



Opening Remarks by H.E. Roksanda Nincic, State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia on behalf of Serbia's 2015 OSCE Chairmanship, at the Conference on "25 Years of the Charter of Paris – How to Renew Commitments, Fulfill Expectations, and Revive the OSCE".

Minister Schetyna,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by thanking the Polish Institute of International Affairs and the Federal Academy for Security Policy for organizing this conference to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe. I also thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland and the Federal Foreign Office of Germany for supporting this important event.

Just like the Helsinki Final Act in 1975, the signing of the Charter of Paris in 1990 marked a major turning point in the history of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. It represented the culmination of [I quote] “a time of profound change and historic expectations” that ended an “era of confrontation and divisions of Europe”. The end of the Cold War was indeed a time that held great promise for [I quote] “a new era of democracy, peace and unity in Europe”, where participating States would focus on the full implementation of the CSCE commitments to strengthen stability, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law across the CSCE region. The participating States’ determination to affirm and consolidate these commitments was so strong and genuine that they felt the CSCE needed new structures and institutions to assist them in times of enhanced political dialogue and co-operation. They decided to establish formal decision-making bodies, a Secretariat, a Conflict Prevention Centre, an Office for Free Elections and a Parliamentary Assembly, laying the foundations for what – just a few years later – would become the Organization for Security and Co-operation as we know it today.

While many of the aspirations and expectations held by the Charter of Paris became reality, with the OSCE playing a key role in supporting democratic transitions, we also saw the emergence of new security challenges, tension and conflict.

Some argue that the crisis in and around Ukraine poses the most serious challenge to the OSCE since its inception. Many also maintain that this crisis is the result of a deeper malaise that the international community was not able to detect and address when it first emerged. The inability to resolve the protracted conflicts, the 2008 war in Georgia and the lack of progress on arms control are some of the most revealing manifestations of renewed divisions. Today, we need to face a situation in which the Helsinki principles, which participating States solemnly reaffirmed in the Charter of Paris twenty-five years ago, have been violated; we are in the midst of the worst crisis of European security since the end of the Cold War.

To make matters worse, this is happening at a time, when increasingly complex transnational security challenges are affecting all participating States without exception and require a joint and coordinated response. But we should not lose hope. Let me mention four elements that could play a positive role in our efforts to overcome this unprecedented crisis of European security.

First, the crisis in and around Ukraine has demonstrated the relevance of the OSCE as an inclusive platform for dialogue and joint action. It is the only international organization able to bring all key stakeholders to the table, keeping communication channels open and helping de-escalate tensions on the ground. Despite stark divisions and deep mistrust, participating States succeeded in reaching consensus on deploying the OSCE's largest-ever field operation to Ukraine. Serbia's Chairmanship worked hard during this year to consolidate the Special Monitoring Mission. The Mission plays an invaluable role in facilitating a durable and sustainable solution to the conflict. However, it is only one of a number of instruments used to address the crisis. The entire OSCE toolbox has been mobilized to help restore peace and stability in Ukraine – the Institutions, Secretariat, Parliamentary Assembly, Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine, the Observer Mission at the Russian Checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk and – of course – the Special Representative of the Chairmanship for Ukraine. Austrian Ambassador Martin Sajdik, who has followed in the footsteps of Swiss Ambassador Heidi Tagliavini, represents the OSCE in the Trilateral Contact Group and continues to lead difficult negotiations between the sides. The dedicated work of the Special Representative and the Working Groups' Coordinators on matters like decentralization, local elections, weapons withdrawal and verification and demining has greatly contributed to improving the situation on the ground. The ceasefire reached on 1 September has been largely holding, providing more space for achieving a political solution and resolving these critical issues.

Second, the OSCE participating States are “rediscovering” the OSCE. We should use this momentum to revitalize the OSCE as a platform for dialogue and co-operation on Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security. The OSCE needs to develop the right tools to better prevent and resolve conflicts, address new and emerging security threats while improving its effectiveness and efficiency. The Serbia's Chairmanship believes that the Helsinki +40 Process was a good effort to seek common ground on many key issues on the OSCE agenda. Although the Helsinki +40 Process – despite the best efforts of successive Chairmanships – fell short of earlier expectations, we are confident that the Belgrade Ministerial Council will encourage future Chairmanships to pursue an inclusive, forward-looking and open-ended informal dialogue on the broader crisis of security and co-operation in the OSCE area and on advancing efforts to strengthen the OSCE as an organization. Against the backdrop of the current crisis, we simply

cannot afford to give up and must sustain our efforts to engage with each other.

A third element of cautious optimism for overcoming the current crisis is the important work of the Panel of Eminent Persons on reconsolidating European security as a common project. The Panel was established by the Swiss Chairmanship and fully endorsed by the Serbia's Chairmanship and the Troika as part of the overall efforts to restore trust and co-operation among participating States. The Panel's interim report on lessons learned from the crisis in and around Ukraine has already offered a number of valuable recommendations and the Serbia's Chairmanship is exploring how to best follow up on them. The Panel's final report – which we intend to present at the Belgrade Ministerial Council – will provide additional ideas and further impetus for continuing political dialogue on the future of European security and the role of the OSCE beyond 2015.

As part of these broader efforts to stimulate thinking on the OSCE's future, the Serbia's Chairmanship also organized a side event on the margins of this year's opening session of the UN General Assembly on how to increase the OSCE's capacity to launch and sustain complex peace operations of an essentially civilian nature.

There is a fourth aspect that should be a source of inspiration for all of us – the OSCE's achievements in the human dimension. The Organization pioneered the human dimension as part of its comprehensive security concept, recognizing that – to quote the Charter of Paris – human rights and fundamental freedoms “are the foundation of freedom, justice and peace”. Current and emerging challenges in the OSCE region and beyond only confirm the need to redouble our efforts to strengthen democratic institutions and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms as essential preconditions for peace and stability. As highlighted at this year's Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, the current refugee and migrant crisis calls for a comprehensive, co-ordinated and humane response by the OSCE participating States, which need to balance security concerns with full adherence to international human rights, humanitarian law and refugee law. As an organization encompassing all of Europe and with strong ties in the Mediterranean and Asian regions, the OSCE can provide an important platform for dialogue and joint action, making sure that migration management does not become yet another divisive issue but rather an opportunity for co-operation. Relying on its comprehensive and cross-dimensional security concept, the OSCE can assist participating States and Partners for Co-operation to address the underlying causes of insecurity that are the root causes of displacement and migration, including conflict, poverty, and human rights abuses.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Looking back, we should be inspired by the vision, hope and determination of the leaders who signed the Charter of Paris for a New Europe. This key document remains as relevant today as it was twenty-five years ago. It can offer us guidance towards a better and more stable future. Overcoming today's deep crisis of European security will take political will, perseverance, and open and frank dialogue to re-build confidence and trust. The same political will, perseverance, and open and frank dialogue that brought about the Helsinki Final Act, the Charter of Paris and the OSCE as an inclusive platform for dialogue, co-operation and joint action.

Thank you.