



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

**Secretary General Lamberto Zannier
Opening Remarks
2017 Annual Security Review Conference
Vienna, 27 June 2017**

*Minister Kurz,
Deputy Secretary General Gottemoeller,
Ambassadors Grushko and Raunig,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Welcome to the 2017 Annual Security Review Conference. As every year, we have an interesting agenda and I look forward to a lively discussion with our high-level expert speakers.

As we come together for this major annual event, we are deeply aware of the rapidly evolving and complex security landscape that surrounds us. Inter-state relations are increasingly governed by a zero-sum mentality and the return of geopolitics is challenging our model of co-operation. Divergent threat perceptions, diminished trust and confidence, as well as drastically deteriorated military predictability, characterise our present security environment. And as was highlighted by the OSCE Security Days event in Prague in May, we are confronted with growing fragmentation and polarization within our region and within our societies. All of this makes it exceedingly difficult to re-create a climate for lasting stability and security in Europe.

Yet, we really have no choice but to intensify our efforts to find ways for pragmatic engagement on common challenges and to pursue the long-term aim of reviving co-operative security as we once knew it. We should certainly not discount the possibility of achieving some important short-term results along the way.

OSCE Foreign Ministers last year in Hamburg launched the Structured Dialogue on the Current and Future Challenges and Risks to Security in the OSCE Area. One of its major objectives is to identify avenues to overcome the long-standing impasse in the discussions on conventional arms control and confidence- and security-building measures. The first meetings of the Informal Working Group have been constructive, giving us reasons for cautious optimism that such dialogue may indeed carry us forward. But the obstacles are formidable and the debate on threat perceptions clearly underlined that we are dealing with conflicting, sometimes incompatible, security concerns. Reconciling them will only be possible if we manage to develop new tools on the basis of our rich acquis in the politico-

military dimension. One of the main challenges for us will be to develop effective and functioning risk reduction measures that can help us achieve a balance in what is in effect an asymmetric security situation.

One of the most pertinent threats today stems from the misuse of information and communication technologies (ICTs). For months now, our news feeds have been dominated by high-profile election hacks, data breaches and cyber-attacks. To safeguard cyber-stability between states against the fallout from such attacks, the two sets of OSCE Confidence-Building Measures that have been adopted so far should be operationalized without delay. We will continue to move towards formalizing a communications network that can help diffuse tensions stemming from the use of ICTs and will raise the awareness and capacities of policy- and decision-makers on how CBMs can help enhance cyber-stability and resilience in the OSCE area.

Without a shadow of a doubt, the crisis in and around Ukraine, now in its fourth year, remains the most challenging political and operational issue on our agenda. A worrying stalemate at the strategic level, coupled with a deteriorating security situation on the ground, risks exacerbating an already volatile and unstable situation. While there has been no shortage of proposals on the disengagement of forces, none of them have been effectively acted upon and negotiations in the Trilateral Contact Group have become increasingly mired in procedural arguments with little practical result. Meanwhile, in the absence of any progress, this conflict risks taking on more characteristics typical of a protracted conflict, not least after economic links between government-controlled and non-government-controlled areas have been further severed. At the same time, the shooting has not stopped, and the risk of escalation remains high.

The Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine – the SMM – continues to observe intense fighting and ceasefire violations along the contact line, the majority around a small number of hotspots where large numbers of weapons and armed forces and formations remain in close proximity to each other. The violence continues to have a devastating effect on the civilian population and has severely damaged civilian infrastructure. With over 200 civilians killed or injured since the beginning of this year, the SMM has confirmed a higher number of casualties compared to the same period in 2016. Progress on establishing “safe zones” around critical infrastructure to secure water and electricity supplies and at sites posing potentially serious environmental threats is urgently needed. All of this is deeply worrying.

I also remain extremely concerned about ongoing security threats affecting SMM monitors. The fatal incident on 23 April, when a Mission member – American paramedic Joseph Stone – was killed and two other monitors were injured in the line of duty, was a tragic reminder that the Mission operates in an often dangerous and potentially life-threatening environment. In recent months, including within the past week, SMM monitors have been exposed to an unacceptable amount of intimidation, threats and harassment and they continue to experience freedom of movement denials and restrictions while carrying out their monitoring duties.

Despite all this and the restrictions on patrolling introduced after 23 April to take into account the security risks, the Mission maintains a robust presence on the ground and is continuing to upgrade its technological monitoring tools. The SMM deserves our unwavering collective support.

Beyond the crisis in and around Ukraine, the OSCE remains firmly focused on other conflict situations in our area. There have been a series of worrying incidents and further casualties in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. While we have not experienced the sort of violence that spiked so dramatically in April last year, there is an urgent need for tangible progress towards a solution of this long-running conflict.

Last week saw the 40th round of the Geneva International Discussions, which, together with the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms, play a key role in ensuring security and stability on the ground and dealing with the consequences of the 2008 war in Georgia. The co-chairs from the United Nations, the European Union and the OSCE are to be commended for their dedication to find common ground between the participants.

The Mission to Moldova and my own staff are working actively, together with the Chairmanship's Special Representative, to make progress in the Transdniestrian settlement process. While the Hamburg Ministerial provided a possible avenue of progress through co-operation on a list of issues, we need to see continued focus on an output-based approach to the 5+2 process and progress on a range of related issues.

Further strengthening our operational preparedness across all phases of the conflict cycle remains an important task for us. Since the last ASRC, we have conducted a comprehensive review of the Common Regulatory Management System to enhance the OSCE's operational framework. Policies and procedures that enable effective OSCE response have been revisited and compiled into a set of Standard Operating Procedures that codify OSCE actions in crisis situations. Beyond this managerial response, we should make sure that we continue the debate on OSCE capabilities and capacities with a view to strengthening our policy analysis and planning abilities and enhancing our tools for crisis management, mediation and dialogue facilitation.

We also have to continue adapting our early warning mechanisms to capture all relevant signals of emerging conflict and instability, including those related to global challenges such as climate change, environmental degradation, demographic disparities or the impact of economic inequalities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The recent terrorist attacks in London and other cities in the OSCE region are a painful reminder that terrorism is a real and imminent threat to our societies and must be tackled at all levels, including through preventive measures. Last month, the 2017 OSCE-wide Counter-

Terrorism Conference attracted unprecedented interest, gathering more than 550 participants, practitioners, academics and civil society representatives.

The spread of violent extremism conducive to terrorism is one of the greatest challenges we face in the OSCE area, and we need to do more to empower young people to communicate positive narratives, including via social media. So I am very pleased that we are again partnering with Facebook to host a second peer-to-peer digital challenge for students under the umbrella of our OSCE United in Countering Violent Extremism campaign, UnitedCVE. I draw your attention to a side event during the lunch break today where three front-runner teams from the Czech Republic, Germany and Spain will present their social and digital campaign projects. This project is one example of how the OSCE is strengthening its efforts to support the role of youth in preventing and resolving conflicts, countering global and transnational challenges, and building peace across our region.

Whether our action aims at countering terrorism, cyber-crime, trafficking in human beings, illicit drugs or weapons, we need to build innovative and flexible coalitions at all levels. The signing of a Joint Action Plan with INTERPOL last month is but one example of our persistent efforts to intensify our partnership with international and regional organizations, our Mediterranean and Asian partners, civil society, business, the media and academia.

Through the OSCE Security Days event on Local Approaches to Global Challenges in March, I have aimed to bring in mayors into our discussion on account of the increasingly prominent role that cities play in addressing a wide range of transnational challenges. Looking at the scale and complexity of today's security challenges, there is a clear need for mobilizing diverse constituencies that can add new perspectives and expertise to complement our intergovernmental dynamics.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Annual Security Review Conference is an established format and has consistently been a venue for constructive and forward-looking debate. I incite you to make full use of this platform to discuss the current state of affairs and to identify practical steps we can start taking now to build a stronger and more stable security environment in the OSCE area. We have no time to lose.

Thank you.