



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe**

**Standing Committee Meeting  
Winter Meeting 2022  
Vienna, 24 February 2022**

**Address by Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid**

*President Cederfelt,*

*Secretary General Montella,*

*Distinguished Members of the Parliamentary Assembly,*

Thank you for inviting me to address the Parliamentary Assembly.

These are extraordinary times. We are in crisis, up at all hours.

But I still thought it was important to be with you this morning.

I ask for your understanding and will keep this brief.

Normally, I would have spoken about the great work this Organization does – the Secretariat, Field Operations and Institutions – on political-military, economic, environmental and human rights issues.

But I will not talk about that today.

Russia has launched a military action against Ukraine.

Together with the Chair, I condemn this in the strongest terms.

It is counter to Russia's UN obligations.

It is counter to Russia's OSCE commitments.

According to the Ukrainian Interior Ministry it has caused already hundreds, and could spiral into thousands, of casualties.

Families are losing loved ones. Friends are being lost.

It is creating a humanitarian crisis, with a lack of basic services for those remaining, and flows of people leaving.

It did not need to be this way.

But Russia chose force over dialogue.

Dialogue was offered.

By the OSCE, by its Polish Chair.

By others. Including NATO, the US, and European capitals.

Options for dialogue were not exhausted.

We said that again on Tuesday at the Permanent Council held here.

*Colleagues,*

Right now, I have two priorities

- First, the safety and security of OSCE personnel in Ukraine.
  - o In the Special Monitoring Mission and Project Coordinators Office.
  - o They are located, as you know, throughout the country.
  - o Their safety and security is our utmost priority.
  - o We have a fully operational crisis centre.
  - o I was in touch with the Chief Monitor and Project Coordinator several times this morning.
  - o And the Mission's well-developed contingency plans are being put into action.
- My second priority is coordination.

- We are working around the clock, talking with participating States and International and Regional Organizations like the UN, ICRC and the EU.
- In these extraordinary circumstances, the Polish Chair will convene a reinforced Permanent Council this afternoon. Many Ministers will join.
- And I call on Russia.
- We are urging them to end this unacceptable military action, to sit at the table and to de-escalate.
- And I am reminding them of their obligations under international law and international humanitarian law, including the principle of not indiscriminately targeting civilians. This also pertains to OSCE staff, as a civilian Mission.

*Colleagues,*

- We were the first responder in 2014.
- We promptly established the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM). Dedicated men and women; the impartial eyes and ears of the international community on the ground throughout the country.
- We have a legacy to be proud of in the country.

*Dear colleagues,*

Thank you for your attention and your support.

We are in unprecedented times in Europe's recent memory.

The people of Ukraine are in my thoughts, and the OSCE will continue to stand by their side.

At challenging times like this, the role of parliamentarians is more important than ever.

Thank you for all your support in this crucial moment.

We have to stand together.