

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Paul Kehoe T.D.,
Minister of Defence of Ireland
at the OSCE 25th Ministerial Council
6 December 2018 - Milan**

Thank you Chair

Our thanks go to you and the entire Italian Chairmanship team for your leadership, your tireless efforts throughout the year, and for your excellent hospitality here in Milan.

Ireland fully supports the principles and commitments of the OSCE as agreed by each of us over the decades since Helsinki. We have agreed that a rules-based security order is the only method by which we can assure peace in our region. We have created a field presence network, which is tasked with advancing these principles and commitments in partnership with host countries. Nowhere is the vital role of the field missions more evident than in Ukraine and we strongly commend the work of the Chief Monitor, Ambassador Apakan and his able team, in seeking to address a dangerous conflict and protect civilian lives.

Today, however, the governing principles and the institutions of the OSCE, face severe challenges. The illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia, the violation of the territorial integrity of Ukraine, the violence in the Donbass, and the most recent events in the Kerch Straits, represent serious breaches of our principles and commitments. Protracted conflicts in Georgia, Moldova, and Nagorno-Kharabakh, affecting the lives of millions of people, underline the extent to which a re-commitment to the establishment of a rules-based security order has become essential.

Chair

Ireland welcomes the progress that has been made within the OSCE's Structured Dialogue to achieve greater transparency and predictability in the politico-military field. We support further work on risk reduction and incident prevention, and the enhancement of military to military contacts within the framework of the Forum for Security Co-operation and the Informal Working Group.

The OSCE has also rightly determined that our approach to security must be comprehensive, and that security is not sustainable without the fullest possible participation of our citizens, as well as governments.

Ireland is a strong supporter of the commitments we have entered into encouraging the participation of civil society in OSCE events. In the field of human rights, Ireland strongly support efforts to agree decisions at this Council to counter violence against women and for the full participation of women in public and political life. In that regard, we applaud the OSCE Secretary General's commitment to gender mainstreaming of all OSCE policy programmes and activities.

Chair

Ireland also places a particularly high value on the work of the autonomous institutions, such as ODIHR and the Representative on Freedom of the Media. The work of ODIHR in monitoring elections, in assisting countries with advice on the operation of their legal and judicial systems, as well as in organising annually the largest human rights conference in Europe, is an essential part of developing peace and security which are meaningful for the average citizen.

The role of the Representative on Freedom of the Media has become ever more critical in recent years as attacks on journalists, particularly female journalists, have increased throughout the OSCE region. In calling out those instances where journalists have their rights denied, are arrested, are attacked viciously through social media, are physically assaulted, or even murdered, the Representative is performing an invaluable service. Sustainable security does not come from seeking to censor or suppress views, and we must seek to reinforce the work of the Representative in addressing this increasingly urgent and complex question in a rapidly changing media environment.

Chair

Ireland commends the Chair's work this year on the Mediterranean dimension of security. Whether it relates to questions of addressing current conflicts, reducing the risk of other conflicts developing, addressing the challenges of climate change, or adhering to human rights principles throughout the region, security is an inclusive, comprehensive, concept which we must continually work to achieve. We look forward to the Slovak Chairmanship of 2019, and will continue to support the OSCE as a vital platform for dialogue and interaction in our part of the world.

Thank you.