



The 22nd OSCE Ministerial Council began today in Belgrade with a call for greater efforts to rebuild consensus on European security and renewed dialogue based on full respect for OSCE principles and commitments.

OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Serbia's Foreign Minister Ivica Dačić, encouraged participants to conduct an open, frank and constructive dialogue on all issues of common concern.

Serbia's Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić addressed the meeting, which is being attended by over 40 Foreign Affairs Ministers and hundreds of high-level diplomats from the 57 OSCE participating States, 11 Partners for Co-operation and representatives of international organizations.

"It is important that, in the period ahead, we make our best efforts to protect the fundamental values enshrined in the principles and commitments that the OSCE is based upon," said Vučić. Speaking about current challenges, including terrorism and migration, the Prime Minister said that the OSCE provides an important international framework in which to work on the resolution of such issues.

"There is no doubt that the OSCE's most important task at this moment is to further de-escalate the crisis in and around Ukraine," said OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Dačić. "Our determination to contribute to addressing this crisis, which has sharpened the already existing divisions among us, will largely determine our ability to revive an atmosphere that is conducive to working towards a shared vision of a free, democratic, common and indivisible security community in the OSCE region."

He said that Serbia's 2015 OSCE Chairmanship had invested large efforts in order to define the OSCE response to transnational and global threats and challenges, calling for "urgent, decisive and co-ordinated responses by all of us."

"In the year when we are marking the 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act and 25th anniversary of the Charter of Paris, we are deeply aware of the legacy that we have inherited," said Dačić. "We should draw inspiration from the courage of those Cold War leaders who managed to draw up a new foundation for regulating relations between states, despite an ideologically charged atmosphere of intense antagonism. I remain optimistic that, in time, we will manage to rebuild mutual trust and find our way back onto the right track."

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President Ilkka Kanerva advocated for organizational reform.

"We must modernize the OSCE. Let me encourage all of us to consider the array of suggestions the Assembly has offered this year for the kind of reform that is essential, including the modification of consensus-bound decision-making to enable swifter action; increasing investment in our field presences; and more openly addressing human rights issues," he said.

OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier thanked Serbia for its active leadership of the Organization in 2015 and highlighted the critical role that the OSCE is playing in facilitating the political process and de-escalating tensions in Ukraine.

"We proved to be an organization with real room for manoeuvre, trusted by all sides for our impartiality and balanced approach, ready to reach out and build bridges. But while we should all be proud of what the OSCE has accomplished, we must recognize that ultimately it is up to the sides to end the conflict and to engage in good faith in the hard work of restoring peace and stability."

The OSCE Ministerial Council will continue until 4 December.

*Photo by:MFA Serbia*