

ENGLISH only

**25TH OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL MEETING
STATEMENT BY H.E. MS. EMILIA KRALEVA,
DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA**

At the outset, let me express our gratitude to Minister Enzo Moavero Milanesi as the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE and host of the Ministerial Council. Our appreciation goes also to the whole team of the Italian Chairmanship for their dedication and constructive work throughout this jubilee 25th year of the Organisation.

Before continuing, I would like to align with the statement of the EU HR Federica Mogherini.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have been witnessing complex security crisis determined by intensifying challenges in the OSCE area, including breaches to international law by an OSCE participating State. We still face also the need for resolution of the protracted conflicts in Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Nagorno-Karabakh. All these challenges lead to ever broadening security, economic and humanitarian implications. The resolution of the conflicts in the OSCE area, based on the existing mediation formats, should remain a core effort of this Organization.

It is absolutely crucial that every single OSCE participating State and not only a majority, as great as it might be, is committed to International Law based security order and to its core principles enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act. In particular, the respect for sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of states within their internationally recognised borders are the fundamentals to step on.

The crisis in and around Ukraine has been an acute challenge to European security, among many others. The Minsk Agreements should be fully implemented and we support the international efforts in this regard, including the Normandy Format and Trilateral Contact Group. We call for securing the personnel of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine safety and full access on the ground.

We share the concerns already expressed by many Participating States about the ongoing militarisation of the Kerch Strait and of the Sea of Azov. This together with the militarisation of the Crimean Peninsula has a severe negative impact on the security situation in the Black Sea region and beyond. Guaranteeing unhindered freedom of navigation is of paramount importance and the International Law should prevail. But also, exercising restraint is key for avoiding further escalation.

Enhancing military transparency and confidence in Europe remains also an essential priority. There is a need to reconfirm the commitment to conventional arms control as a key element of the European security. Modernizing the Vienna Document, maintaining, and strengthening the Open Skies Treaty remain important tasks we should keep on the top of the OSCE agenda.

We support the continuation of the Structured Dialogue as a meaningful and inclusive platform for in-depth exchanges on the current and future challenges and risks to security in the OSCE area. Let me here reiterate our strong commitment to full implementation of the existing principles and commitments in the politico-military dimension, which is essential for enhancing military transparency, predictability and political stability in the OSCE area.

The genuine respect for human rights and protection of fundamental freedoms is also a guarantee for the security in Europe. It is indispensable to foster a broad consensus on core issues such as respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, rule of law and, especially, respect for the rights of persons belonging to national minorities.

Bulgaria attaches great importance to the promotion of tolerance and prevention and elimination of any forms of discrimination and intolerance. We note with concern the rising trend of hate speech and anti-Semitism in the OSCE area.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the first half of 2018, Bulgaria held the EU Presidency during which the Western Balkans region has been one of our key priorities. We invested great efforts, including in a truly successful EU-Western Balkans Summit held in Sofia in May this year, to put the spotlight on the challenges and the genuine opportunities in our neighbouring region.

We have been striving to keep that regional focus also in the OSCE, fostering synergies between OSCE and EU in areas such as political dialogue, good neighbourly relations, rule of law, freedom of expression, freedom of religion and belief, enhancing the ethnic and religious tolerance, economic reforms and connectivity. It is in this context that we deem strong and well-funded OSCE missions in the Western Balkans highly instrumental.

I would like to conclude by our conviction that rebuilding consensus on European security should be pursued as a common project not only within the framework of the OSCE, but also in all other international organizations, UN and CoE in particular.

Expressing once again appreciation for the valuable work of the Italian Chairmanship, I wish every success to Slovakia as the next Chairmanship-in-Office of the Organisation and personally to Minister Lajčák.

Thank you.