol and parts of Donbas.

Last November Russia again raised the stakes in its choice for defiance of agreed rules and for confrontation with the democratic international community by carrying out an act of unprovoked armed aggression against Ukraine near the Kerch Strait. We see it as a critical task for the OSCE, the Chairmanship and participating States to join efforts and take practical measures in seeking immediate and unconditional release of 24 Ukrainian servicemen captured by Russia as prisoners of war and return of the seized vessels. We would highly appreciate the CiO's personal involvement in this case.

Mr. Chairperson,

We stand ready to support the Slovak Chairmanship in facilitating collective response to other significant challenges on the OSCE agenda of comprehensive security. Political resolution of protracted conflicts on the territories of Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and the Republic of Azerbaijan with full respect to their sovereignty and territorial integrity within their internationally recognized borders and in line with norms and principles of international law must be kept as priority. Ukraine will continue to act and seek progress as a mediator and guarantor in the Transdniestrian settlement process.

In the politico-military dimension, efforts must continue to aim at implementing already existing commitments and at increasing transparency and military predictability. Practical response to transnational threats, strengthening border security, countering the phenomena of foreign terrorist fighters and other subversive non-state actors are the areas with potential for increased positive impact on security. Multilateral cooperation within the OSCE on cyber security brings an important added value.

We will support the efforts of the Chairmanship in using and expanding the respective OSCE toolbox to tackle environmental and humanitarian challenges to security arising from armed conflicts and their implications for the local civilian population. We will support the Chairmanship's leadership in fostering respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in line with respective OSCE commitments, noting that most glaring violations take place in the situations of occupation.

In conclusion, we wish to reiterate our gratitude to Minister Lajčák for being with us today and wish him and his able team every success in their activities throughout the year.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.