



Address by OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic at the closing of the 24th Annual Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, held in Helsinki:

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to address this 24th Annual Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Finlandia Hall, the very venue where the Helsinki Final Act was signed forty years ago. "Recalling the Spirit of Helsinki" is a first step in the difficult discussion that we need to engage in to overcome the present crisis.

During this session you have debated a wide range of issues of concern to OSCE participating States and the international community. Inevitably you have put a strong focus on the situation in and around Ukraine, the OSCE's role in crisis prevention and management, and the broader crisis of European security. Addressing this very critical situation is the top priority of Serbia's Chairmanship and is at the heart of all our efforts. At the same time, there are many other burning issues that warrant our attention. These include: the increasing flows of migrants and refugees in the Mediterranean and South East Europe regions and the larger OSCE area; terrorism, and especially the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters; organized crime and trafficking; climate change and many others.

The OSCE is an indispensable actor in European security. In the face of the crisis in and around Ukraine, the OSCE deployed a comprehensive set of tools and has become a key

factor in the search for a lasting political solution. All OSCE Institutions and structures, not least the Parliamentary Assembly, have been working in concert to help address the conflict. The Special Monitoring Mission that continues to monitor a fragile ceasefire and unfortunately is witnessing violations on a daily basis remains the most visible OSCE effort. Equally important, the Trilateral Contact Group, with the participation of the OSCE, continues to negotiate practical steps to stop the fighting and seeking solutions toward a lasting settlement.

The Organization's speedy response to the crisis in and around Ukraine has once again proven its value after a period in which the OSCE's unique strengths were often overlooked. But we should recall its history. The Helsinki Final Act and the CSCE Process were critical early

contributors to developments that have shaped European security over the past 40 years. There have been many different phases and key milestones along the way. It is also worth remembering that times were not always trouble-free, and the way forward was not without setbacks.

Indeed, the early stages in the 1970s took place against the dramatic backdrop of superpower rivalry – a stand-off that appeared stable but in fact carried great risks, including nuclear risks. As high-level contacts became more regular between East and West and diplomats began meeting in various formats, détente took hold. The Conference on Security and Co-operation and its lasting legacy, the Helsinki Final Act, both benefited from, and contributed to, this period of lessening tensions.

However, the grand bargain of Helsinki did not mean that Cold War confrontation was over. At subsequent CSCE meetings, verbal skirmishes between East and West, in particular between the U.S. and Soviet delegations, continued to be the norm rather than the exception. The Helsinki Decalogue governing the behaviour of States towards each other and towards their citizens was open to different interpretations and had to be squared with unfolding developments. The Helsinki Final Act's then-revolutionary concept of comprehensive security had to be tested in real situations to prove its validity. The discussion of commitments on political-military, economic and environmental, and human rights issues and their implementation had only just begun. The first Follow-up Meeting in Belgrade in 1977-78 ensured the continuity of the process, which at later stages produced some remarkable outcomes.

Indeed, the "Helsinki Process" eventually facilitated the transition from confrontation to co-operation and helped create conditions that led to the end of the Cold War. With the 1990 Paris Charter for a New Europe, participating States announced "a new era of democracy, peace and security." And in 1995, the OSCE came into being.

As we look back at forty years of the Helsinki Final Act, we are also reviewing twenty years of the OSCE. One way of assessing the relevance and impact of an organization is by asking the question, what would be different without it? In this regard, let me mention just a few examples.

The OSCE's field operations are a unique strength of our organization. They help participating States implement their commitments and are an indispensable tool for crisis prevention and conflict management. I strongly support, and am grateful for, the OSCE's comprehensive role in fostering democratic institutions, reconciliation and regional cooperation in South East Europe. The Organization has also made important contributions in other parts of the OSCE area, and has the potential to do more.

In the past twenty years, there have been a number of points when the OSCE's inclusive framework for dialogue and co-operation, combined with its comprehensive security concept, have placed it at the forefront of efforts to maintain peace in our region.

The OSCE has served as a dialogue facilitator and continues to work inside the relevant formats for resolving long-standing conflicts in Moldova and the South Caucasus. Even though

resolution of these conflicts remains out of reach because it requires genuine commitment by all the key actors, the OSCE has contributed to preventing military escalation and improved the lives of people suffering from the consequences of these conflicts. While the results of these efforts are mixed, there is no alternative to pursuing dialogue with patience and determination.

Ladies and Gentleman,

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly provides an invaluable platform for promoting inclusive dialogue and joint action among OSCE participating States. Indeed, in the 1999 Charter for European Security of the Istanbul Summit, the OSCE Heads of State or Government declared that “the Parliamentary Assembly has developed into one of the most important OSCE institutions.”

In the current context of heightened tensions, it is especially important to make efforts to overcome divisions by reaching out to each other to strengthen trust and encourage dialogue. It is therefore extremely regrettable that the OSCE’s core role as a platform for inclusive dialogue was undermined by the denial of visas to some Members of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. Indeed, it is contrary to “the spirit of Helsinki” fostered by the OSCE and its Parliamentary Assembly.

The OSCE is sometimes blamed for failing to prevent or resolve conflicts, including the current one in and around Ukraine. This criticism is misdirected. The OSCE is a tool of its participating States. Even though lessons learned from our response to the current crisis suggest the need to strengthen the Organization’s capacity to prevent and respond to conflicts, the OSCE is only able to do what your common political will allows. So I urge participating States to make greater use of our inclusive platform for dialogue and joint action, and to work together toward resolution of the current crisis. Progress both on the ground in Ukraine and at the negotiating table is the fundamental requirement not only for restoring peace and security in our region, but for making our common security architecture stronger and more resilient. In this, as always, we must be guided by the Helsinki principles. There can be no real stability in our region without full respect for, and strict implementation of, OSCE principles and commitments.

With tomorrow’s Informal High Level Meeting of participating States we are hoping to stimulate an interactive and genuine exchange on how to move our security dialogue forward. We will have a small commemorative event followed by substantive discussion allowing participants to express their views on key challenges, including the broader implications of the current crisis on Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security and, more importantly, to chart the way ahead. Secretary General Zannier will steer discussions during this session. Furthermore, over a working lunch, Ambassador Ischinger, as Chair of the Panel of Eminent Persons, will put forward some of the ideas for bridging the growing divide between East and West and reaffirming and reinforcing European security.

While we are only at the beginning of a long process and have yet to establish the exact format for deeper discussion, I am confident that the OSCE will have a vital role to play in working out a resolution of the current crisis, regaining lost confidence and reconsolidating European security.

In closing, I would like to congratulate the Parliamentary Assembly on your impressive Helsinki +40 Project. It has marked the anniversary of the Final Act with seminars focused on its enduring legacy that have fed into the informal discussions of the Helsinki +40 Process launched at the Dublin Ministerial Council. In this anniversary year, the Project is a welcome contribution to the discussion on the future of security in our region and the future of the OSCE.

Thank you.