



**NORWEGIAN MINISTRY
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

STATEMENT BY THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF NORWAY,
H.E. Børge Brende,
at the 22nd Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council,
Belgrade, 3-4 December 2015

Thank you, Mr Chairman,

The terror attack in Paris is a reminder of the dramatic times we live in, and of the complexity of threats to security in Europe.

While our thoughts go to those in Paris, Ankara, St. Petersburg and elsewhere that have lost their loved ones, we must take necessary action and make full use of the established institutions of the European security architecture.

Our thoughts also go to the many who have fled their homes because of conflict, adding to the largest number of displaced people the world has seen since World War II.

In such times of unprecedented turbulence and risk, a strong European security architecture is needed more than ever.

An irreplaceable part of that architecture is the OSCE.

This organisation has a unique potential with regard to conflict resolution. We should use this potential.

Over the years, the OSCE has carried out missions in countries and areas where no other organisation could perform these tasks.

In Ukraine, the OSCE has demonstrated its uniqueness as a tool for security measures on the ground.

No other organisation could have done the same job of monitoring the Minsk peace agreements.

The SMM is the major provider of impartial information from areas controlled by rebel forces.

In many places, SMM has managed to build trust and confidence and facilitate negotiations, ceasefires and humanitarian relief.

The OSCE is an active provider of capacity for Ukraine's reform, its civil society, its free media and its national minorities.

In sum, the engagement in Ukraine is a prime example of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security.

The OSCE is and must remain a key platform for dialogue on a wide variety of issues. We must use this organisation to rebuild trust.

We should explore ways to improve our mechanisms for conventional arms control.

And we need better systems to prevent incidents and unintended escalation. We have seen examples of such incidents in the past few weeks, which underlines the need to come together and discuss ways of avoiding such situations.

Updating the Vienna Document must be a priority in 2016.

And we must use the OSCE to share views on how to meet the magnitude of challenges we are faced with.

Last time we met, the situation in Ukraine was top of our agenda. It still is.

The unacceptable situation in Donbass remains of great concern. Crimea remains illegally annexed by Russia.

But there is a way forward.

The conflict in and around Ukraine can only be solved through full implementation of the Minsk agreements, by all parties, in full respect of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders.

We have to be clear:

This conflict is the result of a fundamental breach of the most basic principles of the OSCE. It can only be resolved by restoring the respect for those same principles.

We support the work of the Normandy format towards this end.

Mr Chairman,

Our engagement in and for Ukraine has demonstrated that we must strengthen the conflict response capacity of our organisation.

Greater instability and more conflict in Europe should inspire us to invest in the OSCE.

There is a lack of genuine political will to implement our common commitments in several participating States.

We are particularly worried by the increasing pressure on civil society. Civil society is an indispensable partner in building democratic and prosperous societies.

We commend the work of our autonomous institutions. They assist us all. They criticize us all. We must have the courage to face their constructive recommendations.

There can be no lasting security and stability without respect for human rights and international law.

This is what the OSCE is about.

Thank you.