

Mr. Chairman, Madame Secretary General, Excellencies, dear colleagues,

Let me express my sincere appreciation to our Greek hosts for the successful conduct of their Chairmanship.

This year we are meeting on-line during the Covid-19 pandemic. It poses unprecedented challenges and requires extraordinary measures in order to address them. Let me stress here, these measures must be strictly necessary, proportionate, non-discriminatory, limited in time and in full conformity with the European Convention.

I wish to thank the Secretary General for her comprehensive Toolkit for member states in the framework of COVID-19 sanitary crisis, which can serve us as a guide in these difficult times. It is especially important to protect freedom of expression, free access to information, and freedom of media, freedom of assembly and association, and the right to a fair trial.

Today we are celebrating the 70th anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights, the most important legally binding instrument for collective enforcement of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Europe, with the crucial role of the European Court of Human Rights. The protection of the Convention rights is especially important in the current context of pandemic.

While the achievements over the decade of the Interlaken Process are apparent and deserve our tribute, a number of difficulties persist in the execution of certain judgments by respondent states. It is crucial that each State Party lives up to

its international law obligation to abide by the final judgments of the Court, regardless of its national constitutional law provisions.

Mr. Chairman, dear colleagues,

Let me also express my disappointment that even 75 years after the end of the World War II we are still witnessing conflicts in Europe between members of this organization. I need to express my deepest concern regarding the latest developments in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh. We have noted the agreements on humanitarian ceasefires between Armenia and Azerbaijan and call on both sides to the conflict to adhere to these ceasefire agreements. Conflict-resolution by military means at the cost of human lives is unacceptable and must stop immediately.

Unfortunately, this is not the only conflict in Europe. We thank the Secretary General for her latest report on the conflict in Georgia. Allow me to reiterate the Czech Republic's continuous and consistent support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. We also condemn the human rights violations in the breakaway Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. We call for full access for international human rights mechanisms to the territories beyond effective control of the Georgian government.

Equally, we are concerned about the situation in occupied Crimea, which continues to be one of the grey zones with no access for monitoring bodies. We once again reaffirm our commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. We repeat our call on the Russian Federation to respect international law and to implement its commitments from the Minsk agreements.

Having mentioned some of the challenges in Europe, and thus painting a rather bleak picture, we should be asking ourselves whether this is a failure of the Council of Europe and a proof of its inability to fulfil its mandate. It is clear that we need a genuine engagement and political courage. I thank the Secretary General for her Report „Multilateralism 2020“. I firmly believe, that we can and thus we should make our actions within multilateral framework more effective. Let us do justice to the European Convention we celebrate today and safeguard human rights of 830 million citizens of Europe. We can do a lot together and we owe it to them.

Thank you for your attention.