

OSCE Ministerial in BASEL 4-5 December 2014

STATEMENT BY ICELAND

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to reiterate Iceland's support of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act. The principles enshrined in the Helsinki Decalogue –the inviolability of frontiers, peaceful settlement of disputes and the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms – are as valid as they were little less than 40 years ago.

Then, our political leadership showed remarkable responsibility to avoid war and secure peace, and managed to overcome differences – build bridges. Their wisdom eventually led to the OSCE region growing together instead of drifting apart.

This is why today Iceland also steadfastly stands by Ukraine.

We do that as signatories to the Helsinki Final Act, and as members of the United Nations, the Council of Europe and other international organizations based on human rights, democracy and rule of law.

In and around Ukraine these principles are being grossly violated and because of that we are facing a military conflict in the middle of Europe.

It threatens not only Ukraine and its neighbors but constitutes a grave danger to security in the whole OSCE area, as well as rule-based international order.

This is why the armed fighting by Russia-backed separatists cannot be tolerated and why the illegal annexation of Crimea is unacceptable.

This must stop and we have a responsibility to stop it. The building blocks of European security are being undermined. They are blown away with every bomb that explodes and every life that is lost.

Mr. Chairman,

Our organization has proven valuable in this crisis. Politically, the OSCE has been an important platform ensuring crucial dialogue on European peace and security.

Operationally, as a security organization the OSCE has made effective use of its conflict management tools and the various confidence-building measures at its disposal.

The OSCE has been an honest broker and our experts have demonstrated impartiality and resilience, speed and flexibility.

Allow me on the behalf of my Government to extend my gratitude to all members of the SMM, as well as to the staff of different OSCE's institutions, for their professionalism and sacrifice. Iceland will seek ways to continue to contribute to SMM both financially and with civilian experts.

We join others in condemning the cowardly attacks on civilian monitors. By the same token, we strongly encourage all parties to return to and respect the Minsk Arrangements.

There is no military solution to this crisis. Armed conflict, human rights offences and a foreign policy doctrine that disregards the solemn right of sovereign states to self-determination is not the solution. It is the problem.

A political solution is required and it should and must build on our principles. This will require inclusive dialogue and intensified political engagement. Here, the OSCE must continue to contribute.

The good news is that democracy works. The recent parliamentary elections demonstrated that the Ukrainian people are committed to democratic and economic reform. Successful reforms are perhaps the strongest antidote against attempts of others to assert power over Ukraine's future.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me emphasize Iceland's support for OSCE's commitments to security in Europe, human rights, particularly gender equality, freedom of expression and freedom of the media, as well as the fight against xenophobia and intolerance.

In these areas, implementation of commitments is key and civil society and youth can play important parts. We support greater involvement of both in our work.

By closing, a strong word of praise to the outgoing Swiss chairmanship. Your leadership, with the right combination of consistency and creative thinking, has indeed set a precedent for future presidencies.

I wish the incoming Serbian Chair all the best. You certainly have Iceland's support.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.