

**REMARKS BY H.E. MR. MIROSLAV LAJČÁK,
MINISTER OF THE FOREIGN AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC**

AT THE 2018 OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

*Dear Secretary-General Gremminger, Dear Foreign Minister Moavero,
Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,*

Let me first recognize the leadership of the Italian Chairmanship and you personally, Enzo. You managed to steer the Organization throughout yet another troubled period.

We meet every year, to reaffirm the same ideas that tied us together in Helsinki. *That* we advance the security and prosperity of our citizens - *when* we advance the timeless principles that are at the heart of the OSCE.

Our task begins in places where violence and assaults on human dignity persist, even where a clear path to peace is staring us in the face.

So I echo the words of the previous speakers on the recent incident in the Azov Sea – yet another wake up call for everyone. All sides need to refrain from the use of force and must contribute to de-escalating the situation, easing tensions and avoiding further risks of destabilization in the region.

Contributing to solutions of the crisis in and around Ukraine, including the illegal annexation of Crimea, which undermines the very principles and norms of the OSCE, will be high on agenda of our next year's chairmanship.

This is not the only crises we face, obviously. We have listened to updates on the seriousness of the situation in the OSCE region for years during past Ministerial Councils. It seems that we are doing something wrong.

We have this great tool, unique platform reaching *from* Vancouver *to* Vladivostok. With immense potential. There are many positive examples for the importance of the work of the OSCE across all three dimensions. And we can multiply them. IF – and I want to make 3 brief points here.

1. IF we make it fit for purpose

Today, when global setting is changing, multilateralism is challenged and stability tested, OSCE is more relevant than ever.

We need to assess whether the tools and platforms we have are fit for the changing security environment that we live in today.

From Conventional Arms Control agreements - to Structured Dialogue. From taking into account environmental aspects of security – to aligning OSCE activities with the 2030 Agenda. From promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms - to support for the mandate of the OSCE and its autonomous institutions.

All these areas need more. More cooperation, more active commitments and frankly – more money.

Our budget negotiations for 2019 are chaired by Slovakia. We fully understand its seriousness. To find a solution until end of this year is not just an expectation, but a real need for this organization, physically and psychologically.

We may assess the performance of our organisation differently, but in times where more cooperation is absolutely indispensable, we shouldn't undermine its proper functioning.

Which brings me to my second “IF” -

2. IF we use it right

Sometimes we harm the efforts ourselves.

Too often we see the organization undermined - by unilateralism. By not respecting rules.

Misrepresented – blamed for our own shortcomings.

Misused - flooded with bilateral agendas and taking out mutual spats on multilateral platforms. This does not help anybody and it certainly doesn't move us forward.

We can only be successful IF – my third point –

3. IF we recommit.

Recommit to the founding principles we set for ourselves many years ago. **We all.** *Not just those of us, who are living with conflict. Not just those of us, who have vested economic or social interest. Not just those of us, who have time – or money.*

We all. Only then can we use the tools at our disposal right. To prevent - unfreeze – mitigate.

We are very much looking forward to working on these challenges with all of you during the Slovak year at the OSCE. And once again thank you, Minister Moavero Milanese; thank you, Italy for your leadership in 2018.