

OSCE Call for Action: Reaffirming a Common Purpose

We, former Chairpersons-in-Office, Presidents of the Parliamentary Assembly, Secretaries General and Heads of other Institutions of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, have decided to join our voices in this Call for Action on the 30th Anniversary of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe.

Thirty years ago, the Charter of Paris heralded the advent of democracy, peace and unity in Europe. Leaders declared that the era of confrontation and division had ended. In 2010, the OSCE Heads of State and Government recommitted themselves in Astana to the vision of a free, democratic, common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community rooted in shared principles, shared commitments and common goals.

We are proud of the OSCE's long history of strengthening security and promoting stability throughout our region.

Yet, in today's difficult times, much work remains to realize the vision of our past leaders. Geopolitical divisions and confrontation, crises and conflict, uneven progress in the implementation of our commitments, as well as the growing impact of a number of transnational and global threats are confronting the OSCE community with serious challenges to our common security.

While more investment is needed to address these challenges and preserve the established European security architecture, we are troubled to see only limited political-level engagement to ensure that the OSCE maintains its ability to continue addressing these challenges effectively. The failure to reappoint the top four heads of the OSCE executive structures last July has been only the most recent manifestation of this lack of political attention. A constant decline of resources, in the absence of a genuine political dialogue on the core strategy and the key priorities of the Organization, seriously affects the activities of OSCE structures, including its Institutions and field operations.

Participating States should make full use of the OSCE's potential to help build a safer and more stable future for us all.

Overall, there is a need to improve the way the Organization operates. For instance, we would welcome a stronger, more focused and coherent process of reviewing implementation of commitments in all spheres of security, revitalizing and strengthening the peer-to-peer dialogue.

A separate space should be devoted to the dialogue on addressing new challenges and updating, whenever necessary, the toolbox of the Organization. In particular, the OSCE should continue to promote dialogue on a broad agenda to foster comprehensive and co-operative security. But its programmatic activities should be streamlined and refocused to confront key challenges in fields where the OSCE has deep expertise and a comparative advantage.

We regret the progressive erosion of the politico-military toolbox when there is much need for a genuine security dialogue and for confidence-building, especially to re-establish trust, develop new crisis response mechanisms and focus on new risks, such as in the field of cyber-security. Engagement in conflict prevention and peacemaking should be sustained, including with a focus on growing divisions within our societies.

As COVID-19 impacts on our health and our way of life, a more effective strategy is required to address global challenges, including, but not limited to, terrorism and the fight against all forms of trafficking. This must be broadened to include effective joint action to urgently address the climate emergency through strong environmental protection policies and the promotion of the agreed Sustainable Development Goals. We should also integrate input from younger generations.

Political support and adequate resources should be provided to all executive structures, and in particular to the activities of the OSCE Institutions, to enhance efforts to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, achieve gender equality, promote tolerance and non-discrimination, freedom of the media and, more broadly, the stability of our diverse societies, and to strengthen democratic institutions in all participating States. We call for a continuing strong support of election observation activities across the OSCE area.

Periodic informal discussions among Ministers, in addition to the regular Ministerial Council meetings, should ideally guide this process. As darker clouds are lining up on the horizon, we need decisive leadership to steer the OSCE community towards the vision and the ambitious goals set out by our former leaders, a vision we share and feel bound to promote, and to help our Organization navigate the troubled waters ahead.