

OSCE Ministerial Meeting

ENGLISH only

Address by the Estonian Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr Urmas Paet

December 5, 2013, Kyiv

Check against delivery!

Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

- I would like to thank the Chairperson-in-Office for hosting the Ministerial Meeting here in Kiev. It is no secret that prior to today, given the demonstrations taking place as we speak in this very city, there was some discussion surrounding the status of this meeting. However, the fact that we are all here is an occasion to prove that the OSCE values remains relevant and important for all of us. The events of the past days have also reminded us that principles such as the freedom of expression and assembly are fundamental to the OSCE and must, therefore, be upheld by all of its members, and especially by the Chairman-in-Office. In this context I welcome your statement in this regard and the statement of the Prime minister this morning. Let me stress, these OSCE principles have to be lived up to not only today during the OSCE ministerial but every day.
- Co-operation in Europe has recently been at the forefront of many discussions. A few days ago, at the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius, the European Union initialled association agreements with two partner states – Moldova and Georgia. I am certain that this step will help bring prosperity to millions of Europeans and have a positive impact on co-operation in Europe.
- It is even more relevant to remind ourselves that already 38 years ago the principles for the cooperation and security in Europe were laid in Helsinki Today, in a world without iron curtains, the OSCE should continue to play an important role. Therefore, the Helsinki+40 process should sharpen the focus and confirm the long-term goals and commitments of the organisation.

- Independent OSCE actors like ODIHR, RFOM, HCNM should contribute considerably to this common goal. We must support their endeavours to ensure that political leaders are elected democratically, that human rights and fundamental freedoms are guaranteed both online and offline and that men and women are treated equally. All the member states of OSCE have to work closely for our common goals.
- Estonia places great importance on the issues of human dimension. Notably, for many years the OSCE has made an effort to protect media freedom. But much remains to be done! Unfortunately a considerable number of journalists are persecuted just because they appeal to the universal value of human rights. The same goes for just ordinary citizens who express their discontent about violations of basic freedoms. This must stop. Free media and freedom of expression are real and actual tools that help to improve the world.
- Freedom of expression has to be protected universally, both offline and online and we hope to see positive developments in concrete, strong and binding decisions. I take this opportunity to reiterate Estonia's support to the proposal for the OSCE ministers' joint declaration "Fundamental Freedoms in Digital Age". The Internet has to remain both secure and open and be as an accelerator of economic growth and quality of life. Security and openness are perfectly compatible.
- We also welcome the confidence-building measures in cybersecurity agreed among the participating States and hope that they will facilitate international consensus required for peaceful and transparent utilization of cyberspace.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- The OSCE's potential role and available tools for building peace and stability are unique. We expect work on resolving protracted conflicts in Europe to continue. Clear and visible results are needed. Territorial integrity of the states has to be the starting point of the conflict resolution throughout the process. Protracted conflicts should not become forgotten conflicts. Therefore our international commitment has to increase. People living in conflict areas should not become isolated. Hundreds of thousands of refugees should not bury their hopes about returning to normality.

- We would like to underline the need to pay attention to Georgia and continue to support the OSCE's active participation in the discussions in Geneva. This is the essential framework for political negotiations between the conflicting parties.
- All the parties should engage themselves with the aim of a true solution for conflict in Moldova. Approaching peace and stability is possible only in an atmosphere of mutual trust. It is true in the case of Transnistrian settlement process as well as in the conflict about Nagorno-Karabakh. Estonia supports the efforts of the OSCE Minsk group and calls the Armenian and the Azeri sides to show readiness for compromise. Both parties have to address seriously the pressing issue of refugees.

Honourable Chairman,

- Gender equality and empowerment of women continues to be one of Estonia's human rights and foreign policy priorities. Gender inequality is still a cross cutting phenomenon in different societies. We should not be silent about that! Thus, combating violence against women and achieving gender equality cannot be addressed separately from promoting human rights and social justice in general. I think we all agree that no-one suffering directly from conflict can be left behind.
- Our more specific focus is on women in conflict situation. UN Security Council Resolution 1325 declares the principles and provides necessary tools. In this regard the OSCE Wide 1325 Action Plan would be an important and valuable step. We shall support OSCE in implementing it.
- I wish Switzerland and Serbia all the best in bearing the responsibility and chairing the OSCE in 2014 and 2015.

Thank you for your attention.