

As delivered by  
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway,  
Mr. Audun Halvorsen,  
at the 24th OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting  
Vienna, 7 December 2017

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Let me first thank Minister Kurz and our Austrian colleagues for their excellent work and leadership over this last year.

Unresolved conflicts persist in the OSCE area. They represent threats to the international order and to our common security.

Nothing has affected our organisation more in recent years than the conflict in Ukraine brought about by Russian aggression. Millions of lives are affected by undisguised violations of our common principles and commitments. These violations are challenging the very basis of the international legal order.

The OSCE has a key role in mediation and monitoring in Ukraine. The presence shows the value of this organization, and underscores its role in the international security policy architecture.

The SMM must have full, unrestrained access to all of Ukraine, including the border with Russia.

As in the case of Crimea, we also call for unimpeded access for international humanitarian and human rights mechanisms to Georgia's regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The situation for parts of the local population is increasingly dire.

But, while there are serious issues dividing us, there are areas where we should be able to work together towards common goals against mutual threats.

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Radicalisation and violent extremism is a threat affecting all participating States. Cooperation would bring obvious benefits. The OSCEs field activities play an important part in early warning and prevention in this field as in many other areas.

Equality between women and men is essential. All women must have the opportunity of inclusion and participation. The OSCE and Participating States must do their part.

Confidence and security building measures have always been integral parts of the work in the OSCE. The agreed principles need to be upheld. We welcome the Structured Dialogue on Security as a potentially promising political state led and state driven process.

We value and respect the OSCE's work on security sector reform. A well-functioning and legitimate security sector is a prerequisite for stability and social, economic and political development, and necessary to effectively prevent and counter terrorism.

There can be no lasting security and stability without respect for human rights, and civil society is an indispensable partner in building democratic and prosperous societies. We must ensure that OSCE events and meetings continue to be open to civil society.

Mr. Chair

The autonomous institutions continue to demonstrate their high professional standards, impartiality and essentiality for all Participating States. We must secure their independence and necessary funding. This remains a key priority for Norway.

Norway firmly believes that the OSCE continues to be an important platform for dialogue and interaction in our part of the world.

In conclusion, let me reassure you that our support for the organization, both politically and financially, will remain as strong as ever in the years to come.