

MC.DEL/36/15
4 December 2015

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

**STATEMENT BY
MR. DIDIER REYNDERS, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS OF
BELGIUM, AT THE TWENTY-SECOND MEETING OF THE
OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Belgrade, 3 and 4 December 2015

**Delivered by Ambassador Bruno Georges, Permanent Representative of
the Kingdom of Belgium to the OSCE in Vienna**

Mr. Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I have the honour of speaking on behalf of Minister Reynders, who, to his great regret, is unfortunately unable to take part in this Ministerial Council meeting.

A year ago, I already informed you of my deepest concern about the situation in Ukraine. Having visited Kyiv again a few days ago with my Benelux colleagues, I continue to pay the greatest attention to the situation, even though other serious challenges such as terrorism and the migration crisis demand our attention.

Mr. Chairperson,

A great number of countries in the OSCE region and the surrounding area have been victims of abhorrent and deadly terrorist attacks. I condemn once again in the strongest terms these barbaric acts, and reiterate my sympathy for the victims and all those affected.

Terrorism is a phenomenon that is constantly changing. In order to combat it, Belgium will continue to take the necessary steps, maintaining a good balance between prevention and repression, and with the strictest observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Following the dramatic attacks in Paris and the subsequent threat to Brussels, my Government announced an action plan to effectively combat those who wish to attack our society.

We must remain aware that, owing to its ubiquitous, transnational and diffuse nature, the terrorist threat is a problem that cannot be overcome at the national level alone. It requires a joint response. In that regard, the OSCE offers precious added value, notably through its consolidated framework for combating terrorism, and its long-standing partnerships with our partner countries and other international actors.

Mr. Chairperson,

Our struggle will be successful only if we tackle the root causes as well. I also welcome the OSCE's efforts to combat both intolerance and discrimination. We must work to ensure that the spirit of tolerance that binds our societies prevails over hatred and division.

Belgium advocated this message throughout its Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, which adopted both the Additional Protocol to the Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism and a political declaration against violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism, accompanied by an action plan. I welcome the excellent collaboration between our Organization and the Council of Europe in areas such as these.

Mr. Chairperson,

The recent tragic events cannot mask the importance and urgency of a lasting and peaceful settlement of the conflict in and around Ukraine, in accordance with our values, principles and commitments.

While I can only once again welcome the reforms being undertaken in Ukraine and encourage them despite the particularly difficult circumstances, I must remind all parties to the conflict to show the utmost commitment to a rapid and definitive return to peace and stability.

I should like here to reiterate our call for respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine in its entirety, including Crimea and Sevastopol.

We call on the Russian Federation, as a vital actor and partner in European security and co-operation, to demonstrate through practical action its desire to reconnect with the founding principles of our Organization. The restoration of confidence in the OSCE area depends on this, and is bound to have an impact.

More generally, my country continues to insist on the absolute need to implement all the Minsk agreements as soon as possible. I should like to pay tribute here in particular to the role of the OSCE and its various executive structures, including our three institutions, in support of a solution to the crisis. I am thinking here especially of the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) and the Observer Mission at the border checkpoints of Gukovo and Donetsk. We shall continue to support the SMM by providing personnel and financing.

As well as ensuring complete freedom of work and movement of the SMM monitors throughout Ukraine, it is also important to ensure free and unhindered access for humanitarian agencies, in accordance with the rules of international law.

I also welcome the commitment of the Normandy format Heads of State or Government and their foreign ministers as well as the efforts made under the auspices of the Trilateral Contact Group.

Mr. Chairperson,

Europe and the world are faced today with an unprecedented migration phenomenon. There are many countries which, like Belgium, are experiencing a hitherto unseen influx of refugees and migrants. Our national instruments must be complemented by international strategies and partnerships. The OSCE has an important role to play here.

As President of the International Organization for Migration, Belgium will work energetically and proactively to develop such international co-operation.

Mr. Chairperson,

Our Ministerial Council also coincides with the 2016 budget negotiations. As a supporter of a rigorous approach that takes into account the economic and financial realities of the time, Belgium nevertheless intends to allocate sufficient resources for the Organization to be able to play its role fully. We welcomed the recent revised budget proposal by the incoming German Chairmanship and will continue to participate constructively in negotiations to adopt the budget before the end of the year.

Lastly, I should like to emphasize the importance for Belgium of achieving a better distribution of the payments within our Organization in the very near future. It is essential to redefine the scales of contributions of our participating States so that they better reflect present-day realities.

Mr. Chairperson,

In conclusion, I should like to thank you and through you all the members of the Serbian Chairmanship for your hospitality and your constant commitment in the service of our Organization during this particularly difficult year.

I also extend my best wishes to the incoming German Chairmanship. They may rest assured that they will have Belgium's support and full co-operation.

Thank you for your attention.