

Mr President,

I would like to thank the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Slovakia for his briefing and congratulate his country on assuming the Chairmanship of the OSCE this year.

Belgium shares the particular interest of this Chairmanship in the following three areas of action:

Firstly, the prevention, mediation and reduction of conflict;

Secondly, ensuring a more secure future; and

Thirdly, the promotion of effective multilateralism.

Belgium is ready to offer its full support for the achievement of these priority tasks.

Mr President,

The OSCE plays a key role in promoting dialogue in a number of conflicts, ranging from Nagorno-Karabakh to Transnistria and the breakaway territories of Georgia. It contributes to reconciliation efforts in the Balkans on a daily basis.

Today, I would like to focus in particular on the situation in Ukraine, which is not only one of the greatest violations of the founding principles of the OSCE, but also of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. In this regard, I would like to highlight the OSCE's efforts to avoid a further escalation of this conflict. We welcome the invaluable work of the special monitoring mission as an observer and as a facilitator of dialogue between all the parties to the crisis.

We regret the obstacles to the proper performance of this mission's monitoring and reporting tasks in Ukraine. We strongly encourage the parties to the conflict to respect the mission's mandate and allow it safe and unhindered access to all Ukrainian territory, including Crimea and along the border between Ukraine and Russia.

We join the call for a lasting political solution to this conflict. Such a solution must be based on respect for the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders. The full implementation of the Minsk agreements is essential in this respect. We continue to support the work of the Normandy format as well as that of the trilateral contact group.

Mr President,

We are concerned by the situation regarding human rights and fundamental freedoms, including attacks against human rights defenders, assaults on journalists and growing intolerance, in the many regions where the OSCE is active. Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law is essential for ensuring lasting security. We underline our unwavering commitment to the human dimension, which must be the common thread throughout the work of the OSCE.

Mr President,

The OSCE makes a significant contribution to preventing and combating transnational threats. Terrorism, violent extremism and radicalisation are just some of these transnational threats. In this regard, we welcome the *Memorandum of Understanding* between UNOCT and the OSCE. One of the most effective ways of promoting the implementation of this Council's resolutions and strengthening the capacities of Member States is through effective collaboration between UNOCT and the regional organisations. These organisations are often in the best position to understand the challenges and vulnerabilities specific to a region. We encourage UNOCT and the OSCE to continue their cooperation and coordinate their work in order to strengthen international counter-terrorism efforts.

Mr President,

As the largest regional organisation within the meaning of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, the OSCE plays a vital role in protecting an international order based on law and in promoting peace and security in Europe. The different dimensions of the OSCE reflect the idea of an integrated approach to security and lasting peace. These are all objectives that this Security Council must support.