



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic pointed out in addressing the first plenary session of the XXI Ministerial Council Meeting of the OSCE in Basel that the Ukrainian crisis was a serious reminder of the urgent need for joint action and an approach based on dialogue within the OSCE. The Minister used the occasion to congratulate the whole team of the Swiss Chairmanship on their dedication, professionalism and leadership throughout the 2014 mandate, adding that Serbia that will assume the next Chairmanship is ready to be engaged with dedication in the enhancement of overall goals of security and cooperation among individuals, communities, peoples and OSCE participating states.

Following is full text of the speech delivered by Minister Dacic:

Mr. Chairperson,  
Mr. Secretary General,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to thank our hosts, in particular our Chairman-in-Office H.E. President Burkhalter, for their hospitality and the excellent organization of the Ministerial Council in Basel. As expected, Switzerland set high standards in this regard and we will try to follow suit next year in Belgrade. Let me also congratulate the entire Swiss Chairmanship team for their dedication, professionalism and stewardship during their tenure this year. We highly value our joint engagement and close cooperation so far and we intend to continue consulting with our Swiss colleagues whose experiences during this year will be of great benefit for the incoming Serbian Chairmanship.

When we put forward our bid for consecutive OSCE Chairmanships three years ago, we could not foresee that in 2014 the OSCE region will be facing one of the biggest crises since the end of the Cold War. This crisis has already taken its toll with too many lives lost and thousands forced to flee their homes. The situation in eastern Ukraine continues to pose a serious threat for the stability of the region, but also has an impact in the broader context of the European and global security. From the very beginning of this crisis Serbia has advocated peaceful settlement of the crisis and voiced its support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Failure to prevent the escalation of this crisis showed the necessity of a much more intensive political engagement among participating States, particularly in our work to develop an effective conflict prevention toolbox. At this point, it is important to demonstrate awareness and sense of responsibility in order to prevent the further aggravation of the situation and strengthen the overall efforts for the peaceful resolution based on the documents signed in Minsk.

On the other hand, the response of the OSCE in such difficult circumstances highlighted that,

when endowed with the necessary political will, the Organization can put to use its comparative advantages and effectively contribute to addressing the challenges emanating from this crisis. The fact that the OSCE was the first organization to respond to the crisis in Ukraine by setting up the Special Monitoring Mission testifies to the significance of the OSCE as a regional security arrangement under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter.

In view of the implementation of the Minsk Protocol and Minsk Memorandum, respecting the agreed ceasefire and full cessation of hostilities are key prerequisites for de-escalation of the situation and the peaceful resolution of the crisis. Three months after their signing, a lot of effort is still needed to fully implement them and we call on all actors to support the activities of the Special Monitoring Mission envisaged in these documents, including the SMM plan on monitoring the Ukrainian-Russian border. We hope that that these two documents represent the beginning of a comprehensive peace process, which will provide both security on the ground and allow conditions for inclusive political processes within Ukraine. As incoming Chairmanship, we will continue to support the work of all OSCE executive structures in Ukraine, particularly the SMM which has a crucial role in the implementation of the documents. We highly value the instrumental work of the Trilateral Contact Group and the personal contribution of the Special Representative Ambassador Tagliavini. We welcome the political efforts at high level aimed at reaching a peaceful resolution and we deem their continuation crucial for providing strong political impetus towards that end.

The Ukrainian crisis is a stark reminder of an urgent need for joint action and a dialogue-based approach in the OSCE. Despite the current challenges, areas of common interest continue to exist and should be explored to the greatest extent possible in order to create an environment in which trust and confidence among participating States can be restored. We deem that the Helsinki +40 process still provides an appropriate framework for addressing these issues and we welcome the initiative of President Burkhalter on establishing a panel of eminent persons in order to contribute to the process. The discussions on revitalizing the role of the OSCE should include the reflection on current developments and the relevant experiences of the Organization. We should draw lessons from past experiences while working on the peaceful resolution of the crisis in Ukraine, at the same time aiming to reconsolidate the European security as a common project and strengthen the OSCE's role and capacity to act.

We should all recognize the potential of transforming the current fragile security environment in many parts of the OSCE area into a mutually beneficial security community that we have long aspired to create. It is a lasting process but we need to start towards that path by reconfirming the principles and enhancing the OSCE tools in a way which will work to prevent the occurrence of new crises and alleviate the effects and consequences of the existing ones. The period since the Astana Summit showed that solely reconfirming the principles is not enough. We need to move from words to action. Translating the experiences of this year's and previous engagement of the OSCE into more effective tools and structural activities would not only help us prevent the reoccurrences of crises but could reinvigorate our efforts in addressing the protracted conflicts. Provided that enough political will is generated, employing those OSCE tools could allow us to address the overarching issues of human security even if the positions on the principles which may be seen as conflicting cannot be reconciled or solved immediately. In this regard, I wish to emphasize the importance and benefits of allowing the OSCE presences and operations on the ground.

Being from a region which still faces many difficulties but is resolute to look into the future, we can contribute to these processes with the experiences from the Western Balkans, particularly

in terms of the positive role of the OSCE and the cooperation with other relevant international organizations. I am happy to see that a small but important step as transfer of ownership on sub-regional arms control arrangement will take place tomorrow, as well as that there has been progress on a political level between participating States on some other issues dealt with also by our Special Representative on Western Balkans. Still, there are long-term goals to be achieved in the Western Balkans. The Brussels Agreement of 17 April 2013 marked a breakthrough in the EU-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Priština. Our Government expressed clear determination to continue constructively the dialogue with Priština and fully implement the agreements reached with a view to addressing the overall situation in a still fragile security environment. The OSCE, thanks to first and foremost the status neutral approach in conducting its activities in accordance with UNSCR 1244, has significantly contributed to improving the situation on the ground but more engagement is needed in order to achieve long-term goals. We will continue to support the activities of the OSCE conducted in a status neutral manner aimed at enhancing human security and furthering the stability in Kosovo and Metohija and the region.

Next year marks seventy years since the ending of World War II and the establishment of the United Nations, and the fortieth anniversary of the adoption of the Helsinki Final Act. We should always bear in mind that these organizations and the documents guiding their work and the behaviour of states in international relations have been created in order to enhance our joint engagement, dispel concerns and misperceptions, overcome dividing lines and, most importantly, prevent human tragedies. As incoming Chairmanship, and in line with Serbia's orientation to become a long-term positive contributor to the European security, we are ready to work together on advancing the overall goals of security and cooperation among individuals, communities, peoples and participating States of the OSCE and our partners.

I look forward to addressing your representatives on the priorities and the activities of the Serbian Chairmanship in more detail in Vienna in January next year.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.