

**Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna**

ENGLISH only

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Chairpersonship: Ukraine

**Statement by
Mr. Andrii Taran, Minister of Defence of Ukraine, at the Closing Session of
the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation under the Chairpersonship of
Ukraine**

*952nd Meeting of the Forum for Security Co-operation,
22 July 2020*

**Mr. Chairperson,
Excellences,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this meeting which is the last during Ukrainian Chairpersonship in the OSCE Forum for Security Cooperation.

Ukraine assumed its responsibilities of chairing this important decision-making body under unprecedented circumstances of the **COVID-19 crisis** and **ongoing aggression** on its territorial integrity and sovereignty. Both of these factors made our Chairpersonship a **challenging** as well as a **demanding** task.

During our tenure at the head of the Forum for Security Cooperation the security situation in the OSCE region continued to be marked by **gross violations** of international law and OSCE norms and principles, enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter. These negative developments further **erode trust and confidence**, **decrease predictability** and **transparency**, and **undermine security** in the whole OSCE area.

These are the signs that urged us to open a **frank discussion** over the issues that might not be comfortable for all. However, the OSCE and its participating States should stand for its founding principles and seek solutions for a **strong and coherent response**, when these principles are severely infringed upon.

By shying away from these discussions, we will not be able to restore peace and security in Europe. We put forward, for consideration of the Forum those topics that reflect the **root causes** of these negative developments and its consequences for the entire OSCE community.

Therefore, **the politico-military aspects** of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine remained in the **spotlight** of the Forum during our Chairpersonship. The **treacherous murder** of a Ukrainian military medic in Donbas on July 13 is just another example of how important it is to exert every effort in deterring further escalation of the conflict and safeguarding the international humanitarian law.

Through the security dialogues Ukraine has been sharing its bitter national experience of **countering foreign aggression** in its various manifestations, while preserving the relevance of the topics discussed for participating States. Both, current and long-established issues of the Forum were included into the priorities of Ukrainian Chairpersonship.

I am delighted to share with you today some of our **assessments** of the outcomes of these dialogues and offer **views** on a number of security issues that genuinely require further **collective response** of the OSCE.

One of the agenda items discussed during Security Dialogue was the **COVID-19** crisis and its impact on the politico-military aspects of security in the OSCE area, including the implementation of the Confidence and Security Building Measures.

We share with our partners the vision that one of the problems of the pandemic is that some states and non-state actors are trying to use this situation to spread **propaganda** and **false accusations** using cyberspace and social media to **undermine confidence** in democratic institutions, and create conditions to **lift sanctions** related to violation of international law.

Another problem related to the postponement of verification activities and the negative effect of the pandemic on the conflicts in the OSCE area was covered. Particular attention was attached to the **impediment of SMM** and **international humanitarian mission's activities** in Ukraine under the guise of COVID-19, and importance to heed to the appeal of UN Secretary General on the **global ceasefire**.

These deliberations served as a good basis for **further thorough assessment** of the COVID-19 implications within the OSCE, most notably in the Structured Dialogue meetings.

We believe that extra attention should be paid to this topic due to its **unpredictability** and in view of the need to **renew the verification activities** under the politico-military instruments and to **improve adaptive measures** within OSCE structures and field missions.

Another key topic addressed by the Forum is the overall **security situation in the OSCE area**.

I would like to make one point with this regard **very clearly and strongly** – **Russian aggression against Ukraine** remains as the top issue for our **national and regional security**.

Our country has been at war since 2014 struggling as a Nation to **restore our sovereignty and territorial integrity** within our internationally recognized borders.

Now it is clear that all major conflicts on the post-USSR territory – in Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine, are like links in a single chain, one leads to another, but their roots lie in the **Kremlin`s aggressive foreign policy**.

The security situation in the East of Ukraine, around our borders and **in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov region** still remains **highly tense**. It is marked by ongoing unprecedented **militarization, occupation of the sovereign territories** of Ukraine and Georgia, and **impediment of the freedom of navigation**.

We assess that **more attention and involvement** of the OSCE in these processes are **needed**. The SMM`s enhanced monitoring of the situation is important in order to provide an **objective picture**, even in a limited scope due to ongoing restrictions of its freedom of movement.

Our priorities also included an emphasis on the issue of **small arms and light weapons (SALW)**, and **stockpiles of conventional ammunition (SCA)**.

Illicit SALW and conventional ammunition continue to increase **instability** and incite further **armed violence**, derailing sustainable development and crisis management efforts, further destabilizing the OSCE region, fuelling organized crime and terrorist attacks.

Ukraine is **committed** to continue implementing standing OSCE and international documents in the field of SALW and SCA.

During our Chairpersonship we managed **to reach consensus** on the adoption of the decision on the second Biennial meeting to assess the implementation of the OSCE documents on SALW and SCA.

Additionally, we brought to the attention of participating States the topic of **mine action** and **mine threats**, stemming from unresolved conflicts, and the OSCE's role in assisting participating States in this field. The use of anti-personnel mines by a State Non-Party to the Mine Ban Convention against the State Party was given particular attention.

The root causes of illicit trafficking of SALW and conventional ammunition, including across national borders in the conflict zones, and ongoing contamination of the territories with mines, landmines and UXO is a **foreign aggression**.

By defining and further eliminating the sources of this phenomena, we can achieve real progress in combating trafficking of SALW and conventional ammunition, and eliminating mine hazards in the OSCE region. Having said that, I would like to highlight two particular issues:

- importance of **the full state border control** by the Government of Ukraine to prevent illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons and conventional ammunition;
- **humanitarian demining activities** in Ukraine and in the controlled territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions in particular.

Hybrid threats and **modern warfare** were discussed by the Forum and the Permanent Council meeting the week before (*15 July*).

Over the past six years, Russia has been carrying out large-scale **subversive actions**, **cyber-attacks**, attempts to **interfere in the electoral process** and used other **hybrid instruments** against Ukraine and other democratic states, thereby destroying the foundations of European security and creating a threat to peace and stability on the continent.

Unfortunately, these threats further **endanger** our societies, **undermine** our security and **jeopardize** the lives of people. There are diverging views on the topic of hybrid threats and hybrid warfare, but this should not discourage us from considerations on the challenges, that are at **the top of the list of security concerns** in many participating States.

A **coherent international response** to these threats is of paramount importance. Many participating States underlined the role that the OSCE can play through its various tools to respond to this cross-dimensional challenge.

The Forum considered **the implementation and modernization** of the Vienna Document 2011 on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures in light of **rapid technological developments** in the military domain, the lack of effective and up-to-date **risk reduction** and incident **prevention mechanisms**, changes in the **military structure** and conduct of **exercises** and other factors.

The negative impact of existing **grey zones** in the OSCE region, inaccessible for any verification activities and transparency measures under politico-military toolbox, was also outlined during this dialogue.

The overwhelming majority of the OSCE participating States support the process of modernization of the Vienna Document in order to more effectively meet the current challenges to the European security system through **enhanced military transparency** and **predictability**.

The recently conducted by Russia **large scale, no notice military exercises**, involving **150 thousand troops**, is just another spark example why we need to update the Vienna Document. The joint proposal, which is on the table of the FSC, provides **the opportunity to close this loophole** and **ensure mandatory transparency** on this type of military activity.

The Forum discussed issues related to the **non-proliferation of WMD**, in particular, the OSCE role in implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1540 and its possible contribution to Comprehensive Review process in 2021.

The work to facilitate the process of compiling OSCE Best Practice Guides on implementation of the Resolution 1540 as a **potential contribution** to the review process should be concluded. We wish the upcoming German FSC Chairpersonship **tangible results** on this direction and reassurance of our full support.

Together with the OSCE Albanian Chairmanship, we commemorated the 20th Anniversary of the **UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security**

and discussed ways ahead in achieving better equality in rights and opportunities of women and men in the security and defence sector.

Another security dialogue was dedicated to the activities and regulation of **private military and security companies**. Their covert use as tools for achieving political goals worldwide was also discussed. Ukraine's bitter experience was the case in point.

This brings me to my **closing remarks**. And I would like to reiterate once again that **despite difficult epidemiological situation** in Ukraine and **ongoing hybrid aggression**, my country **remains committed** to its international obligations.

We all have to painfully recognize that - as we speak - our defence forces continue **to sustain combat casualties** in Eastern Ukraine, civilian population **suffers** and local economy **shrinks** with real dangers to the environment. All this is continuing to be the reality in the Donbas caused by **ongoing Russian aggression**. This horrible situation cannot last indefinitely.

And the only way to halt the destructive and destabilising power of such actions is **to restore full control by the Government over the entire stretch of our country's internationally recognised borders in Eastern Ukraine**.

To underline the importance of respecting the fundamental principles – the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence I would like to remind you of the issue of illegal occupation of the Ukrainian Crimea. We need greater engagement of the OSCE on this issue. **We are confident that Crimea-related sanctions should be in place until Russia returns control of the peninsula to Ukraine.**

We would like to thank the OSCE for their contribution and constant work to bring back peace into Ukraine.

Chairing the FSC for the first time in more than 20 years was an invaluable experience and honour for my country. Let me conclude by thanking all parties who assisted us during this journey.

Thank you!