

Translation

**Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier:
Address to the OSCE Permanent Council on 2 July 2015**

Chairman,
Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to have been invited here to the Permanent Council, and to have the opportunity as the future Chairman of the OSCE to speak to you today about the security policy situation in the OSCE area – and also about the consequences that this situation has for the OSCE and thus for the German Chairmanship in 2016.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Europe is navigating extremely perilous waters. We must weather storms that come from both the inside and the outside. In Ukraine, a security policy crisis is raging – undoubtedly the most serious since the end of the Cold War. At the same time, many other dangerous storms are sweeping through our neighbourhood, near and far – crises and conflicts so numerous, complex and severe as I have not ever experienced in my own political biography. I am sure: Not just I, but hardly anyone here would have imagined such a situation only a few years ago.

This stormy time is a period of testing – for this institution, for the OSCE, and for peace in Europe. During this test, Germany is prepared to take on responsibility. We will take the helm of the OSCE in 2016 and in doing so we want to help it navigate these stormy seas. One cannot promise a successful crossing of such troubled waters. This will be no fair-weather excursion. I also cannot tell you whether we will arrive in a safe port by the end of next year.

But we all know how much is at stake. We Germans in particular know how much we owe to this institution and to the CSCE process – on the path to détente between East and West, to ending the Cold War and finally to the reunification of my country.

Exactly forty years ago, the Helsinki Final Act was signed and the Finnish President Urho Kekkonen articulated his hopes for the future. He said he had hope that, quote, “a new era in our mutual relations” was dawning and that, quote, “we have set out on a journey through détente to stability and enduring peace”.

We have come a long way on this journey. The current storm shall not and must not end the journey! We must not allow all that we have built up in the OSCE over the years to be torn down now – that is, the vision of a peaceful order in Europe that rests on dialogue, trust and security.

Dialogue, trust and security – these are also the principles that will orient our compass when we take the helm of the OSCE in 2016.

(1) Dialogue

The first pillar –you heard it- is dialogue. In Germany’s experience, the CSCE process has always been a dialogue process – even across the deepest political and ideological divides of the Cold War. This dialogue was always laborious and lengthy, but in the end it made a vital contribution to détente between East and West.

I am convinced: Also today, we need this kind of dialogue, in the severe crisis in Ukraine. And I am convinced that the OSCE must be *the* platform for this dialogue. Over the decades, the OSCE has grown as a common organisation. It is rooted in mutually agreed basic principles, and it possesses proven instruments of dialogue.

All of these things are what matters today, for I remain certain that there can be no military solution to the Ukraine conflict. The solution must be political. This moment of testing is also a moment of diplomacy and dialogue.

In the package of measures adopted in Minsk, we agreed on a “road map” that outlines the path out of the conflict: a political path that must be walked by those who are politically responsible. It is not perfect, but it is the only one we have. The OSCE has a vital role to play in implementing it. But primarily, all of the conflicting parties must fulfil their obligations.

To put it another way: *Without* a political solution to the Ukraine conflict it is unlikely that we will find our way back onto the path towards a shared understanding of our common future and the principles of our coexistence. And it is quite clear that our understandings of these things are currently far apart from one another. That is why the dialogue to which I am referring will not be a fair-weather dialogue, but rather will be contentious. But this makes it all the more important that we speak to one another – about our different perceptions, about the ways we feel threatened, and about our conflicting interests. We can and must talk about all of these things – as long as we speak *with* and not *past* one another.

There is another important aspect of dialogue that I would like to mention. This dialogue is not a dialogue among governments, but rather a dialogue among people. Right now, when political alienation has increased so much in the OSCE area, civil society connections have become all the more important. This human dimension is laid out in the Helsinki Final Act. We want to strengthen it.

- I am speaking, for example, of youth exchanges. We would like to continue the work of Switzerland and Serbia in this area. We also want to – like the Swiss and Serbian Chairmanships – incorporate civil society more extensively into the discussion among States within the OSCE.
- I am speaking, secondly, of freedom of the press and freedom of expression, of the independence of the media and the safety of journalists. Times of conflict are, unfortunately, also times of propaganda and of distorted images. The OSCE should set common standards against these things.
- I am speaking, thirdly, of the protection of minorities. Europe today is a diverse continent, in the East as well as in the West. Minorities should be protected in modern

states so that these states bring societies together rather than dividing them, and we absolutely must not permit minorities to be instrumentalised in conflicts.

- This also means that we must combat every form of political extremism, intolerance and discrimination. This concern will also shape the German Chairmanship. As many of you know, the topic of anti-Semitism within the OSCE is especially important to us. We would like to build on the Berlin Conferences of 2004 and 2014. The terrible attacks in Paris, Brussels and Copenhagen have shown us that anti-Semitism still is –and maybe even increasingly so- a real and dangerous threat, not only to our Jewish citizens but also to our societies as a whole. The struggle against anti-Semitism therefore must remain our shared concern.
- Another OSCE thematic area that the German Chairmanship would also like to highlight as a priority is strengthening the rights of women.

Ladies and gentlemen, the granting of fundamental civil liberties guarantees peace and stability. Not only because free and democratic societies are much less vulnerable to the virus of extremism, radicalisation and terrorism, but also because we as governments – and I mean all the governments that are gathered in this institution – are dependent on the trust of our citizens. Only a government that protects basic rights has earned the confidence of the people.

I would like for us to allow a serious dialogue to take place in the circles of the OSCE about how we can better implement existing obligations in this area and how we can strengthen the corresponding OSCE institutions. Here I am thinking of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Representative on Freedom of the Media. We are building on their excellent work and we will work together closely with them.

(2) Trust

The path of dialogue leads me to the third pillar of our work in the OSCE: Trust.

Let us not deceive ourselves: in the past year and a half, not only has a highly dangerous threat to European security been ignited, but a tremendous amount of trust has been lost. You can probably sense this more directly here in Vienna than others can.

We need to be clear about the *reasons* for this loss of trust: Russia's annexation of Crimea violated international law and a fundamental principle of the Europe's peace order– the inviolability of borders. Of course, Europe's security has thereby been damaged. The attempt to change European borders unilaterally and without any regard for national sovereignty, seven decades after the end of the Second World War, is unacceptable and cannot be a form of behaviour that occurs among the states in a security community.

And what makes things worse: Trust is rapidly destroyed, but only very slowly rebuilt. For me it is a rule of thumb of foreign and security policy that you can set off a conflict in 14 days, but truly resolving it takes 14 years and longer.

This makes it all the more important that we get started now! Let us strengthen existing elements of confidence-building, rather than dismantling them further. And we should even

attempt to develop them further, even though the end of 2016 certainly will not mark the end point of this work.

- Firstly: we need to return to the fundamental principles of cooperative security. Right now, when the Ukraine crisis has caused threatening reflexes from the Cold War to reawaken, I believe, for instance, it is essential to strengthen the arms control regimes. Confidence- and Security-Building Measures, regular military contacts and exchange among military and political experts are all an essential part of cooperative security. Dialogue on these topics in the OSCE must not be demolished, especially when other organisations do not continue this dialogue, ladies and gentlemen.
- Secondly: confidence is only created when we face our common threats together. We need not think far outside the box of the OSCE to recognise such threats: international terrorism, radicalisation, cross-border drug trading, and risks in cyberspace are all among these threats. In all of these areas we could do with *more* cooperation, not less. A great deal of groundwork has been done in the OSCE – by Serbia, by Switzerland, and also by other countries holding the Chairmanship – and we want to build on it. In the area of transnational threats, we want to work together more closely with the OSCE partner countries. We hope that our conference with the Mediterranean partners in October in Jordan will provide fresh impetus for this. And I hope that the negotiations with Iran might generate new impulses for the security order in the Middle East.
- Thirdly: economic exchange can strengthen confidence in the long term. That is why it is absolutely right for the OSCE as a security organisation to engage more with the connection between economic and security policy issues. ‘Connectivity’ is a keyword here. Infrastructure, transportation routes, and border and customs procedures are all vital areas for investment, growth and jobs – but also, and this is important to me, for common security. The promotion of good governance also fits into this area: improving conditions for investment, combatting corruption, minimising environmental threats and managing cross-border migration more effectively all are beneficial both economically and in terms of security policy. The OSCE can serve as a forum for exchange of experience, and should with its broad membership also advance the dialogue about what economic governance in our shared area that was acceptable to all and useful for all would look like. Perhaps in this context it would also be helpful to look beyond the borders of the OSCE.

(3) Security

Last, let me turn to security. It is obvious: The storms of the present have shaken even this existential pillar of OSCE. This crisis in Ukraine has brought armed conflict back to our continent. Despite a ceasefire agreement from Minsk, which the OSCE played a major role in facilitating, people are still dying and we see military actions and violations of the agreed ceasefire every day.

So our task is clear: We must make the pillar of security stronger, firmer, storm-proof! The OSCE is and remains a key instrument of conflict prevention and resolution in Europe. This is precisely what it is currently demonstrating in Ukraine! The OSCE has proved to be irreplaceable. I do not even want to imagine what the situation there could have to *without* the OSCE, *without* the Special Monitoring Mission, *without* the courage and dedication of the

women and men who are braving the storm, in the name of OSCE, and helping to solve this crisis. Those in Ukraine and all those who are active in crisis regions for the OSCE are rendering an outstanding and invaluable service for the benefit of all of our security. So let us first of all thank them for it! But we should not only give thanks – we also have a responsibility towards these men and women and must ensure that we provide them with the support that they need and deserve to complete their work safely.

The OSCE and its institutions need to be in a position to actually fulfil their mandates in all conflicts and regions – in Ukraine, and also in the South Caucasus and Moldova. We cannot allow the dangerous tremors that are rippling through the European security order to spread to other regions of our continent. The remaining trouble spots must be resolved on the basis of the agreements that have been made, the OSCE principles and international law.

In doing so we can draw on all existing OSCE formats. Moreover, we should equip the Conflict Prevention Centre with more capabilities and assets, for early detection and crisis prevention determine the speed and quality of the OSCE's crisis prevention work. Election monitoring has also developed into an OSCE trademark that sets standards worldwide.

I am convinced that we all share a common interest in strengthening rather than weakening these institutions. And in doing so, we should apply the lessons learned from the current mission to Ukraine, and we should likewise take up the suggestions for improvement that the Panel of Eminent Persons have put together.

However, such improvements have two conditions. The first of these is the clear political will of all participants. It is essential for all participating States to cooperate with the OSCE institutions and OSCE field missions reliably and in a spirit of trust. All of these institutions and missions support and assist us, and we should value their contribution to our common security. The second condition will come as little surprise to you: adequate financial resources are needed. I am aware of the challenges of tight public budgets, and I know that efficiency is important. But we must provide security for this organisation in these turbulent times, and swift adoption of the budget and the financial support of the member states are an indispensable part of this.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I have gone through all three pillars, with all the many building blocks that they are made out of. Each single building block is a great deal of work. And let me make one thing clear in the end: the first brick must come before the second. The house is built from the bottom up.

I know that some of you have high expectations for the German Chairmanship. But these are stormy times, and the future is uncertain. For that reason, we should make sure it is clear to all of us that we can only move forward only step by step. In my view there are four layers to the tasks ahead:

- First and foremost, this OSCE is a complex multilateral organisation and must be able to *function*, all the more in difficult times like this. This is the first step. Passing a budget is part of that.
- The second step is the acute *crisis management*. We want to use the OSCE's set of

tools for this – as we are doing currently in Ukraine through the Special Monitoring Mission and the Trilateral Contact Group. If we manage to go ahead with Minsk, the OSCE can build essential bridges to resolve the conflict.

- Thirdly: in this speech I have described a number of challenges that extend far beyond the acute storm on the horizon. These future challenges also require the OSCE – I am convinced of this. But this means setting the *institution itself* on solid footing for the future: improving its sustainability and future viability. The Ukraine crisis shows: Technical preconditions for more difficult missions must be provided.
- And finally, fourthly, we will adhere to the spirit of Helsinki, to the vision of a *Europe of trust and cooperation*. This common architecture will, I hope, someday rest again on the building blocks of the OSCE. For, certainly, in the past forty years we have been further than today.

Without a doubt, the path there is a very, very long one. But let me quote the words of Willy Brandt who said “small steps are better than no steps”. Willy Brandt himself was a trailblazer for the CSCE and he would advise us to take those small steps now, especially when the big steps seem so far away. I look forward to our joint efforts, to the stretch of road that’s ahead of us today, and I hope we will travel it together. *Thank you very much.*