



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Statement by OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger

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of the Council of Europe**

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Mme/Mr Chairperson,
Ministers,
Secretary General,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank the Finnish Presidency for the kind invitation and congratulate you all on the Council's seventieth anniversary.

The OSCE and the Council of Europe share a common objective for our continent: a Europe whole and free, where democracy, human rights and the rule of law prevail.

Today's Europe is facing numerous security challenges: armed conflict, violent extremism and terrorism, the violation of fundamental rights to name just a few. All of these put the very values that our Organizations stand for to a severe test.

In a world of complex and inter-linked threats and challenges, unilateral or even isolationist approaches cannot sustain long-term peace and security. By empowering organizations such as the OSCE and the Council of Europe, states can help foster effective multilateral solutions that allow us to succeed jointly to the benefit of our citizens.

Building on our longstanding partnership, we will continue to strengthen co-ordination in the four common priority areas: addressing terrorism; combating human trafficking, upholding the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, and promoting tolerance and non-discrimination. These remain as central to European security as ever.

But, beyond these well-established priority areas, I see strong potential for further strengthening our co-operation. Our mandates and the geographical area we cover overlap to a great extent, offering scope for synergies and an even smarter division of labour.

We will be mindful of this potential when co-ordinating capacity building; monitoring compliance with agreed standards and commitments; and supporting implementation through the provision of country-specific expertise.

Dear colleagues,

The crisis in and around Ukraine continues to deepen mistrust and divisions across the continent. For the people directly affected, it is a humanitarian tragedy.

After five years of violence, a new political impulse is needed to implement the Minsk Agreements, to stop the fighting, withdraw the heavy weapons, and take steps towards a sustainable solution. The OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission is there to monitor a cease-fire: but instead, it is recording hundreds, sometimes thousands of cease-fire violations every day. Even the limited windows of silence that are arranged to address humanitarian issues such as restoring access to water or electricity are increasingly disrespected.

The SMM is doing its utmost to manage a tense situation on the ground but its technical assets are being targeted and its freedom of movement unduly restricted. The SMM's more than 800 monitors from over 40 countries deserve better. They must be allowed to do their job in an enabling environment.

But I am not without hope. Recent political dynamics offer a chance to reverse this sorry state of affairs. I sincerely hope that the opportunities this offers will be grasped and that a renewed focus on relieving the humanitarian suffering will bear fruit.

Before closing, I congratulate Finland on its leadership in chairing the Committee of Ministers and I wish France every success for its upcoming Presidency.

Thank you.