



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.

Head of Serbian diplomacy underlined that the Serbian Chairmanship was fully aware that it was our duty to defend what the OSCE stands for.

Referring to the crisis in and around Ukraine, Minister Dacic said: "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.

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".

Presenting the priorities of Serbian OSCE Chairmanship, the Head of Serbian diplomacy emphasized that the Serbian Chairmanship would give special focus to countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism, including radicalization of youth and the foreign fighter phenomenon.

"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 human rights institutions. 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.

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".

Serbia will strive to intensify efforts to advance regional co-operation and reconciliation in the Western Balkans. "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.

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".

Minister Dacic stressed in his statement that we should remember that we had 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.

The current culture of confrontation must be replaced with one of co-operation and joint action. 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", said the Head of Serbian diplomacy Ivica Dacic.

For the full statement of Minister Dacic, click [here](#)