



*“Helsinki +40 Process: Prospects for Strengthening the OSCE”*

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Ladies and gentlemen,

Friends and colleagues,

Distinguished guests,

We meet today in a period of profound crisis and uncertainty in the OSCE region. The conflict in and around Ukraine has undermined the assumption that peace and stability in the area from Vancouver to Vladivostok are irrevocable. The heightened tensions and bellicose rhetoric between participating States are reminiscent of the past decades, and most discouragingly, there appears to be limited appetite for compromise.

In this context, and before talking about current challenges and opportunities, I would like to briefly reflect on the circumstances surrounding the birth of the OSCE.

Although the threat of imminent conflict had diminished when the “Helsinki Consultations on the Question of a Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe” began in 1972, East-West diplomacy had at that point failed to produce a comprehensive breakthrough or paradigm shift. Despite the policy of *détente*, the atmosphere continued to be marred by mutual suspicion, distrust and entrenchment. And yet – perhaps even to the surprise of its participants – the consultations ultimately yielded the Helsinki Final Act, signed on 1 August 1975 in Helsinki.

In addition to articulating ten basic principles guiding relations between the signatories, the document’s innovation lay in its comprehensive definition of security which, in addition to the political and military aspects, also included the economic, environmental, and human dimensions of security. Whatever misgivings may have accompanied attendees to those initial consultations,

by 1975 the 35 signatory States of the Helsinki Final Act had managed to agree upon the foundation for a common security region spanning from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

The Helsinki Final Act is therefore more than just the OSCE's founding document; It is a document witnessing common understanding with an accompanying list of commitments. In addition, in situations when States have differences, it is a code of conduct to be followed with the aim of making a concerted effort to solve differences through dialogue and negotiation. Furthermore, the Final Act was designed to be a preventive mechanism as well as a promoter of confidence-building between States. While the current challenges faced by participating States may not wholly resemble those of decades past, co-operation and dialogue remain as essential as ever in overcoming them.

In an environment of deteriorating trust, we meet today to discuss proposals for strengthening the OSCE. Bearing in mind this overarching theme, I would like to make some remarks on the OSCE PA's efforts in general and on Ukraine in particular.

The OSCE PA Special Representatives and Working Groups aim at enhancing dialogue, fostering contacts and promoting confidence-building measures based on their specific mandates and areas of competence. In fact, the OSCE election observation missions are an example of a highly visible form of co-operation between the States concerned and the OSCE. In connection with election observation, I would like to emphasize the importance of strong participation of Russian Duma members in the upcoming PA observation mission to the Ukrainian parliamentary elections in late October.

Being in Moscow, and this event being hosted by the Russian International Affairs Council, I would like to acknowledge the contribution made by the Russian Federation towards efforts in making the OSCE more relevant. One recent example is an initiative to form an OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Interparliamentary Liaison group on Ukraine, first proposed by Chairperson Naryshkin and endorsed by the PA in its 2014 Baku Declaration. The *raison d'être* for the group is to bring together parliamentarians from the Russian Duma and the Ukrainian Rada – as well as from a number of other OSCE participating States – to promote meaningful dialogue in order to reduce tensions and to de-escalate the conflict. This initiative was well received and I have taken subsequent action to make it operational; The group will hold its first meeting in Geneva next week in connection with the PA Autumn Meeting in Geneva.

Continuing with the liaison group -- and in the framework of Helsinki +40 -- I have had consultations with the leadership of both the Russian and Ukrainian parliaments, as well as with the representatives of other participating States taking part in the liaison group. In addition, I had the opportunity to discuss all relevant OSCE issues, including Helsinki +40 and the OSCE's engagement with Ukraine, with Foreign Minister Lavrov and other senior officials the last time I visited Moscow in early September. I am of the view that although the parliamentary and governmental tracks on Helsinki +40 and connected issues are separate, they are parallel

processes and one should strive to exchange information between the two in order to achieve the best possible result.

Looking at the current situation and turning back to the PA and its unique role in representing people from the participating States in the OSCE area, it is clear that shortcomings in accountability can lead to serious consequences. As frequent contact and dialogue between parliamentarians is essential to build upon and propagate the Helsinki ideals, the PA and its delegations form a vital component of the OSCE mechanism in general and the Helsinki +40 process in particular. Our Annual Sessions have frequently served as a platform for articulating concrete proposals to strengthen the organization. This year in Baku, a resolution titled “the OSCE at 40 years – a region of trust and mutually beneficial coexistence” again outlined a series of priorities for reform. This seminar – and subsequent events in Washington, D.C, Stockholm and Helsinki – will provide a platform to voice additional, concrete inputs. This series of seminars also highlights the fact that the PA is keen to involve think tanks and civil society in general in its deliberations.

Dear colleagues,

Let me be clear: The rapidly evolving geopolitical landscape presents new challenges which the OSCE’s existing capacities may be inadequate to cope with. The institutional reform and Helsinki +40, and the crisis in and around Ukraine, form the two main components of my intervention. These are profoundly interlinked. I believe that in order to move from abstract ideas into concrete proposals on these issues, one should conduct a lessons-learned exercise on the OSCE’s response to the crisis in Ukraine. The PA could contribute significantly to such an endeavor. Make no mistake though, the whole OSCE family should continue applying the full toolkit at our disposal in search for negotiated, diplomatic solutions, complemented with practical measures to de-escalate and stabilize the situation in and around Ukraine.

Now, I would like to say a few words about our two keynote speakers. Mr. Zagorsky argues, rightly so, that recent developments in Ukraine dramatically illustrate the relevance of the OSCE as a key forum for multilateral cooperation in crisis management. His paper provides several recommendations for how the organization might consider updating its toolbox in order to better respond to the present global landscape. Mr. Ruperez, on the other hand, focuses on the history of the OSCE’s development. In re-examining the individual elements of the Helsinki Final Act, he argues that the organization’s future continues to be dependent on achieving full implementation of the principles agreed upon nearly 40 years ago.

In conclusion, I would like to wish all of us a productive and fruitful discussion today. Your recommendations and proposals will be compiled into a report to be presented at the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly’s 2015 Annual Session in Helsinki and delivered to the governmental side of the organization.

Thank you.