



Address of Minister Plenipotentiary Guðni Bragason, Permanent Representative of Iceland, delivered at the Informal Ministerial Gathering of the Slovak Chairmanship “From past action to future prevention: the OSCE’s niche in fostering stability in Europe and beyond”, High Tatras, Slovak Republic, 9th July 2019.

Mr Chairman.

Allow me to thank you for having initiated this dialogue and thus provided us with an opportunity to reflect on the past, and look to the future.

Multilateralism is of paramount importance to Iceland. Isolation and **not** participating in multilateral cooperation is not an option for us.

Our point of departure in security is our National Security Policy, which takes a holistic approach to security and encompasses active foreign policy, defence policy and civil security alike.

Iceland’s **geographic location** in the North Atlantic is also a determining factor and key pillars of our National Security Policy include membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the bilateral Defense Agreement with the United States.

The Cold War was ever present in the North Atlantic in the 1970s and so was the knowledge of the importance of the Helsinki Final Act of the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe, later to develop into OSCE.

Our predecessors created a unique Organization which provides all the diverse 57 states with a framework for **comprehensive security**. It is the only regular forum where past and present adversaries in Europe discuss security issues almost on a day-to-day basis. The value and virtue of dialogue cannot be overstated.

The OSCE encompasses all the elements, and has the instruments and structures, needed to preserve peace and security, to prevent conflicts, manage crisis and

post-conflict rehabilitation in the region. The three dimensional structure underlined from the beginning the multifaceted nature of peace and security.

Behind these considerable achievements was first and foremost hard work, but also optimism and enthusiasm, perhaps needed today, and **political will**.

How can participating States strengthen the OSCE?

First and foremost a **strong political will** is needed to use fully the instruments of the organization and its substantial tool-box.

We must show vigilance in preserving our **democratic and pluralistic societies**, which are being threatened by forces, be they individuals or states, which do not tolerate democracy, human rights, freedom of thought and expression.

In practical terms, we emphasize the importance of the organization's **core activities and operations** to strengthen security in the region and prevent conflict from breaking out.

For conflict prevention **early measures** to ease tensions involve negotiations and dialogue, identifying the root causes of dissatisfaction and get difficult situations under control. Such measures involve all three OSCE dimensions.

We like the OSCE to be **action oriented**, with emphasis on **field missions**, and readiness to deploy experts in troubled spots, directly helping people.

It would be a worthy tribute to our predecessors to honour the instruments and structures they created. The OSCE has for decades contributed effectively to the common and cooperative security in the Euro-Atlantic region through Conventional Arms Control and Confidence and Security Building Measures (**CSBMs**).

We call for the modernization of the **Vienna Document** (VD) and the strengthening of the Open Skies Treaty (**OST**). We urge all participating States to resume implementation of the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty (**CFE**), and thus contribute to greater security in the OSCE-area.

We support the **Structured Dialogue** which has proven to be a useful addition to the politico-military exchange regularly taking place within the organization. We like to draw attention to the importance of Risk Reduction and Incident Prevention on the High Seas.

While fostering the important instruments already in place, we need to come to terms with new challenges and threats to security, such as **Hybrid Warfare** which is now an integral part of security concerns.

The issue of non-proliferation of conventional arms should remain high on our agenda, as the agreed measures in the field of small arms and light weapons (SALW) demonstrate.

Mr Chairman.

Sustainable economic development, including environmental considerations, is essential for strengthening the security in the OSCE area.

Energy security is important for the overall security of every nation. Utilizing energy resources we need to have the welfare of future generations in mind, not only short term gains. In this respect, Iceland has called for energy efficiency and the increased use of **renewable energy** in the overall energy consumption.

Iceland is currently a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council and respect for human rights is an integral part of my country's foreign policy. We highly value the important work that ODIHR carries out on a daily basis.

We put great emphasis on the **election monitoring** of ODIHR and the work of all three institutions in strengthening democracy and pluralistic society, especially their work in the field, which is an integral part of security.

We hope for a consensus on the participation of **civil society** organizations in OSCE meetings, and a vigorous exchange of views at the HDIM in September.

Effective implementation of **UN Security Council resolution No 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security** would strengthen the comprehensive security role of the OSCE. The provisions of the resolution should be well integrated into OSCE-structures and field missions.

Increased cooperation with other **multinational organizations** will make the OSCE more effective and prevent duplication of work in various fields, such as humanitarian situations, capacity-building, human rights, migration and regarding to environmental hazards, as well as counter terrorism, transnational threats and anti-trafficking, to name but few.

We emphasize the importance of the **cooperation framework** from 1993 with the United Nations and the status of the OSCE/CSCE since 1992 as a "a regional arrangement in the sense of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations".

The OSCE needs to be an integral part of the global UN **Agenda 2030** and contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Mr Chairman

Iceland reiterates its support for **Ukraine's** sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders, and calls on the parties to the conflict to adhere to the Minsk Agreements which provide the basis for solving the conflict.

We regard the seizing of ships and sailors near the **Kerch Strait** in November 2018 as a violation of the freedom of maritime passage. We call on Russia to release the sailors and ships seized, as the *International Tribunal of the Law of the Sea* has concluded.

The **humanitarian situation** in the conflict areas in Ukraine is of concern. The prolonged armed conflict is hitting the civilian population hard economically, stalling social development and creating hazardous environment for ordinary people. We call for protection of civilians, exchange of detainees, demining and the easing of travelling of people.

Iceland also reiterates its support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia.

Finally, Mr Chairman.

We call for an agreement on the **scales of contribution**. The lack of agreement undermines the work of the organization, and at stake is the credibility of our commitments to the organization.

For our Organization to stay relevant in the future, we like it to be **action oriented**, with emphasis on field missions, and with a stronger political will and resources provided to make the future safer. It should have a lean and effective secretariat, fit for purpose.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.