



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic, in his capacity as OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, addressed the Helsinki Commission of US Congress yesterday.

Chairman Smith,
Co-Chairman Wicker,
Commissioners,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for the invitation to address your Commission. I am honored to have the opportunity to discuss European security and the priorities of the Serbian Chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe with members of the United States Congress.

I would like to acknowledge the important role that the Helsinki Commission plays within the OSCE. We are also grateful for the support and co-operation of the U.S. Department of State across the spectrum of the Organization's work. The active engagement of the United States within the OSCE is critical to the Organization's effectiveness. Indeed, America is one of our anchors. It is a strong promoter of OSCE values and commitments. It is also the largest contributor to the overall OSCE budget, and a leading supporter of the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine both in terms of financial support and personnel. Your country's steadfast support for the OSCE is deeply appreciated.

This year, as you know, is the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act. When Serbia agreed to serve as OSCE Chairmanship in 2015, we expected we would be celebrating these fundamental principles of security. Instead, we have seen them blatantly violated. The dramatic developments in Europe over the past year are sharp reminders that both our security and the fundamental values of democracy and human rights must be constantly defended.

Serbia's Chairmanship of the OSCE coincides with the worst crisis of European security since the end of the Cold War. The crisis in and around Ukraine dominates security considerations in Europe, but its impact is far greater. Mistrust and divisions, confrontational policies and zero-sum logic are undermining the co-operative approach to security that is at the heart of the OSCE's comprehensive body of commitments and principles. Twenty-five years ago in Paris, our Heads of State or Government declared the end of confrontation and division in Europe. They expressed their commitment to democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms; prosperity through economic freedom and social justice; and equal security for all countries. The Helsinki process and full implementation of all commitments are at the very foundation of the

Paris Charter. The Serbian Chairmanship is fully aware that it is our duty to defend what the OSCE stands for, and we count on your support.

The current crisis has highlighted the enduring strengths and advantages of the OSCE as the organization best suited to bridging growing divides and facilitating co-operative solutions. Its response to the crisis has once again demonstrated the Organization's relevance to European security.

The OSCE has been continuously engaged in trying to find a diplomatic solution to the crisis in and around Ukraine. Indeed, the OSCE is the only regional organization that brings all the key stakeholders to the table. We are keeping critical lines of communication open, and finding opportunities for joint action.

The Serbian Chairmanship is doing its utmost to continue these efforts in an impartial and reliable manner. We recognize that both the OSCE and European security are at a critical juncture. Our highest priority is to protect the inclusive and co-operative nature of the OSCE's work, and to prevent the crisis from escalating into a larger confrontation. We are making every effort to rebuild confidence and trust among participating States and to restart our joint efforts toward the vision of a Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community. We are fully committed to working with the main stakeholders to restore peace and stability for Ukraine and its people.

Today, the whole world is watching Ukraine. The OSCE is also in the global spotlight because of its key role in monitoring the ceasefire and the withdrawal of troops and heavy weapons. The ceasefire is fragile, but it seems to be largely holding. I have repeatedly called on all parties to uphold the terms of the September 2014 Minsk Protocol and Memorandum, and to fulfil their responsibilities under the Package of Measures for implementing the Minsk documents that was recently agreed within the framework of the Trilateral Contact Group. I would like to thank Ambassador Heidi Tagliavini, my Special Representative in Ukraine and to the Trilateral Contact Group, for her tireless commitment to helping the parties find the path towards peace.

The OSCE, and in particular our Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, is doing its part to facilitate the ceasefire process and all other efforts to restore stability and pave the way for reconstruction and reconciliation. The Special Monitoring Mission has proved to be a unique and invaluable asset in terms of the international response to the crisis. However, it is an unarmed civilian mission carrying out what amounts to a peacekeeping operation. OSCE monitors are working under considerable operational constraints and in an extremely volatile environment. I salute their courage and dedication. Their safety is our primary concern. Depending on how the situation develops on the ground, we may need to reconsider the Mission's mandate.

The Serbian Chairmanship will make every effort to help restore peace in Ukraine and to rebuild trust and confidence across the OSCE region. Our own recent past demonstrates that, despite many difficulties, we can set a positive agenda for the future, focused on co-operation and reconciliation. Serbia brings to the table good relations with all the key stakeholders, and we are making every effort to serve as an honest broker and use our leadership role to utilize the OSCE toolbox impartially and transparently. However, we have a shared responsibility – but

especially the key stakeholders – to engage in dialogue and to create conditions for co-operation and compromise so that we can find a constructive way forward together. But please do not misunderstand me: I do not mean we should compromise our norms and principles. Quite the contrary – we must reaffirm and strengthen them, and make them harder to violate.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Terrorism is without a doubt a top concern around the globe today. In recent weeks in the OSCE region, we have seen horrific attacks in Paris and Copenhagen. I offer my sincere condolences to the families of the victims. As the threat from terrorism and the related phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters continues to grow, we must be united and determined in our condemnation of all forms of terrorism. We must also unify our societies to resist attempts to create divisions on the basis of religion, ethnicity, race or culture. It is clear that a criminal justice response is not sufficient. We need to work with communities and address the deeper roots of the problem, and foster tolerance, non-discrimination and respect for diversity.

The Serbian Chairmanship will give special focus to countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism, including radicalization of youth and the foreign fighter phenomenon. In all of these areas, we will take our human dimension commitments into account, and also engage closely with the OSCE Partners for Co-operation. In July, we will host an expert-level, OSCE-wide counter-terrorism conference in Vienna that will focus on foreign terrorist fighters. This event was announced last week at the Ministerial Meeting of the White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism as one of its regional follow-on events. I encourage the United States to make a strong contribution to our conference.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me now to turn to the priorities of the Serbian OSCE Chairmanship.

Supporting the peace process in Ukraine is of course our main priority. But there are other important challenges in the OSCE region where the OSCE has a role to play which must not be overshadowed by the current crisis. Chief among them is the resolution of protracted conflicts in the OSCE region through agreed formats. In this regard, I would like to recognize the efforts of Ambassador Warlick, the U.S. Co-Chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, and Deputy Assistant Secretary Eric Rubin, the U.S. representative in the Geneva Discussions. The agreed formats should meet regularly and without obstruction, and high-level contacts between the parties should continue. But I believe that we must also try to move beyond the status quo and take some small but concrete steps to increase trust and confidence between the parties. This could enable them to start focusing on substantive problems that could advance the peace process. After all, in the end, resolving the conflicts is the responsibility of the parties. The OSCE and key international players can encourage conditions to foster the necessary political will to support peaceful settlements.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am convinced that the OSCE has benefited from the continuity provided by the consecutive chairmanships of Switzerland and Serbia. The Serbian Chairmanship will continue to work on the basis of our Joint Work Plan in all three dimensions, giving special focus to certain topics of interest.

In addition to counter-terrorism issues, our first dimension activities will focus on improving co-operation in confronting transnational organized crime, including its links to trafficking in human beings and irregular migration; security sector governance and reform; and addressing emerging cyber-security threats. We appreciate the continued commitment and leadership of the U.S. Chair of the Informal Working Group as it focuses on developing a new set of cyber-security confidence-building measures. The Serbian Chairmanship also supports continued dialogue on conventional arms control with the hope that it can lead to progress in updating and modernizing our existing instruments, including confidence- and security-building measures like the Vienna Document. We shall co-operate closely on politico-military issues with this year's Chairmanships of the Forum for Security Co-operation – Mongolia, Montenegro and Norway – and in our preparations for the Annual Security Review Conference.

In the second dimension, we will focus on issues that coincide with our national priorities, including combatting corruption, water governance, and disaster risk reduction and preparedness. This year's Economic and Environmental Forum will be devoted to "Water Governance in the OSCE Area – Increasing Security and Stability through Co-operation." The Economic and Environmental Dimension Implementation Meeting, which will take place in Vienna in October, will focus on the fight against corruption. We look forward to strong U.S. participation in both of these events.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Helsinki Final Act was revolutionary for its time in large part because it took the human dimension of security into account. Today it remains our duty and responsibility to highlight and protect the universal values of human rights, tolerance and non-discrimination. OSCE participating States must continuously strive to strengthen the implementation of their human dimension commitments including by strengthening national institutions of human rights. The Serbian Chairmanship will do its utmost to support them. This year we will place special emphasis on strengthening the rule of law, freedom of expression and freedom of the media, including the safety of journalists, and freedom of assembly and association. The recent tragic events in Paris and Copenhagen underscore the importance of protecting freedom of expression, so our plan to organize an event devoted to the safety of journalists is especially relevant. We will also focus on the protection of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities and promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination.

Recognizing that the OSCE agenda is increasingly cross-dimensional and that many contemporary threats to security stem in part from marginalization, we will strengthen efforts to be inclusive. We will integrate the perspectives and concerns of women and youth in our activities, particularly at the grass-roots level. Because civil society can and should play a crucial role in protecting human rights and creating policies in our participating States, we will also strengthen efforts to engage civil society in the Organization's work.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Serbia will strive to intensify efforts to advance regional co-operation and reconciliation in the Western Balkans. Our region has benefitted significantly from the presence of OSCE Field Operations and their efforts to assist host countries to implement their OSCE commitments in all three dimensions of security. My country has directly benefited from the OSCE's work, and we know from our own experience the important contribution that OSCE Field Operations can make. OSCE Field Operations are reliable partners, and Serbia is proud to host the OSCE in our country. OSCE Field Operations make a significant and constructive contribution to enhancing security and consolidating reform processes that make our societies stronger and protect the rights of our citizens. Although every region in the OSCE area is different, I am convinced that sharing the lessons of the Western Balkans more broadly would be beneficial. The current crisis of security in the OSCE region underscores the need for dialogue and reconciliation. Serbia's own experience demonstrates that it is possible to create a positive agenda even in the face of significant obstacles by adopting a pragmatic and goal-oriented approach.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The current crisis of European security highlights the importance of the OSCE as a security organization. Its response to the situation in Ukraine has shown that the OSCE can deliver. It reminds us that our comprehensive concept of security also includes the politico-military dimension, and we should support this aspect of the Organization's work as firmly as we support its work in the human dimension. Especially when we are putting hundreds of civilian staff on the ground in a conflict situation, we should be able to offer them as much protection as possible. I hope that we can accelerate progress toward resolving the long-unresolved issue of the OSCE's lack of a legal personality. This would help us to address this kind of challenge.

I should also point out that the OSCE provides very good value for very little money. Imagine how much more it could do with additional resources. Its work would have an even deeper impact.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we prepare to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act this year, we need to find ways to rebuild trust and confidence and to re-engage in joint efforts to strengthen security across the whole OSCE region. We must keep a close eye on the broader strategic perspective of European security. And we must continue to uphold our common values and principles as enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act and other landmark OSCE documents. Although these norms have been violated, they do not need to be reconsidered. Instead, they need to be reaffirmed and strengthened and made more difficult to undermine. We should look back to the roots of the Helsinki process and learn from the commitment of those Cold War-era leaders to work together. We should remember that we have joint responsibility for peace and security in Europe.

I strongly believe that the OSCE has a crucial role in the overall European security architecture

– as an inclusive platform for dialogue, building trust, and bridging the growing East-West divide. This is captured in the motto of the Serbian Chairmanship – “Rebuilding trust and confidence in order to create a positive agenda for the future” – and we will spare no effort in pursuing this goal. In this regard, I welcome the creation of the Panel of Eminent Persons on European Security as a Common Project, which was launched in December at the annual OSCE Ministerial Council. I am confident that the Panel has the potential to generate innovative ideas that can help us recapture the “spirit of Helsinki.” I look forward to its recommendations on how to replace the current culture of confrontation with one of co-operation and joint action.

Chairman Smith,
Co-Chairman Wicker,
Commissioners,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

President Obama has reaffirmed the centrality of European security to American interests and national security. The OSCE provides a unique format through which the United States can contribute to European security. The OSCE is broadly inclusive, providing an increasingly important bridge between the Euro-Atlantic and the Eurasian regions.

I would like to thank the United States for its firm commitment to the OSCE. I hope that your country will continue to make the most of the OSCE’s inclusive platform for dialogue and joint action.

Thank you for your attention and support. I look forward to your questions and comments