

**Speech by OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde, at OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Winter Meeting
25th February 2021**

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Excellencies,

Thank you for the invitation to participate in this year's OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Winter meeting. I always appreciate the opportunity to interact with you. The discussion we had last November marking 30 years since the adoption of the Charter of Paris for a new Europe was a good example on how we can work together to uphold the common commitments of the OSCE.

Like all of you, I would of course have wanted to be in Hofburg in Vienna today to meet in person. Unfortunately, this is not possible due to the pandemic. I hope that we will see the situation improve during the year so that we can meet in person maybe at the annual meeting in July or later.

The parliamentary assembly is an indispensable part of the OSCE family. Your knowledge on how issues relating to comprehensive security affect your constituents adds an important perspective to discussions in the organisation.

The parliamentary dimension of the OSCE is an important link between the people in the participating States and the work of the OSCE in Vienna and in the field. Through your participation in ODIHR election observation missions, you strengthen the connection between our organisation and the

more than 1 billion citizens across our 57 countries and contribute to the role of the OSCE when it comes to democracy and the rule of law.

As parliamentarians, your personal experience of participating in elections also gives vital input to the missions. This is an essential contribution to the comprehensive concept of security. Where possible during my visits as CiO, I want to include meetings with parliamentarians to exchange views on issues on the OSCE agenda, I hope to meet some of you during these trips.

We have a security situation in our part of the world that calls for more common solutions and more multilateralism. As Chair, Sweden will continue to emphasize the fundamental commitments on which the OSCE was founded and to defend the European security order. Underpinning them is, of course, international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

Today, OSCE commitments and principles are being challenged on multiple fronts; It is obvious in the conflicts and crisis in and around Nagorno-Karabakh, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and Belarus. The challenges to what we have all agreed as commitments within the OSCE occur through resistance to open society and violations of human rights and humanitarian law in several participating States - a problem that has grown stronger during the pandemic.

It includes challenges stemming from increased geopolitical tensions and new transnational threats such as climate change, cyber-attacks and of course, the current pandemic. And it happens in the multilateral work of the OSCE, through occasional blockages and vetoes.

Our task as Chair is to navigate through these challenges towards common solutions. We will prioritize the comprehensive concept of security across

all three dimensions, as we believe it contributes to making the OSCE truly unique.

In the first dimension we work closely with the Forum for Security Cooperation chairs and seek to further the agenda for Women, Peace and Security. The inclusion and meaningful participation of women is vital for the successful prevention and mitigation of conflicts, as well as to consolidate peace when hostilities have ended. During the year, and if the pandemic permits, we will invite the military advisors to OSCE delegations in Vienna for a visit to the Nordic Center for Gender in Military operations, outside Stockholm.

We support efforts to ensure that confidence- and security-building measures remain relevant, also in the current situation when they are being challenged. The Open Skies Treaty plays a key role in contributing to transparency, predictability and confidence-building in parts of the OSCE region. I have expressed that we would regret to see any state withdraw from the Open Skies Treaty.

The confidence- and security-building measures also need to be adapted to changing circumstances. We therefore support discussions on the proposal for a modernisation of the Vienna Document with the goal of increasing transparency and strengthening confidence between states on military matters. The Structured Dialogue is an important platform to contribute to these discussions.

The important work in the Security Committee on transnational threats and activities that are linked to the financing of illicit activities and cyber threats will be given due priority.

I was pleased that our Special Envoy against Organised Crime could participate in the Security Committee meeting this week. In the meeting he shared perspectives on the importance of strengthening co-operation in countering transnational organized crime.

The second dimension remains a key component of the OSCE comprehensive concept of security. Gender equal societies are more secure with better prospects for sustainable, resilient and prosperous development for all. Women are disproportionately exposed to economic vulnerabilities. Women often lack access to social protection, full enjoyment of human rights and the security that follows from equal participation in economic life. Women's economic empowerment is therefore an important priority to strengthen security. To support the work to strengthen gender equality I have appointed Liliana Palihovici as Special Representative on gender.

We are also at the expert level supporting discussions on issues relating to environment and security and also what role the OSCE should play regarding climate and security.

Corruption is a menace to all our societies. It threatens development, democracy and security. Sweden will continue the work of previous Chairs and existing commitments to fight corruption and strengthen good governance.

Human rights, democracy and the rule of law lie at the core of the comprehensive concept of security. The right to freedom of expression and freedom of the media are key priorities for us in the human dimension.

Democratic processes, civic space and participation are central to preserve and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the

rule of law and is therefore emphasized throughout the chairpersonship. We will promote equal rights, gender balance and inclusiveness, not only within the OSCE but also in relation to the participating States and their citizens. Civil society is included in dialogues, both in Sweden and during my field visits as CiO.

All our work, but most particularly so in the human dimension, will be carried out complementary to, and in support of, the important work carried out by the autonomous institutions.

The visits that I conduct as Chair of the OSCE are an important tool to engage in political dialogue on our chairpersonship priorities, meet civil society and gain first-hand impressions on developments on the ground. They are also important to support our priority of contributing to conflict resolution in the region.

The crisis and conflicts in the OSCE area highlight the importance of defending the European security order. This is particularly evident in the case of Ukraine. It was important for me to visit Kyiv and the contact line in eastern Ukraine during my first trip as CiO.

The week after that I visited Moscow for discussions with Foreign Minister Lavrov on the challenges to the European security order and what needs to be done to resolve them.

These trips were followed up last week with visits to Georgia and Moldova to discuss the role of the OSCE in resolution of the unresolved conflicts there.

We are also conducting a series of meetings and conferences to support progress throughout the year.

The primary task of the CiO must be to work for more respect for the commitments that all participating States have once agreed upon. This applies to every participating State, and I will be consistent in my messages.

I look forward to working with the OSCE PA during the year, and hope to be able to meet you all in person at the summer meeting in Bucharest in July.

Thank you for listening.