



MC.DEL/26/17
8 December 2017

ENGLISH only

OSCE Ministerial Council
7-8 December 2017

Australian National Statement

HE Dr Brendon Hammer
Ambassador of Australia

Let me begin by acknowledging Austria's strong work as Chair of the OSCE in 2017.

We also appreciate your hospitality in hosting this annual Ministerial Conference.

I also wish to register Australia's appreciation to Germany for its excellent chairing of the Asian Partners Contact Group this year - and its very successful hosting of the OSCE Asian Conference in Berlin in June.

Australia now looks forward to working with Austria to make the 2018 OSCE Asian Conference a success.

Australia places a high value on the work of the OSCE, its institutions and field missions.

As colleagues have emphasised today, the OSCE is built around the idea that collective security is enhanced when we come together to discuss issues of mutual concern.

This is a key to the OSCE's success.

This is also a principle that Australia values highly, as emphasised in our recently released Foreign Policy White Paper.

The White Paper sets out a comprehensive framework to advance Australia's security and prosperity over the next several years in an increasingly contested and competitive world.

Informed by our values, it describes Australia's national interests and the Government's international engagement priorities.

Central to this White Paper is a firm commitment to the rules-based international order.

The rules-based order protects us all. It is manifestly in our collective interest – and in the interests of all the countries represented here today – to advance it and defend it.

Refusal to act in ways consistent with international law and established norms of good behaviour, such as Russia's coercive and aggressive actions in Ukraine, weaken global security.

We again take this opportunity to urge Russia to abide by its commitments under the Minsk 2 agreements and respect the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

I reiterate firmly that Australia does not recognise the illegal annexation of Crimea.

Australia sincerely appreciates the work of the OSCE, and the staff of the Special Monitoring Mission, in Ukraine.

They are the world's eyes and ears on the conflict – and every day they help reduce tensions and facilitate dialogue between all the sides.

In this connection we were deeply saddened to learn of the tragic death of SMM monitor Mr Joseph Stone last April.

This was simply unacceptable. We call on all sides to respect the safety and freedom of movement of the SMM to gather information, report on the security situation, and engage various community groups in dialogue.

For Australia, no long-term foreign policy goal is more important than working to keep our own region – the Indo-Pacific – peaceful and prosperous during this time of change.

We are strengthening our alliance and engagement with the US and deepening our relations with major regional democracies – Japan, Indonesia, India and ROK.

We are ambitious about engagement with China across a wide range of common interests.

And we are intensifying engagement with the countries of ASEAN to remain a leading partner for Southeast Asia, including through a special ASEAN Summit in 2018.

Security challenges in our region impact directly on the OSCE area – as North Korea's egregious nuclear and missile programs clearly demonstrate.

These are the perspectives we bring to the OSCE as an Asian Partner for Cooperation.

As an OSCE Asian Partner for Cooperation we also appreciate the opportunity exchange views on some of the key global challenges that transcend national borders.

We are, for example, working with our immediate region and beyond on combat the ongoing threat of terrorism and counter violent extremism. This threat will remain high and could worsen over the decade.

There are now more Islamist extremists – from more countries and active in more places – than ever before. The front line in the battle against terrorism in this interconnected world is everywhere. This is a strong reason why we must work closely to share lessons across our respective regions.

Of course, extremists are not the only group to exploit the fast-paced changes underway across the virtual world.

Globally networked information systems make it easier for states and non-state actors to compromise national security, critical national infrastructure, and target individuals and business.

So we commend Austria's leadership in hosting the Austrian Chairmanship Conference on Cyber Security in November.

And finally, we wish Italy well as it takes up the OSCE Chair for 2018, and look forward to continuing our valuable relationship with the OSCE.