

Allocution de M. le Vice-Premier Ministre et Ministre des Affaires étrangères, Didier Reynders.

OSCE

Hambourg, 8 décembre 2016

Mister Chairman, dear Frank-Walter,

Colleagues, dear friends,

I would like to associate my voice to the many other voices that thanked and congratulated the German Chairman in Office, Dr. Frank Walter Steinmeier, for the seamless organization of this annual Ministerial Council of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. I also wish him well in his endeavor as candidate for the German Federal Presidency.

UKRAINE

Year after year since 2014, the conflict in and around Ukraine has remained the main focus of concern of our OSCE meetings. After Potsdam, in September, our gathering today in Hamburg will be no exception. With the risk of generating lassitude and apathy.

However we cannot allow this conflict to slide into oblivion and our principles to be quietly swept under the rug. Or, before we know it, the unthinkable will become the norm, the “law of the jungle” will have replaced the “rule of law”.

Our mutually agreed, rules based, security architecture in Europe will give way to the principle that “might is right”, by nature a very unpredictable, unreliable and dangerous master principle.

I seize the opportunity given to me here to repeat Belgium’s support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

We continue to condemn the illegal annexation of Crimea that we will never recognize, and the hybrid warfare conducted in the Eastern part of Ukraine by the Russian Federation.

We are worried about the recent surge in violations of the ceasefire, including the use of heavy weaponry forbidden under the Minsk agreements, (as was acknowledged during the last Normandy 4 meeting in Minsk, on the 29th of November).

While the risk of the Ukrainian crisis becoming a ‘Frozen conflict’ is real, it is still ‘hot’ enough to kill people almost every week.

The conflict in Ukraine has already taken a heavy toll in human lives, both military and civilians, and caused numerous maimed and wounded. Yet there is apparently no fatigue of the belligerents as we witness incidents breaching the ceasefire occurring almost every day.

This is unacceptable. The Minsk agreements need to be fully implemented without further delay, starting with a real, sustainable and verifiable ceasefire. In this respect we support further talks in the Normandy 4 format to advance its implementation.

We call on all parties in the Trilateral Contact Group to put all their efforts into achieving concrete progress on the three zones for disengagement (that were identified during the Normandy 4 summit in Berlin on the 18th of October.)

With winter at our doorstep, ensuring humanitarian access to the civilian population in the conflict areas is crucial. This is true for the Government Controlled Areas as well as the Non-Government Controlled Areas.

It is the duty of all involved under international humanitarian law to alleviate the pains of the civilian population and we therefore call on all actors to urgently take action to provide a remedy for the many shortages, including of electricity and drinkable water.

We welcome the fact that the Ukrainian government recently established a Ministry in charge of the numerous Internally Displaced Persons (IDPS) caused by this conflict. It is a much needed step.

Belgium also encourages the Ukrainian government to continue its efforts on the Political/institutional, Defense and Socio-economic reforms. It is important that the Ukrainian Government ensures full democratic and civilian oversight over its Armed forces and police. (In this regard, I am pleased to see that the European Union is playing a role in helping to reform the Ukrainian police forces and the judiciary.)

It is also important that it continues to pressure the paramilitary forces in order to integrate them fully under the command and control chain of the regular Armed forces.

The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission is a crucial actor in Eastern Ukraine and the men and women working in the mission deserve our utmost gratitude and complete support. The mission needs to be allowed full and unimpeded access to all areas, including border areas. Intimidation attempts should stop.

Belgium remains committed to continue and increase its financial and human support to this mission.

HUMAN RIGHTS & THE AUTONOMOUS INSTITUTIONS OF THE OSCE

The respect for Human Rights and fundamental freedoms forms an integral part of the comprehensive concept of Security and Stability in Europe.

It is at the heart of the Final Act of Helsinki and an essential part of the DNA of this Organization.

This "Third Dimension" is unfortunately under great pressure. We witness a real degradation of the Human Rights situation and a dangerously shrinking space for civil society and Human Rights defenders in the OSCE-Region.

As illustration of this sorry state of affairs, no progress on third dimension issues could be made last year during our previous meeting in Belgrade. Today, we face the challenge of reversing this downward trend or failing again.

There cannot be progress in the other two Dimensions without respect for these core values.

Abiding by those is not a sign of weakness but of strength. It is not a sign of instable and undecided leadership but the only form of efficient and responsible government.

As member of the UN Human Rights Council, Belgium is strongly committed to these values and sees a pivotal role within our Organization for the autonomous Institutions like the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM) and the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) that deserve our full support and cooperation.

We sincerely hope that new personalities will emerge who can soon be appointed as HCNM and RFoM to allow for these bodies to play their role to the full.

RELAUNCHING THE ARMS CONTROL DIALOGUE

We are confronted with an increasingly unstable security situation in Europe. Belgium sees an urgent need to re-establish strategic stability, restraint and fair-play, predictability and verifiable transparency and to reduce military risks.

The existing regimes of arms control are crumbling.

The CFE Treaty, which led to the demilitarization of tens of thousands of heavy weapon systems in Europe in the decade following 1990, is no longer implemented by the Russian Federation.

The Vienna Document is in need of substantial modernization and some provisions of the Open Skies Treaty are not being implemented to the full.

These regimes are mutually reinforcing and need to be strengthened in order to keep the whole system balanced.

We deplore that there was no agreement among participating States to reissue the Vienna Document this year.

Belgium supports all initiatives for a structured dialogue on conventional arms control within the OSCE, as an important path towards a genuine and effective cooperative security allowing for peace and stability on our continent, for our children and grand-children.

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST TERRORISM AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM

The scourge of terrorism, under its many forms, has not receded during the last year in the OSCE-Region.

On the 22nd of March 2016 Belgium has been hit by a massive terrorist attack, on a scale unseen in the recent history of my country. 32 people died, many more were wounded, some crippled for life. But this was unfortunately not the only occurrence.

The victims of senseless terrorist actions are all the same, they share the same fate of cruel injustice. They are sad casualties in an undeclared war that knows no decency, no restraint, no mercy, no honor.

We shall struggle together to make sure they at least did not die in vain. Our action should be determined but following the due process of law. We shall be unwaveringly resolved in repression but also imaginative and thoughtful in prevention.

Full respect of the Human Rights and fundamental freedoms should be upheld. Or we may win some battles but ultimately we would lose the war, for the terrorist would have succeeded in changing the fabric of our democratic and open societies. That is why the comprehensive approach of the OSCE is an interesting laboratory for exchanging best practices and information.

ASPECTS FINANCIERS

J'aimerais finalement insister sur l'importance pour la Belgique de parvenir, le plus vite possible et au plus tard pour la fin de l'année 2017, à de nouveaux barèmes de contribution, reflétant les réalités économiques d'aujourd'hui. Nous demandons à tous les Etats participants de s'engager de façon constructive afin de trouver une solution attendue de longue date.

Je vous remercie pour votre attention.