



Address by OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic at the 40th Anniversary Commemoration of the Helsinki Final Act:

Minister Soini,  
Minister Burkhalter,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

For decades, the Helsinki Final Act has provided a solid foundation for security and stability in Europe. Forty years ago, our forerunners here in Helsinki understood that maintaining peace and security in Europe is a shared responsibility. We must follow their example and show the courage to engage in serious, committed dialogue and find opportunities for joint action. But even as we gather to commemorate this historic triumph of co-operation over conflict, the legacy of Helsinki is at risk. The crisis in and around Ukraine has challenged the most basic and essential principles of security and shaken the European security architecture to its foundations.

Armed conflict is once again a reality on our continent. The Helsinki principles have been violated and mistrust and tensions are growing which could increase the risk of provocations and escalation. It is no exaggeration to say that we are now grappling with the worst threat to European security since the end of the Cold War.

Yet, at the same time, the current crisis has underscored the continued relevance of the Helsinki Final Act and its revolutionary concept of comprehensive security. Despite today's challenging circumstances, I believe we can find encouragement and inspiration in the forty-year history of the Helsinki Final Act. At a time of much deeper divisions than we are now experiencing, political leaders found the courage to agree on a pragmatic compromise that served us well for decades. There is no doubt that the "Helsinki process" facilitated the transition from confrontation to co-operation and helped to end the Cold War. Today, after 40 years of its existence, the OSCE is yet again faced with the same challenge of confrontation vs cooperation.

It is obvious that the roots of the current crisis run far deeper than was initially understood. East-West tensions were already rising before the crisis erupted, fanned by divergent threat perceptions and contradictory security narratives. For quite some time, constructive engagement on key issues of European security had been difficult. Growing mistrust, confrontational policies and a weakening attachment to the OSCE concept of comprehensive security made cooperation even in areas of common concern more difficult. All of these challenges have only increased since the emergence of the crisis in and around Ukraine.

To make Europe's security architecture more resilient, we must work hard to recommit to cooperation and joint action. We need to find ways to rebuild trust and confidence and to re-engage in joint efforts to strengthen security across the whole OSCE area. This will be a challenging and long-term task – but it is urgent and we have no other choice.

The Serbia's Chairmanship, together with the other OSCE Troika members, is doing everything in its power to help achieve a peaceful resolution of the crisis. The daily violations of the cease-fire along the line of contact in eastern Ukraine are unacceptable. Both civilians and combatants continue to be killed and injured on both sides, and humanitarian conditions in areas of conflict are deteriorating rapidly. We must bring this unjustifiable human suffering to an immediate end and work together in good faith to achieve a peaceful and durable solution. I once again call on all sides to fully and unconditionally respect the cease-fire, end all hostilities and implement the provisions of the Minsk Agreements, including a verifiable and lasting withdrawal of heavy weapons. I also call for more constructive engagement by the parties in the Trilateral Contact Group and its working groups to enable progress on the key political, security, humanitarian and economic issues.

We must also recognize the impact that the crisis in and around Ukraine could have on the protracted conflicts in Moldova and the South Caucasus. We need to watch out for signs of escalation and redouble our efforts to revitalize the respective negotiating formats so that progress toward durable solutions can be made.

At the same time, transnational and global threats like terrorism, organized crime and climate change, as well as increasing flows of migrants and refugees, are rapidly gaining ground in the OSCE region and beyond. Addressing these complex and often interconnected challenges to security requires cooperation – including with our Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation. For tackling these challenges, the OSCE concept of comprehensive security is more relevant than ever. We should also not forget the added value of the OSCE field operations, which are a unique strength of our organization in addressing these challenges. I am convinced that we can work on them together even in the current context of division and confrontation.

At this juncture, restoring trust and confidence among OSCE participating States while respecting our fundamental shared principles and commitments should be the core elements of our joint endeavor. Helsinki principles remain valid and they do not need to be reconsidered. Instead we must work together to reaffirm them in good faith, strengthen them, and make them more difficult to defy. Within this framework, the long overdue process of reform of the OSCE needs to be given serious consideration in order to provide our organization with the necessary

tools and mechanisms to face current and emerging challenges to European security. The 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act is also an opportunity from this perspective, not least to give the OSCE a stronger footprint and a well deserved place in the European security architecture.

It is very easy to destroy trust, but re-establishing it is a slow and difficult process. As a crucial first step, we must reframe our dialogue around a positive, forward-looking agenda, and then start making small steps to rebuild confidence. As the organization best suited to bridge divides and facilitate cooperative solutions, the OSCE offers the right forum. In this context, while marking this important anniversary, I urge participating States to make greater use of our Organization. It is one of the best possible platforms for dialogue and joint action, and we should therefore work together to strengthen its capacities in order to reconsolidate European security.

Thank you.