



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°1032
Vienna, 18 January 2023

EU Opening Statement

Mr. Chair, the European Union and its Member States warmly welcome his Excellency, **Mr. Josip Brkić, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina** to the Forum for Security Cooperation and thank him for outlining the priorities of the FSC Chairpersonship of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Excellency, your country takes over the helm of the FSC amidst the most serious security crisis in Europe, which is a direct result of Russia's pursuit of its imperialist ambitions. **Russia's unprovoked, illegal, and unjustified full-scale war of aggression, supported by Belarusian authorities, against Ukraine** has been raging for almost 11 months, resulting in immense human suffering and a devastating trail of destruction. By launching this imperialistic war, Russia has blatantly violated a fundamental premise of international law, namely the prohibition of changing international borders by force. At the same time, Russia has trampled all over the numerous principles and commitments of this Organisation and refused initiatives for dialogue and cooperation, thereby seriously undermining the spirit of cooperation and confidence in this framework.

In the face of this brutal aggression and the horrendous violence unleashed upon Ukrainians – the latest dreadful example of which we saw last Saturday in Dnipro - **the EU and its Member States**, as well as the overwhelming majority around this table, **have clearly taken the only stance possible**. This is an unyielding stance against the aggression against a sovereign State by another one, and in favour of a country's inalienable right to choose its own future. We have shown, not only by words but also by deeds, that we stand with Ukraine in these unprecedented times and will continue doing so for as long as it takes.

The **mandate of the Forum for Security Cooperation** is to address the security needs and concerns of all participating States, **to cooperate towards peace in the OSCE region**, through increased military transparency and predictability and building

mutual trust. This common task has been flouted by Russia and Belarus. They blatantly violated OSCE commitments in the politico-military dimension, including the Vienna Document provisions. **How can one country pretend to cooperate towards peace when at the same time brazenly attacking its fellow participating State?** If Russia is interested in a meaningful and result-oriented dialogue on the future of European security, it must first and foremost put an end to its aggression and withdraw all its troops and equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine. It should also respect the sovereignty of other States, including Georgia and the Republic of Moldova.

After 24 February 2022, **business as usual was no longer an option** in the FSC. This has been recognised and reflected by the preceding Chairs. Nevertheless, we strongly believe that the FSC can and should play a useful role even under the current dire circumstances. We witnessed it last trimester during the Belgian FSC Chairpersonship where we had many opportunities to address the consequences of Russia's condemnable actions in and against Ukraine. **Overall, this forum should remain firmly focused on doing its part towards ending Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.** We will continue to **voice our unrelenting support for Ukraine** and to **refute Russia's propaganda and disinformation.** Moreover, we reiterate that all perpetrators and all responsible for this illegal war and for the crimes committed must and will be held to account.

Excellency, **Bosnia and Herzegovina is in a unique position** to steer our deliberations in the FSC at this juncture. Your country knows exactly how much suffering and destruction a war can cause. At the same time, your country has worked hard to handle the tragic war legacy, clearing the mine fields, countering the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and consequently working towards reconciliation and a better future. We welcome your work programme and look forward to the upcoming discussions on mine action, SALW, Code of Conduct and to the joint FSC/PC meeting on the implementation of UNSCR 1325. **All these topics are extremely relevant**, not least against the background of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

The OSCE activities with regard to the Women, Peace, and Security agenda must be strengthened. Promoting and mainstreaming **gender equality** throughout all dimensions is also an important aspect of advancing the OSCE's concept of comprehensive security. It is imperative that women's participation at all levels of decision-making processes is full, equal, and meaningful, including in the armed and

security forces. During these difficult times for their country, the courage and commitment of Ukrainian women are truly inspiring.

Lastly, we would like to take this opportunity to ensure you of our full support and engagement in such a challenging period, and wish Ambassador Bencun and his able team every success.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ALBANIA*, UKRAINE and REPUBLIC of MOLDOVA, the Potential Candidate Country GEORGIA, the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

*North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.