



"Serbia's OSCE Chairmanship coincides with the worst crisis of European security since the end of the Cold War," OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Serbia's First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ivo Dačić, told the U.S. Helsinki Commission at a hearing on 26 February in Washington, D.C.

"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 prevent the crisis in and around Ukraine from escalating into a larger confrontation," said Dačić. "Peace and security in Europe are a joint responsibility," he said.

The OSCE has been continuously engaged in trying to find a diplomatic solution to the Ukraine crisis, bringing all the key stakeholders to the table, and keeping critical lines of communication open, said Dačić. "The Serbian Chairmanship will make every effort to help restore peace in Ukraine and to rebuild trust and confidence across the OSCE region," he said.

Dačić stressed the importance of countering violent extremism and radicalisation that lead to terrorism, a priority for his country's OSCE Chairmanship. He called for unified action to resist attempts to create divisions on the basis of religion, ethnicity, race or culture. The OSCE should also increase its efforts to fight transnational crime, including human trafficking, drug trafficking and terrorism, Dačić added.

He also underlined the importance of regional co-operation and reconciliation in the Western Balkans, emphasizing his conviction that there was benefit in sharing lessons from the region. "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," he said.

Resolving protracted conflicts is also high on the list of the Serbian Chairmanship's priorities. Dačić voiced support for continued efforts within the existing negotiating formats as well as taking small steps to build confidence between the parties.

Strong engagement from the United States remained essential to the fulfilment of the OSCE's mission, Dačić stressed. "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 Eurasian regions," he said.