

As prepared for delivery



Address to the OSCE Ministerial Council

***OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President Ilkka Kanerva
4 December 2014
Basel, Switzerland***

Ministers,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my privilege to address you today for the first time in my capacity as the elected representative of 323 parliamentarians from across the OSCE area.

A lot happens in a year. We've been faced with the greatest modern challenge to the OSCE – a crisis in which one participating State has ignored the Helsinki Principles, violating the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its neighbor. The crisis in and around Ukraine has generated an institutional crisis: What can the OSCE do to monitor, to defuse, to mediate?

The institutional crisis also meant a truly existential crisis: What's the point of the Helsinki Final Act if countries that have pledged to play by these rules, decide not to do so?

Our hosts, the Swiss Chairmanship-in-Office, deserve credit for implementing the varied tools of the OSCE toolbox to try to help mitigate the crisis in Ukraine. But clearly, those efforts have had limited success in stopping the violence so far. While we call on both sides to honor their ceasefire commitments and fully implement the measures agreed in Minsk, let us state plainly that it is up to Russia to end its support for illegal separatist forces in Ukraine, including on the Crimean peninsula. Russia's troubling actions extend beyond Ukraine and I am greatly concerned by Moscow's continued efforts to challenge the territorial integrity of others – including Georgia and Moldova.

While the OSCE has responded to the crisis using many tools available, there are some questions concerning the effectiveness of some of these measures. For example, in order for the border Observation Mission to be credible, it needs to be extended and expanded. I would also argue that the Special Monitoring Mission needs to be scaled up to its maximum strength of 500 international monitors sooner rather than later. While talking about the Monitoring Mission, and taking into account the very demanding circumstances it is operating under, it might be worthwhile to discuss whether the mandate is robust enough or whether we would need a more explicit peacekeeping mission.

This critical juncture in our Organization's history happens to coincide with the upcoming 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act and the Helsinki +40 Process. For years, the elected parliamentarians of the OSCE have consistently advocated concrete steps to help this Organization become more effective. The OSCE's 1999 Istanbul Document declared the Parliamentary Assembly "one of the most important OSCE institutions, continuously providing new ideas and proposals." The creation of the office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media came from a proposal by the Parliamentary Assembly. The Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities was another position created on the initiative of the PA. The establishment and role of the gender adviser also stems from PA recommendations. We have also taken a leading role in the fight against human trafficking and we oppose the apparent efforts to reduce funding for these activities in the OSCE budget. We believe the budget should be adjusted upwards in order to play a meaningful role in this struggle.

Many recommendations are now emerging from the OSCE PA's Helsinki +40 Project, a series of seminars at top think-tanks both east and west of Vienna. These recommendations will be finalized next summer in a final Colloquium in Helsinki and we hope that they will be given the consideration that they deserve within the Organization.

Continuing with Helsinki +40 and organizational reform, I welcome the Swiss initiative concerning the establishment of a panel of eminent persons to advise on strengthening the Organization. The PA stands ready to provide substantial input to the work of the panel, as suggested by the Chairmanship.

Finally, I would like to thank the Swiss Confederation for its work in chairing this Organization during one of our most trying years. I also welcome the upcoming Chairmanship of the Republic of Serbia and commend their stated aim to pursue Organizational reform and strengthen the OSCE's responses to crises, foremost among them in Ukraine. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly stands ready to work with Foreign Minister Dacic and with all of you, offering new ideas, providing democratic oversight, helping to ensure the integrity of elections and taking action for the benefit of us all.

Thank you.