

Note by Oscar Mina, Special Representative on Disinformation and Propaganda
28 February 2021

I fully agree with the note from the Ukrainian Delegation to the OSCE PA received by all OSCE PA colleagues. The note denounces the disclosure of more or less truthful information about the situation in the conflict with Russia, an aspect that I have already mentioned recently in a press release together with our President and Secretary General, in which I underlined how the danger of disinformation and propaganda has become a real weapon of war.

In fact, it appears increasingly clear that a war of information and propaganda at various levels is taking place at the same time of the actual war on the ground. Everything has become propaganda, and everything has become counter-propaganda.

The tension is so high that unfortunately, even the news, true or false, have truly become an integral part of the war strategy. On this aspect, it seems that the EU itself is by no means underestimating the threat of widespread propaganda of false information, as also demonstrated by the final report of the European Parliament's special commission on foreign interference and disinformation. The report identifies the threats by State and non-State actors who aim to attack the EU with fake news trying in some way to weaken its attempt to mediate in this conflict. These tensions have literally generated a systematic and lasting disinformation campaign, coordinated under the control of the countries involved in the conflict, towards the European Union and beyond, aiming to influence public opinion.

In this scenario, the media controlled by the States and the so-called "ecosystem" of other actors composed of pro-government media are inevitably directed to denigrating the adversary, portraying him as a threat to global security, attacking the international community for supporting the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of States in conflict within their internationally recognized borders. We can't ignore how the disinformation campaign in this conflict has somehow directly targeted the role played by NATO in particular, by distorting its image to outline an allegedly threatening and aggressive attitude towards "legitimate concerns for security" expressed by the States in conflict.

In conclusion, in my role as Special Representative for Disinformation and Propaganda of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, I consider it important to highlight how

disinformation reflects on the ongoing crisis between two OSCE participating States such as Russia and Ukraine, and how the spread of fake news and the increasingly hostile and incendiary propaganda rhetoric compromise the diplomatic efforts aimed at promoting peace and stability.

Disinformation, the phenomenon of fake news and its propaganda, is transnational, has no borders, and is not related to the importance of a country and its size, but has features capable of producing harmful effects on the political and military fields, as in this case between Ukraine and Russia, and above all undermining co-operation and security between the States themselves. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has always been a promoter of international recommendations and pays particular attention to the phenomenon of disinformation and State propaganda as a military and strategic political tool, because it represents a serious danger to transnational political equilibrium and to the affirmation of democracy and of its fundamental values.

Oscar Mina

Head of Delegation San Marino OSCE PA

Special Representative on Disinformation and Propaganda