



Statement by H.E. Tomáš Petříček
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic
25th Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council, Milan 2018

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Secretary-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by expressing our strong appreciation to the Italian Chairmanship for the work done in 2018 and for their hospitality in Milan.

The growing insecurity in the Euro-Atlantic and Euroasian space is caused by flagrant violations of international law and OSCE principles and commitments. The respect for our rules-based order principles must be restored. The OSCE with its unique normative framework, is needed more than ever. We should make full use of existing instruments to reduce risks and foster trust and security. We also need to recommit to a genuine dialogue, primarily on the unresolved conflicts.

The crisis in and around Ukraine has remained at the top of our agenda for another painful year since Crimea was annexed and the conflict in and around Donbas ignited. International law as well as fundamental OSCE commitments have been violated by Russia and we will not recognize the outcome. The growing militarization of Crimea by Russia has further worsened the security situation in the region. Russia's recent aggressive activities in the Sea of Azov have added tensions, which had to be defused: Release of the Ukrainian sailors and dialogue between Russia and Ukraine are necessary to avoid further escalation and ensure the freedom of navigation in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov.

The Minsk agreements remain essential for a sustainable political and security solution in Donbas. Our Special Monitoring Mission is indispensable for overseeing the security provisions of the Minsk agreements, its monitors must have safe, secure and unimpeded access throughout Ukraine, including on the internationally recognized borders with Russia.

The Czech Republic also fully supports the OSCE's role in addressing the protracted conflicts in Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and in and around the Nagorno Karabakh.

This year has marked a decade of the Russian military invasion of the Georgian territories. Georgia has made efforts towards the breakaway regions in the humanitarian sphere, which testifies to its good will. In contrast, Russia has acted to separate the two regions from Georgia, all contrary to the peaceful resolution we support. Only a genuine political will of Moscow can overcome the current situation. We welcome the progress made in the Transdniestrian settlement process this year and hope the Parties will be able to build upon it, in resolving namely the remaining open issues of the „package of eight“. We appreciate the determined efforts of the Italian Chairmanship in this regard. Regarding the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, we welcome the establishment of a direct line of communication between the sides, which has contributed to the reduction of tensions on the ground.

Mr. Chairman, democracy and rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms, freedom of the media and thriving civil society are essential parts of the OSCE comprehensive security concept. We reiterate our steadfast support to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Representative on Freedom of the Media and High Commissioner on National Minorities. The Czech Republic rejects attempts to undermine their respective mandates and independence. We must preserve the Human Dimension meetings as a venue for open dialogue of all stakeholders on implementation. Also, protection of independent media and safety of journalists are more topical than ever. We commend the Italian Chairmanship for the work done in that regard.

The full implementation of the commitments in the politico-military dimension, including arms control regimes and confidence and security building measures, is essential. The Vienna Document must be modernized and we regret Russia has not allowed to go ahead. Lowering thresholds for notification and for observation of military activities, strengthening the inspection modalities and prevention of hazardous military incidents remain our priorities. The Structured Dialogue, in its third year, will be of continued relevance, use and benefit for the FSC's work. We should retain its focus on threat perceptions and military transparency and predictability to prevent incidents and reduce risks.

We look forward to our upcoming Chairmanship of the Forum for Security Cooperation next year. Let me signal that the Code of Conduct, Small Arms and Light Weapons, regional cooperation and gender aspects are some of the priority areas of our FSC Chairmanship.

Finally, we wish every success to the upcoming Slovak Chairmanship who can count on our full support.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.