

Address by Mr. Paschal Donohoe T.D.
Minister for European Affairs of Ireland
OSCE Ministerial Council, Kyiv, 5 December 2013

Mr Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

We resume our meeting this morning in the shadow of the passing of one of the great figures of the past century. A man whose life can only serve as an inspiration to all those who strive to prevent or to resolve conflict. It seems appropriate in this gathering to remind ourselves of one of Nelson Mandela's thoughts on hatred and difference when he said:

'No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.'

Madiba, we salute you!

Ireland is happy to associate itself with the intervention of Deputy Secretary General Helga Schmid, speaking on behalf of the European Union.

I wish to thank the Government of Ukraine and the city and people of Kyiv for the efficient hosting of this Ministerial Council and for the warm hospitality shown to delegates.

As a member of the Troika, we have worked closely in Vienna with Ambassador Prokopchuk and his colleagues and I think it important that the excellent work they have done should be recognised by the Ministerial Council.

As visitors to this historic city of Kyiv, we are of course conscious of the current differences of perspective within Ukrainian society.

We expect that all sides will respect the rule of law and resolve such differences peacefully, in accordance with the norms and principles of the OSCE.

I am particularly satisfied that agreement has been reached here in Kyiv on the Declaration on the Helsinki+40 Process, which was the subject of a Decision by Ministers in Dublin.

It is important that the incoming Swiss Chair and his Serbian successor have a clear message of political support and guidance from Ministers as they bring this process to fruition in the years ahead. The Irish Representation in Vienna will continue to work on this issue in close collaboration with the Chair.

The renewal of our Organisation should take account of changing realities in our region and in the world since the milestone year 1975 and the previous major renewal of the OSCE in the 1990s.

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We want a ‘visible’ OSCE. Our work should come to be appreciated throughout the region for the difference it makes to the lives of ordinary people, including in the most vulnerable categories – certain of which are the subject of decisions by this Ministerial Council.

We must uphold in practice the principles and commitments on which our security community is based. Human dignity is also a function of the quality of our social bonds and of the society we build together.

At the Ministerial Council, it has become customary to address larger questions informally, in our lunchtime discussions.

Today we have had a valuable exchange of views on the role of integration processes in developing a common and indivisible security community. Is it not time for strategic and future-oriented discussions to be mainstreamed within the work of the OSCE? Even if the steps we can agree by consensus in the end are small steps?

The Irish delegation comes to the OSCE with a definite experience in peace-building. With our British colleagues, our aim has been to build consensus in Northern Ireland amid continuing differences of perspective. Such a community of values – reflecting, one might say, ‘unity at a higher level’ - preserves what is valid on all sides while raising our sights to a common future.

Ireland supports the inclusion of the protracted conflicts in the road-map for Helsinki +40. Such points of vulnerability, if progress can be made, can become links in the chain of a stronger OSCE.

We should not underestimate the role of our Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian sphere in creating the conditions for sustainable and peaceful development at the global level.

I would like to comment briefly on some other aspects of our work at the Ministerial Council.

Doubts about the relevance of the OSCE in the field of conventional arms control in Europe need to be addressed. Ireland also favours an updating of the Vienna Document 2011.

Cyber issues, including cyber security, require a multifaceted approach at the global level, as we saw in the recent Seoul Conference. The OSCE has a part to play. I welcome the progress we have made on a modest set of CBMs [confidence building measures] in the field of cyber security.

A balanced outcome to the Council requires that all Dimensions are reflected in its work. Ireland attaches particular importance to the draft Decisions on journalists and on Freedom of Thought, Conscience, Religion or Belief.

We recognise that other participating States attach equal priority to other draft Decisions and would hope that the interests of all can be reflected in the outcome of the Council.

The work of the institutions - ODIHR, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, and the Representative on Freedom of the Media - deserves our commendation. ODIHR remains the world leader in the monitoring of elections and the improvement of standards.

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

At a time of transformation of the global media landscape, we need to ensure that traditional guarantees of freedom are respected and that commitments accepted in the era of print and fixed terrestrial broadcasting transfer to the cyber media world.

We can be justly proud of the support and advice which the OSCE Field Presences offer to participating States, sometimes in difficult circumstances. The successful conduct of elections in Kosovo a few weeks ago is a prime example.

The desire of Georgia and Mongolia to see OSCE presences established on their territory is clear proof of their value.

Ireland has the privilege of chairing the Asian Partners Contact Group in 2013.

Our partnerships with the Asian and the Mediterranean regions are a very important means of extending awareness of the OSCE and its ideals. Equally, our partnerships enable us to look at ourselves in the mirror and benchmark our work against developments elsewhere.

Following our chairmanship in 2012 – and three years at the service of our OSCE community as a member of the Troika - I am happy to say that Ireland is stronger than ever in our conviction that the work of the organisation is effective, necessary and valuable.

We renew our commitment to support the OSCE to the extent that our resources permit. I assure my Swiss and Serbian colleagues that they will have our full support in the challenging years ahead.

Thank you.