



Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

9316th meeting

Thursday, 4 May 2023, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Cassis (Switzerland)

Members:

Albania	Mr. Hoxha
Brazil	Mr. Costa Filho
China	Mr. Geng Shuang
Ecuador	Mr. Pérez Loose
France	Mrs. Jaraud-Darnault
Gabon	Mr. Biang
Ghana	Ms. Hackman
Japan	Mr. Ishikane
Malta	Mrs. Frazier
Mozambique	Mr. Afonso
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
United Arab Emirates	Mr. Abushahab
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
United States of America	Mr. DeLaurentis

Agenda

Briefing by the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Briefing by the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Bujar Osmani, Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and Minister for Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Osmani.

Mr. Osmani: At the outset, I would like to congratulate Switzerland on its first presidency of the Security Council, at a time when we face dramatic situations across the world. I take this opportunity to wish you, Mr. President, success during your presidency. Additionally, I would like to extend my gratitude for the invitation to brief the members of the Security Council about the political vision, priorities and undertakings of the 2023 Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) chairpersonship of North Macedonia.

My address as a OSCE Chairperson-in-Office will be a call for action, a call for an immediate quest for peace. A terrible war rages in our back yard, in Europe and in the OSCE area. The possible consequences of that war are grave enough to endanger peace and stability globally. This Organization, the United Nations, was created to save future generations from the scourge of war. The OSCE is aimed at reinforcing stability and cooperation by enhancing trust and meaningful dialogue from Vancouver to Vladivostok. The question that appears relevant is: where do we stand now? Have we lived up to the principles and values to which we have committed? Stability has been shattered, confidence is lost, and cooperation hardly exists. Dialogue, if there is still any, is becoming more and more poisoned.

Thirty years ago, former United Nations Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali offered his vision for the absence of war, but above all, the existence of durable peace. I

was pleased to learn that the New Agenda for Peace of Secretary-General Guterres was discussed here yesterday (see S/PV.9315). Both the United Nations and the OSCE should stand together and resolutely work on ways to promote and safeguard peace, because no organization can do it alone. Only through collaboration and mutual support can we create a world that is safe, secure and prosperous for all.

As OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, I call upon the synergy between the United Nations and the OSCE for achieving peace for our generation and those to come. As security challenges continue to evolve, the nature of OSCE cooperation with the United Nations must evolve as well. We must become more pragmatic and action oriented. In the 30 years that have elapsed, the United Nations and the OSCE have built a significant relationship and coordinated very closely in operational terms. We need to tighten those relations even more now.

North Macedonia assumed the chairpersonship of the OSCE as of 1 January this year, in the most difficult and challenging times. As Council members know, our motto is "It's about people". Allow me to say a couple of words about why we have chosen this approach. Politics is not about winning or losing. It is about the people we represent: their lives, their hopes and their dreams. As leaders, we have a solemn responsibility to serve them, to protect them and to ensure that their voices are heard. The world is facing unprecedented challenges, and the people are paying the price. It is time for us to step up and take decisive action. We cannot afford to wait any longer while the suffering of the people continues. It has never been less about ideology, geopolitics or personal gain. It has never been more important to put the well-being of the people at the forefront. We cannot ignore the cries for justice, freedom and dignity. We cannot turn a blind eye to human suffering or deny basic human rights. Collective action is needed now.

The OSCE has been confronting a number of challenges over recent years that have come to a head in the current full-scale Russian aggression. This aggression erodes the foundations of the organization by violating the provisions of the Helsinki Final Act. The Russian Federation blatantly violated fundamental principles of international law agreed upon by all. As I started my address with a call for immediate action for peace, I take this opportunity to urge Russia once again to end this war and withdraw its troops from the sovereign territory of Ukraine. Immense damage has already been done, and every additional day of

aggression prolongs the human suffering. I witnessed people's hardship first-hand in Borodyanka, near Kyiv, on my first trip abroad in my capacity as OSCE Chairperson-in-Office. I visited a nearby camp housing the war-affected and displaced population, most of them innocent civilians, elderly people or children. I have heard their distressing stories and experiences. They do not deserve this destiny and need to be freed from the fear of war. Moreover, they deserve justice. Accountability today is a moral imperative, as it is the most effective means to avoid this happening again in any other place.

In our programme for the 2023 OSCE chairpersonship, the protracted conflicts and the work of the OSCE field operations are another area of high priority. In this regard, earlier this year I visited the Republic of Moldova, as the situation with the Transnistria settlement process needs further OSCE attention. As Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE, I have offered my readiness to support ideas that can have a positive impact on the process.

A brief assessment from my recent visits to the South Caucasus, another area of protracted conflict, is that the overall situation needs support for the initiatives that facilitate dialogue towards lasting peace and leading to the normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan. As Chair, we aim for the peaceful, comprehensive and sustainable settlement of the disagreements that afflict and concern Azerbaijanis and Armenians. As on the previous occasion, and while I was there, I also addressed the humanitarian concerns over the Lachin corridor and, in particular, the consequences that directly affect the local population. In the light of recent developments, I would like again to emphasize our commitment to the OSCE as a venue for resolving differences in the South Caucasus and call on all parties to rely on genuine dialogue and good faith negotiation.

With regard to Georgia, I welcome the latest round of the Geneva International Discussions, held two weeks ago. As the OSCE chair, North Macedonia fully supports the continuation of this key venue for dialogue under the joint leadership of the United Nations, OSCE and European Union. These channels and diplomatic processes must remain open, not only to avoid further escalation, but also to deal with the consequences of the 2008 conflict. It was particularly significant to visit the Odzisi crossing and see first-hand the condition of the dividing lines and the consequences of the long-term

closure of the crossing. It is unfortunate to witness that in the twenty-first century there is yet another wall of separation that divides the population affected by the conflict. The completely blocked freedom of movement of people in this area is unsustainable and contrary to the basic principles of the OSCE and civilization's ideals.

In the upcoming weeks I am planning to visit the OSCE field missions in South-East Europe. The visits are taking place at a crucial juncture for developments in the region. In particular, I would like to commend the progress reached between Kosovo and Serbia in Ohrid, North Macedonia, under the auspices of the European Union. One encouraging fact is the readiness expressed by both sides to carry out their responsibilities related to the implementation of the annex to the agreement reached in Brussels.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, I will continue to promote the unity of voice and unity of purpose concept and reinforce the reconciliation and trust-building portfolio. The other priorities that are incorporated in our programme for the 2023 chairpersonship will largely depend on security developments. Despite all difficulties, we will continue to promote human security through support for sustainable economic growth and environmental cooperation, uphold basic human rights and promote tolerance and non-discrimination as prerequisites for comprehensive security. With all that said, I would like to add that we will spare no efforts nor energy to support a functional and flexible OSCE. The challenges facing the OSCE are significant, but they are not insurmountable. We will remain committed to the organization and work together to address the issues that threaten its effectiveness. This includes providing adequate funding, strengthening its institutions and ensuring that it has the support of member States. Let us remember that the OSCE is not just a platform for dialogue for non-like-minded countries — it is a community of nations that is supposed to share a common vision of peace and stability. We must work together in solidarity and unity to ensure that this vision becomes a reality.

Human lives are the most precious thing. As a medical doctor myself by profession, I have worked to save lives on a daily basis. I have seen the suffering provoked by illness and witnessed the natural fight of a human being for life. I would like to believe that war is not an inherent component of human nature. It is a manmade disaster that takes hundreds, even thousands, of lives in a moment. War is neither necessity nor destiny.

In most cases, it is a deliberate human choice — the most wrong and terrible one — and it is our duty to repair this and do things right. Peace is the driving force of multilateralism and the most precious ideal of humankind. Therefore, we must join forces around our joint pursuit for peace. After all, it is all about people.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Osmani for his briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Federal Councillor and Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland.

At the outset, I would like to once again thank His Excellency Mr. Bujar Osmani for his briefing. Mr. Chairperson-in-Office, Switzerland fully supports you in this difficult task for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) this year.

Russia's military aggression against Ukraine represents the greatest challenge to our cooperative security in Europe and Central Asia. I reiterate here the call to the Russian Federation to stop this aggression and to immediately withdraw its troops from Ukrainian territory. This war has already caused far too much suffering and too much damage. My thoughts are with the millions of victims — the dead, the wounded and the separated families forced to flee their homes. I am also thinking of the indirect victims elsewhere in the world, who are bearing the brunt of the social, economic and environmental effects of this conflict. These people, already vulnerable before the war, are now in an appalling situation. That is unacceptable.

The motto chosen by the current OSCE chairpersonship, "It's about people", is more relevant now than ever. Our primary responsibility is to protect civilians. That responsibility is the essence of the link between the OSCE and the United Nations. As we celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the partnership between the United Nations and the OSCE, we must reaffirm our commitment to strengthening that cooperation. Let me remind the Council of a few facts.

First, at the political and military levels, the OSCE is the largest regional security organization in the world. Its presence on the ground in 13 countries has a stabilizing effect in regions such as the Western Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Through its missions, the OSCE creates and maintains strong partnerships with local and national authorities and institutions, civil society and other international

organizations. Its activities promoting minority rights, election observation and institutional reform are therefore based directly on those countries' needs.

Secondly, in its human dimension, the OSCE has mechanisms that document the most serious human rights violations, for example the Moscow Mechanism, currently being invoked in Ukraine. Peace cannot be won without justice for the victims and their families.

Thirdly, in the economic and environmental contexts, the OSCE is actively addressing challenges that have an impact on all of us. It is doing crucial work to combat the adverse effects of climate change, including sustainable water resource management and conflict prevention.

Our debate today, as well as the open debate held under the Swiss presidency of the Security Council yesterday (see S/PV.9315), is also relevant to regions beyond Europe. The OSCE, in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, shares the objectives of many other regional organizations. By focusing on prevention and on creating lasting peace, those organizations can make an important collective contribution to the implementation of the New Agenda for Peace proposed by Secretary-General António Guterres.

In conclusion, while the war in Ukraine is indeed a serious setback for the OSCE, which was founded to ensure security in Europe, its inclusive nature means that it will remain vital because of the trust we discussed yesterday that must bind its member States, and because of the fundamental synergies it creates with the United Nations. As we approach the fiftieth anniversary of the Helsinki Accords, they must remain our benchmark for the common peace and security architecture in Europe. It is also up to all of us to preserve the OSCE's capacity for action, and Switzerland is ready to do its part.

We must not allow the future of Europe to be decided by the law of force, and Switzerland is committed to using the force of the law to counter it. We encourage everyone here today to do the same, because, once again, while it is certainly about security, above all "It's about people".

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I shall now give the floor those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): We are very pleased to welcome Mr. Bujar Osmani, Minister for Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia, in his capacity as Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and to thank him for his important remarks. I would like to commend him for his efforts and the work done since he took on that important responsibility, despite the very challenging circumstances.

Yesterday, as you recalled, Mr. President, we had an open debate on trust as a means to achieve sustained peace (S/PV.9315). There is hardly a more meaningful and successful case to recall than that of North Macedonia, which has been transformed precisely by investing in trust and cooperation, with an unparalleled positive impact on the country's stability, development and prosperity. We listened very carefully to the Minister's briefing and would like to put on record our full support for the chairpersonship's priorities — a functional and flexible OSCE, the promotion of human security, upholding human rights and promoting tolerance and non-discrimination, as prerequisites for comprehensive security.

Today's meeting marks the thirtieth anniversary of the signing of the Framework for Cooperation and Coordination between the United Nations and the OSCE. As an important pillar of the international rules-based order, the OSCE plays an essential role in addressing many of the challenges on the Council's agenda. The cooperation, collaboration and partnership between the two organizations is therefore meaningful and should be strengthened. While we could reasonably claim that a lot has been achieved over the past three decades, the fact is that the security situation in the OSCE area remains very precarious, and since last year it has been put in serious danger. One of the major historic and transformative events for Europe and the world was the end of the Cold War. It put an end to a divided continent and to a climate of fear, mistrust and instability, and enabled greater cooperation and dialogue among nations, based on agreed principles and shared values. It was what I might call a second European renaissance, and the OSCE has been an important platform for discussing issues related to comprehensive security, as well as confidence- and security-building measures. Despite the current cynical efforts to undermine and diminish its role, the OSCE remains as relevant as when it was created.

But while the Cold War is over, its spirit has been forcefully brought back through Russia's imperial appetite, dreams and plans. The continued barbaric attacks on Ukraine, such as the latest on Kherson, the extreme rhetoric by former and current officials, including repeated nuclear sabre-rattling, and the escalatory and irresponsible decision to station tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus are only a few of the actions that testify to a flagrant, deliberate policy aimed at destabilizing the OSCE area, reviving fears about major confrontations and bringing back debates that many of us had hoped and believed were a thing of the past.

We reiterate our condemnation, in the strongest terms, of the ongoing unprovoked, unjust and unjustified military aggression by Russia against Ukraine. After 16 months, the war is still going on with tragic consequences, significant human and humanitarian costs, the daily loss of innocent civilians, the widespread destruction of critical civilian infrastructure, huge economic setbacks and a devastating impact on the country, the region and more widely. Shocking war crimes and crimes against humanity, including torture and rape, have been committed in Ukraine and are being duly documented by the United Nations and also by the OSCE, through invocations of the Moscow Mechanism. Crimes cannot be let go with impunity and evidence will be used in courts of law. Accountability and justice are being established and will be pursued. As we all know, the International Criminal Court has already issued two arrest warrants at the highest level.

As the Chairperson-in-Office outlined, the OSCE area is also facing other challenges. A number of unresolved conflicts continue to be a source of concern, such as the continuing situations in Transnistria and Georgia. The quest for negotiated solutions to those conflicts must remain an urgent matter. On the positive side, we welcome the talks initiated in Washington by Secretary of State Blinken at the ministerial level between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Furthermore, the agreement reached in Ohrid between Kosovo and Serbia, with the facilitation of the European Union and other partners, is of historic magnitude and should be implemented without delay.

Let me mention one additional worry. Our increasing reliance on digital technology and digital communication — an undeniably powerful driver of development — has also brought new security challenges to the OSCE area. Cyberattacks and cybercrime are growing threats, with potential implications for critical

infrastructure, Government systems and the private sector, especially when they are conducted by State actors. That is why, to address all those challenges, we need the OSCE and its mechanisms so that we can work together to implement policies and initiatives that promote security and stability in its area, in line with the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris. That includes efforts to promote disarmament, conflict prevention and crisis management, as well as initiatives aimed at strengthening democratic institutions, human rights and the rule of law. The OSCE cannot and will not be undermined, because our common desire for peace and cooperation is way stronger than anyone's appetite for destabilization and confrontation, and because — as was rightly said of the OSCE, "It's about people".

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I would like to thank Foreign Minister Osmani for his briefing.

For almost 50 years, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has played a vital role in promoting peace, stability and security in Europe, and it remains a critical institution for European and Euro-Atlantic security. In a challenging period for multilateralism, we welcome the positive role played by the OSCE in supporting the Security Council in its work on international peace and security. I would like to highlight three areas in particular.

First, the OSCE makes a vital contribution through its autonomous bodies such as the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and its field missions in Central Asia, the Western Balkans and Moldova. We also support its efforts to facilitate a peaceful resolution of the conflicts in Georgia, Moldova and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Secondly, the OSCE's work across all dimensions underpins our common security and prosperity. That includes its actions on economic development, environmental protection and climate change, which have our full support.

Thirdly, we welcome the OSCE's ongoing work through the Moscow Mechanism to expose violations and abuses of international humanitarian and human rights law. That includes reporting on the brutal crackdown on political and media freedoms in Belarus and holding Russia to account for its actions in Ukraine.

When Russia launched its unprovoked, full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, it transgressed all of the OSCE's core principles — sovereignty, respect

for territorial integrity, the inviolability of borders and the peaceful settlement of disputes. The publication today of the OSCE's Moscow Mechanism report on the deportation of Ukrainian children once again highlights the immense suffering caused by Russia's war. It outlines the grave human rights violations and abuses that Russia has committed and supports the growing evidence that several thousand Ukrainian children have been removed from their families, friends and homes and forcibly transferred out of the country.

In these times of crisis, we need functioning and effective regional organizations to address our shared problems and uphold the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the Helsinki Final Act. The OSCE has an important role to play, but in order to fulfil it, it relies on participating States fulfilling their commitments. Instead, Russia is choosing to obstruct the organization. It is doing so by delaying key decisions on its budget, blocking leadership appointments and frustrating the work of its human rights institutions. We urge all 57 OSCE participating States, including Russia, to support the organization and ensure that it is fully functional and adequately funded to deliver on its important work. The United Kingdom remains steadfast in its appreciation for the work of the OSCE and its support for North Macedonia's chairpersonship.

Mr. Costa Filho (Brazil): I thank Mr. Osmani, Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), for his informative and detailed briefing. Brazil follows the activities of the organization and acknowledges its work in conflict prevention. We are supportive of an active engagement between the United Nations and the OSCE, based on the 1993 Framework for Cooperation and Coordination.

Throughout its history, the OSCE has offered a platform for open discussions on security in Europe, helping in many instances to ease tensions between East and West and prevent the outbreak of armed confrontations. More recently, it has played an important role in monitoring ceasefires in the Balkans, the Caucasus and other areas of the post-Soviet space. Brazil also appreciates the OSCE's efforts to combat transnational organized crime and strengthen the rule of law. In that regard, we welcomed the holding in April of the twenty-third Conference of the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons and echo the participants' call for decisive policies countering the actions of criminal groups.

Although the OSCE has not always been successful in preventing resorting to the use of arms, as evidenced by the collapse of the Minsk agreements, it would be regrettable if the platform ceased to be a forum for frank dialogue on issues of common interest. We lament the incident in the parliamentary session in February and hope that the impasse on the organization's chairpersonship in 2024 can be overcome. The seriousness of the crises in Europe and Central Asia demands that the members of the OSCE restore its traditional spirit of cooperation. Mr. Osmani's recent interactions in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan provided him with an opportunity to assess the existing threats to the stability of the South Caucasus.

We want to take this opportunity to express Brazil's concern about the escalation of tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as the signs of a deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Lachin corridor. The establishment of a checkpoint could exacerbate the complexity of the situation and hinder the prospects for its peaceful resolution. The unimpeded movement of people and goods through the Lachin corridor is vital for preventing a collapse of the already precarious humanitarian situation. We encourage the Governments of both countries to refrain from rhetoric that is conducive to violence and to engage in dialogue with a view to arriving at a peaceful settlement of their differences.

Brazil believes that the OSCE could play a constructive role in a settlement of the conflict in Ukraine. To do so, however, it will be necessary for its members to abandon a logic of isolation and engage in a sincere effort in favour of dialogue.

Mrs. Frazier (Malta): I would like to warmly welcome Mr. Osmani, Minister for Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia, in his capacity as Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and to thank him for his informative and insightful briefing. We applaud North Macedonia for choosing to put a special focus on the people during its chairpersonship. Malta has full trust in its leadership and reaffirms its full support for the OSCE.

In a volatile European security context, Malta continues to attach great value to multilateralism and strongly supports enhanced cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE. That cooperation enables us to deliver more efficient and effective solutions. The OSCE's unique concept of a comprehensive approach to

security continues to retain its relevance to adequately addressing the multidimensional challenges at hand. As a unique forum for political and security dialogue from Vancouver to Vladivostok, the OSCE has provided a platform for confidence-building measures by focusing on conflict prevention, as well as crisis management, through diplomacy. We also welcome the steps that the OSCE has taken to embrace issues relating to economic and environmental cooperation, including climate change.

We reaffirm our support for the OSCE's human dimension, autonomous institutions and instruments, as well as for all efforts that lead to peace and dialogue, defuse tensions and boost trust and confidence in the region. The work of the OSCE has been and continues to be crucial in situations that are on the international peace and security agenda, such as the conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, Abkhazia and the Transnistria region. Malta highly values the OSCE's mediation efforts and its good offices through its deployment of field missions and special representatives. We welcomed the latest visit by the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office to Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia, and we support the continued efforts to address security challenges and efforts towards sustainable peace, as well as to promote and strengthen cooperation between the OSCE and its participating States in the region. We remain fully committed to contributing to the dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan and to peace and stability in the South Caucasus. In that regard, we would like to underline our ongoing concern about the dire humanitarian consequences that have resulted from the blockade of the Lachin corridor. We urge all the relevant parties to cease any action impeding humanitarian access, given the very urgent situation.

While all the OSCE participating States have reaffirmed their commitment to using peaceful means to settle all disputes, both individually and collectively and based on cooperation and respect for one another, violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law continue in the region. The reality is that Russia continues to blatantly violate the Charter of the United Nations and the founding principles of the OSCE, as enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act and subsequent key documents, including the Charter of Paris. Russia's unprovoked aggression against Ukraine is undermining the European security architecture and threatening peace and stability on

the continent and beyond, while shattering already-weakened confidence and trust. Such actions are having lasting consequences that are adversely affecting not only Ukraine and the region but millions of people all over the world. On this occasion, we once again urge the Russian Federation to stop the war, withdraw its military forces from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, and turn to dialogue and diplomacy, the tools that can restore peace, security and stability in the region. We also reiterate our call to Russia to implement without delay the recommendations of the most recent report of the Moscow Mechanism, take all necessary measures to enable the return of displaced and forcibly displaced children to Ukraine and their families and prevent any further transfers.

In conclusion, we believe that strengthening the long-standing and fruitful cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE will only enhance our ability to address the complex security challenges in the OSCE area.

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates): I would like to thank Foreign Minister and Chairperson-in-Office Osmani for his insightful remarks.

The current situation on the European continent should encourage us all to reflect on what the international community has learned since the end of the Second World War. It should also lead us to recommit to the very principles that are mirrored in both the Charter of the United Nations and the Helsinki Final Act, adopted by the predecessor of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Those principles are respect for the sovereignty of all nations, the peaceful resolution of disputes and the prohibition of the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State.

The United Nations benefits significantly from working with regional organizations such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in order to maintain international peace and security. The work of the United Nations with the OSCE is a good example of the way in which both organizations can leverage their respective strengths to prevent crises, promote diplomatic solutions, monitor agreements and avoid the recurrence of conflict. That function remains more essential than ever in the current context, a time when the OSCE is facing a fundamental challenge owing to the war in Ukraine. The ongoing conflict

has shattered countless lives and uprooted more than 8 million people, the vast majority of whom have sought refuge in OSCE States. However, that is not exclusively a European issue. The conflict has exacerbated food insecurity, nuclear risks and polarization across the globe. It has also caused deep divisions within the OSCE area and among its participating States.

At the same time, in the Western Balkans, the encouraging dynamics that led to a European Union-facilitated agreement between Kosovo and Serbia in February must be reinforced and built upon. As we have seen recently, more work needs to be done to implement those commitments. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, hate speech continues to undermine peaceful coexistence and tolerance, which remain essential pillars for diverse and resilient societies and could help the country move forward. Whether it is facilitating cooperation, encouraging diplomatic action and dialogue or seeking to de-escalate tensions, the goal of multilateral institutions is clear. It is to collectively and constructively address common challenges. The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe has served for decades as an important forum for strengthening understanding and promoting such dialogue in Europe. Since its establishment in 1990, the OSCE has played an important role in addressing conflicts on the continent thanks to the constructive engagement of its wide membership. That must remain at the heart of the organization if the OSCE is to continue playing that role today. Its diplomacy and de-escalation efforts are needed more than ever.

In the 1970s, the Helsinki process contributed to building confidence and de-escalating tensions during the post-Second World War era. There is a clear need today to encourage the same spirit of substantive dialogue and mutual trust in order to promote a return to stability in Europe. For its part, the United Arab Emirates will remain a partner in the effort to build bridges and maintain trust, as we strive to maintain international peace and security.

Mrs. Hackman (Ghana): I join others in warmly welcoming His Excellency Mr. Osmani, Minister for Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia and Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), to the Security Council. I thank him for his comprehensive briefing and active chairmanship, which is centred on a commitment to bettering the lives and improving the

human security of the more than 1 billion people within the 57 participating States of the OSCE.

For the past three decades the close and expanding relations of the United Nations with the OSCE, built on the basis of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, have contributed extensively to the Security Council's core mandate of promoting and maintaining international peace and security. The OSCE's comprehensive concept of security, including its political, military, economic, environmental and human dimensions, has maintained its utility in upholding the European security order and ensuring sustainable peace and development. However, the global context in which we are called on to maintain peace and security today is increasingly complex and fragile, especially for the European region. Therefore, as we mark the thirtieth anniversary this month of the signing of the Framework for Cooperation and Coordination between the United Nations and the OSCE, our attention should turn to seeking new and creative ways to strengthen our collective capacities to address present and future security threats in the region.

Ghana remains considerably concerned about the heightened security situation in Europe, headlined by the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine. Now in its fifteenth month, the war has become the epicentre of a global political upheaval, while the resulting food, energy and fuel crises continue at record levels. We are alarmed by the recent findings of independent research suggesting that military expenditure, especially in Europe, has surged to Cold War levels, further worsening the volatile security situation. We have also witnessed actions by some nuclear-possessor States that are peeling away from the non-proliferation arrangements that have served as a bulwark against nuclear war. Those developments fuel uncertainty and have heightened our fears about the waning appeal of multilateral cooperation and the peaceful settlement of disputes on which the two organizations are founded.

We strongly reassert the need for an immediate cessation of the hostilities in Ukraine and firmly believe that dialogue and diplomacy offer the best chances for a lasting and comprehensive political solution. With regard to the OSCE's support for the implementation of the Minsk agreements, we believe that it must reassert itself as a credible interlocutor in the process of finding a lasting solution to the conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine and in the wider conversation

about the future of Europe's security architecture. We welcome the ongoing commitments to the humanitarian aspects of the issue and appreciate the activities of project teams in the areas of demining operations, combating human trafficking, improving disaster risk reduction and addressing the environmental impact of the war.

Elsewhere in Europe, tensions persist as peace efforts have either been rolled back or stalled by the actions of conflicting States. We therefore appreciate the high-level contacts made by the Chairperson-in-Office with the authorities in Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in order to offer support for ongoing dialogues and settlement arrangements. We also note the continuing efforts of the OSCE missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. We underline the importance of keeping those channels of engagement and other mediation formats open to help defuse tensions, build trust and make progress towards the region's shared objectives of stability, peace and democracy.

Given the interlinkages between security issues across regions, we believe that the OSCE should extend its engagements with other regional bodies, especially in Africa, to build synergies and harmonize efforts on cross-cutting issues, including migration, terrorism, arms proliferation, cybersecurity, human rights, climate and the environment. We also believe that women's effective and meaningful participation across the spectrum of conflict prevention and resolution, peacebuilding and sustaining peace must be ensured through appropriate action and mechanisms. We therefore welcome the chairpersonship's commitment to promoting the effective participation of women in public and political life and commend its aims of eradicating violence against women, including women journalists and public figures.

The widening political fissures on the European continent are a result of a lack of mutual trust and confidence among States. Moving towards a more peaceful and stable future demands that the OSCE's participating States renew their commitments to the foundational principles enshrined in the Helsinki Accords and other normative agreements of the organization. In that context, we believe it is important to remind the participating States of their commitments under the general principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations to refraining from the use of force, respecting the principles of sovereignty

and territorial integrity, seeking peaceful settlements of disputes and upholding human rights.

The challenges we have been speaking about today have also upended the effective functioning of the OSCE in some critical situations. If it is to remain the foremost security organization in Europe outside the United Nations, its members must forge past their ideological and political differences and work to provide it with the resources and support that it needs to function and stay relevant in the evolving era of the twenty-first century.

Mr. Biang (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) for his commitment and his informative briefing.

The thirtieth anniversary of the partnership between the OSCE and the United Nations presents a prime opportunity to reaffirm the fundamental nature of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in addressing the security challenges facing the world, in the very spirit of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. In Europe, the OSCE has proved to be a real lever for peace for its 57 member States, even if its role and vocation as a stabilizing entity are now under severe strain. In that pivotal role for the security of its members, the OSCE is built around a noble model of unique cooperation, whose foundations are anchored in the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter. That model enshrines the primacy of solidarity as its cornerstone, with the interoperability of all areas contributing to the achievement of lasting peace and security.

At the heart of the challenges facing the OSCE today is the crisis of confidence among its member States. That crisis seems to call into question the very nature and scope of the social contract at the heart of the organization, as well as the commitments made by its member States under its founding texts. The OSCE has no choice but to recover from that situation. The latent tensions in Europe, particularly in the Western Balkans and owing to the war in Ukraine, but also in a sociopolitical context marked by nationalism and other transnational threats, are all challenges standing in its way. It is well within the OSCE's reach to respond to those challenges while preserving the guiding principles governing mutual relations among its member States. Those challenges are unquestionably amplified by the war in Ukraine, not only due to the humanitarian and

security consequences, including for food security, resulting from the conflict, but also in a more insidious way through the pressure on member States to choose between the opposing sides.

It is more important than ever for the OSCE to deploy its mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of disputes between States within its territorial jurisdiction. It must show commitment and urge the parties involved to find a lasting solution to the border dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan and avoid a conflagration that could harm the entire region. Similarly, it is called on to play a stabilizing role in Cyprus, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as to resolve frozen conflicts that could be reignited by political and economic circumstances and where the stakes are not always controllable. The OSCE has a real ability to bring the conflicting parties — including those to the war in Ukraine — to dialogue. It must use it at every level to ensure that negotiation prevails over a logic of confrontation.

We also recognize the role played by the OSCE in terms of humanitarian response in conflict situations in collaboration with United Nations specialized agencies. It also undertakes many actions to support its member States in strengthening the rule of law, respect for human rights and the fight against environmental challenges.

The OSCE must resolve to prevent, reconcile and promote reconstruction and peaceful coexistence. That is a role that it will not be able to relinquish and for which it must enhance its credibility by positioning itself equidistant from the antagonisms of its member States. To do so, it can rely on its specialized cooperation bodies and forums, which have mechanisms for conflict prevention, protection of national minorities and conciliation or arbitration between the parties.

It is essential that the OSCE be able to fulfil its entire mandate, a significant part of which consists of field missions through humanitarian support, training and other capacity-building missions, including actions within the framework of the women and peace and security agenda. The contribution of this agenda to the restoration of peace and post-conflict reconstruction is now recognized more than ever. We call on member States to refrain from any initiative or attitude that would impede the normal functioning of the organization.

I would like to conclude by stressing the importance of cooperation between the OSCE and the United Nations and by urging OSCE member States to preserve

the achievements of the past 50 years by focusing on dialogue, promoting preventive diplomacy and uniting in the pursuit of security and stability, in the spirit of the ideals of the United Nations Charter, for the peoples of the world.

Mrs. Jaraud-Darnault (France) (*spoke in French*): The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) today is facing an unprecedented attack on its very essence. Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine since 24 February 2022 is a flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as of all the principles and commitments of the OSCE's founding texts, the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris for a New Europe.

We continue to pledge our full support to Ukraine. We must therefore continue to build on OSCE instruments. In that regard, I would like to welcome the launch of the Support Programme for Ukraine in November, to which France contributed €1.5 million in 2022 and which will be maintained as long as necessary.

I would also like to express France's gratitude to those who have worked within the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, as well as to pay tribute to its personnel who have fallen victim to the Russian aggression. We call for the immediate and unconditional release of the Mission's personnel still detained by Russia and its supporters.

I would like to acknowledge the invaluable contribution of the OSCE human rights institutions and instruments by documenting Russia's crimes in Ukraine. The three reports issued since 24 February 2022, under the Moscow Mechanism, document massive and systematic violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by Russia, including against children.

France also fully supports the invocation, on 23 March by 38 participating States, of the Moscow Mechanism against Belarus. France is indeed very concerned about the continued deterioration of the human rights situation in Belarus. It reiterates its condemnation of the complicity of Aleksandr Lukashenko's regime in the illegal and unjustified military aggression led by Russia against Ukraine.

The OSCE must be able to continue to use its resources to prevent and resolve conflicts in the European area, in accordance with the principles of international law.

In an order issued on 22 February, the International Court of Justice determined that

“since 12 December 2022, the connection between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia via the Lachin corridor has been disrupted”.

France recalls that the Court's decisions are binding.

France also supports negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan. All issues must be settled exclusively through negotiations. France believes that the OSCE can make a useful contribution to the ongoing processes, in particular through the implementation of confidence-building measures.

France reiterates its unwavering support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia and Moldova and for the role of the OSCE in helping to resolve those conflicts. It calls on Russia not to obstruct the extension of the mandate of the OSCE Mission to Moldova beyond 30 June.

As we celebrate this year the thirtieth anniversary of the establishment of the Framework for Cooperation and Coordination between the United Nations Secretariat and the OSCE, France reaffirms its support for cooperation between the organizations, with a view to promoting the settlement of crises in Europe. In that regard, France particularly commends the commitment of Minister Osmani, alongside OSCE Secretary General Helga Schmid.

Mr. Ishikane (Japan): I would first like to welcome the Foreign Minister of North Macedonia to the Security Council as the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and thank him for his insightful and comprehensive briefing.

As mentioned by the Chairperson and other speakers, there are many places, unfortunately, where conflict prevention through confidence-building measures is urgently needed. This situation is further complicated and aggravated by Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which has caused negative and, sometimes, destabilizing effects around the world. In that context, we would like to express our respect to the OSCE for the important role it has played in confidence-building, with the participation of a great number of countries with diverse values and perspectives.

Japan became the first OSCE Partner for Cooperation over 30 years ago, in 1992. Since then,

Japan has actively participated in every OSCE summit and Ministerial Council. Japan is proud of the long-standing partnership in addressing common global security challenges. We have also enhanced cooperation with the OSCE in efforts towards democratization and regional stability.

For instance, Japan dispatched experts to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine and has contributed financially to preventing human trafficking in Ukraine and surrounding countries, as well as to strengthening border control in Central Asia and Afghanistan. That cooperation is based on the firm belief that peace and stability in the OSCE region is directly linked to that of the international community, including the Asia-Pacific region.

The international community is now at a historic turning point. The international order based on the rule of law, which we have been consistently upholding, is under threat. We are confronted with an unforgivable situation, in which an OSCE member State that is also a permanent member of the Security Council invaded another member State. We recall the strong voice of the General Assembly in October, calling upon the OSCE to support the de-escalation of the current situation.

The need for comprehensive security through confidence-building based on dialogue, which the OSCE has been working on since its establishment, is greater than ever. His Excellency Mr. Bujar Osmani referred to the importance of putting people at the centre, which Japan fully supports because we value the concept of human security. Japan will continue to cooperate with the OSCE in order to address the wide range of security challenges facing the international community and to maintain and fortify the international order based on the rule of law.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine is an outrageous act that shakes the very foundation of the international order in every corner of the globe, and we condemn it again in the strongest terms. The international community must work together to voice its opposition, regardless of geographical boundaries, to this blatant violation of the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Afonso (Mozambique): We thank the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Chairperson-in-Office and Foreign Minister of North Macedonia, His Excellency Mr. Bujar Osmani, for his timely and very enlightening briefing. We take note of the priorities he outlined for his tenure.

Mozambique commends the crucial role played by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in maintaining peace on the European continent since its inception in 1975. As a regional organization at the centre of the European security architecture for nearly half a century, the OSCE has been instrumental in maintaining peace and stability in Europe and actively involved in shaping the democratic transitions that have laid the ground for the prosperity we have witnessed in post-Cold War Europe. In our view, the organization remains just as relevant today in all matters related to peace and security in Europe. It is a valid and important interlocutor in multilateral, regional and subregional organizations throughout the world that share the same mandate and values.

Mozambique has paid particular attention to the OSCE's role in facilitating dialogue and cooperation among its 57 member States on multiple emerging issues, including terrorism and the violent extremism that can lead to terrorism, transnational organized crime, arms control and migration. Those are issues faced by our own country as well as our various regional and subregional organizations in Africa. We can confidently state that as it is in Africa, silencing the guns is at the core of the OSCE's mandate, and in that sense we have much to learn from and share with each other, despite our contextual and historical specificities.

At this crucial juncture, when the international security architecture is under immense stress and facing multiple headwinds, the OSCE, together with other regional organizations and the United Nations, needs to step up and restore the necessary safeguards for a peaceful and prosperous world. The spirit that led to the Helsinki Final Act in 1975 and the Istanbul Summit Declaration in 1999 and that has enhanced the OSCE's commitment to conflict prevention, crisis management and combating organized crime, corruption and terrorism, remains important and must be put to good use. While the war in Ukraine has severely tested the OSCE and other similar regional frameworks, we still require renewed dialogue and diplomacy to de-escalate the conflict and lay the ground for trust-building and an eventual revised European security arrangement. We are in full agreement with Mr. Osmani that war is not a necessity or a destiny.

Looking beyond Europe, the OSCE has an important role to play in strengthening its partnership with the United Nations, particularly in the areas of conflict prevention and resolution. The two organizations

can work closely together in order to enhance the effectiveness of their common efforts by heeding the call of the Secretary-General's *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982).

We are happy to note that the core principles and commitments enshrined in the OSCE founding act, such as respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity, human rights, fundamental freedoms and the indivisibility of security, remain cornerstones of international peace and security. As we look to the future, we remain confident that the OSCE will continue to be an essential partner in efforts to promote peace, stability, security and cooperation in Europe and beyond.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I listened carefully to the briefing by His Excellency Mr. Osmani, Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Minister for Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia.

China has always supported cooperation between the Security Council and regional organizations, including the OSCE, consistent with the provisions of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, in addressing challenges in the area of international peace and security. In that process, it is imperative to adhere to the purposes and principles of the Charter, which promote the settlement of disputes through peaceful means. The security situation in Europe at the moment is facing mounting risks and challenges. China expects the OSCE to make greater efforts to enhance mutual trust among member States, prevent and mediate conflicts and address non-traditional security threats, and to play a positive and constructive role in maintaining peace and stability in Europe.

We must underscore the importance of cooperative security. The OSCE has a wealth of experience in conflict prevention and resolution and should make good use of its existing mechanisms, scale up efforts to promote peace talks and mediation, balance the interests and concerns of all parties, encourage member States to abandon the zero-sum Cold War mindset and bloc politics, build mutual trust through dialogue and consultation, resolve disputes through peaceful negotiations and achieve security through cooperation rather than confrontation.

We must adhere to the goal of common security. The principle of the indivisibility of security established in the Helsinki Final Act in 1975 should be upheld and put into practice. Only by taking seriously the security

of others and safeguarding the security of all can we truly ensure our own security. The OSCE should promote member States' respect for one another's legitimate security concerns and explore building a balanced, effective and sustainable European security architecture, with a view to achieving common security.

We must insist on achieving sustainable security. Security can be solid and sustainable only if it is based on the international rule of law, grounded in morality and sound concepts. Together with the international community, the OSCE should adhere to genuine multilateralism and uphold the international system, with the United Nations at its core, the international order, based on international law, and the basic norms governing international relations, in line with the purposes and principles of the Charter. It should jointly promote the democratization of international relations and the rule of law at the international level and work to achieve sustainable security in Europe.

China's position on the situation in Ukraine remains consistent and clear. We always hold that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries should be protected, the purposes and principles of the Charter should be adhered to, the legitimate security concerns of all the parties should be taken seriously, and all efforts conducive to a peaceful resolution of the crisis should be supported. President Xi Jinping has recently engaged intensively with the leaders of Russia, Ukraine, Europe and developing countries, explaining China's position and propositions in depth and playing a constructive role in promoting peace talks.

Conflicts and wars have no winners. Dialogue and negotiations are the only way out. Given the recent rising tensions on the battlefield, all parties should remain calm, exercise restraint, refrain from any actions that might further escalate tensions and confrontation and bring together the conditions conducive to a political settlement of the crisis. The international community should persist on the course of peace talks as the right way forward and help parties to the conflict to open the door to a political settlement of the crisis as soon as possible. We encourage the OSCE to leverage its strengths and create the conditions and environment necessary to support of the resumption of negotiations between Russia and Ukraine. The Government of China will send a special representative on Eurasian affairs to visit Ukraine and other countries and continue to contribute to an early cessation of hostilities and a restoration of peace.

There are no simple solutions to complex problems. The Ukraine crisis is the culmination of security tensions accumulated over a long time in Europe, and a final settlement of the crisis can be achieved only on the basis of cooperative security, common security and sustainable security. I hope that all the parties will reflect deeply on their joint efforts and work together for long-term peace and stability in Europe through dialogue and consultations.

Today Mr. Osmani and many Council members mentioned the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan. China's position on that issue has not changed. It is our consistent position that Armenia and Azerbaijan should, in line with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, solve the issue between them peacefully through diplomatic means, namely dialogue and negotiations, and jointly safeguard regional peace and stability.

Mr. Pérez Loose (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to welcome Mr. Bujar Osmani, Minister for Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia and Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) for 2023, whom I thank for his detailed, informative briefing and wish success during his mandate, which is taking place during critical times for European and global security and stability.

Ecuador supports the deepening of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, and beyond. In that regard, we welcome the fact that since the establishment of the framework for cooperation and coordination between the United Nations and the OSCE in 1993, that partnership has expanded to address the various thematic issues, challenges and conflicts that affect Europe and could have an impact on the world.

We appreciate the joint efforts with regard to progress on reconciliation in the Western Balkans, the Geneva International Discussions on Georgia, implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia and the Nagorno-Karabakh and Republic of Moldova conflicts. My delegation welcomes North Macedonia's outlining of its priorities under the motto "It's about them. It's about people". Several of those priorities coincide with those of the United Nations and, in particular, those of the Council.

We also recognize the significant role that the OSCE was playing, before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, through its Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine and within the framework of the Trilateral Contact Group, in promoting security and a political solution in a challenging context. While the OSCE's efforts in the context of the implementation of the Minsk agreements were overtaken by force of circumstance, its contribution remains key, including in today's more complex context.

We also welcome the fact that one of the priorities of the current OSCE chairpersonship is to try to resolve existing conflicts with a human-centred approach. Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is essential for ensuring sustainable security. We encourage the OSCE member States to cooperate in good faith with the organization's institutions and field operations, while emphasizing the human element. We further encourage the OSCE chairpersonship to carry out its intention to focus on other security issues such as border security management and combating terrorism and transnational crime, as well as cybersecurity and the nexus between climate change and security.

Furthermore, my delegation welcomes the OSCE's efforts to promote and integrate gender equality into the various dimensions of its work. We call for the OSCE to strengthen its activities on the women and peace and security agenda and to ensure the participation of women at all levels, including in the armed forces and in conflict-resolution processes and efforts.

We call on the OSCE to deepen its conflict-prevention efforts in the management of host communities and its efforts with regard to internally displaced persons, a situation that particularly affects women and girls. We also highlight the joint work that is being carried out by the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Office of Counter-Terrorism and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. We call on the OSCE and its members to expand their efforts in arms control, non-proliferation and, especially, disarmament, with a view to contributing to the United Nations efforts for a world free from nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction.

Just yesterday, we met in the Chamber to discuss futureproofing trust for sustainable peace (see S/PV.9315). Indeed, the challenges we are facing today call for closer cooperation, in which the OSCE must continue to play a constructive role.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are pleased to see you, Mr. Councillor, in the President's chair. We also welcome to today's meeting Mr. Bujar Osmani, Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Minister for Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia.

I think it will come as no surprise to anyone if I begin my statement by making the point that, for many years, the United States and its allies have taken systematic and consistent actions to create a Russophobic, nationalist and neo-Nazi entity on our borders, triggering a profound crisis of the international relations system. And while Washington, London, Brussels and a number of other capitals continue their frenzied rhetoric about Russia's allegedly unprovoked aggression, the true causes of the tectonic shifts that we are witnessing are very clear to any minimally knowledgeable observer.

Those causes include the anti-constitutional coup in Kyiv in 2014 and the condoning by the regime, for eight years, of the crimes committed against civilians in southern and eastern Ukraine, in addition to the West's collective rejection of the principle of the indivisibility of security in favour of NATO expansion. The question of where we are headed and what the renewed system of international relations will look like remains open today. One thing is clear: the world will no longer be unipolar, and Western domination, or American-style peace, is on its way out. The question of the place and role of international organizations in such an objective process also remains open. Each individual organization deals with that challenge differently. Despite the West's domination of its structures and desperate attempts by Western countries to impose a Russophobic agenda on every Member State, the United Nations, which is essentially a bastion of multilateralism, continues to be sought out as a platform for dialogue and international cooperation. The Council of Europe, on the other hand, has been unable to withstand such pressure and has steadily slid into political oblivion, while becoming an atrophied appendage of NATO and the European Union (EU) and endorsing their every decision.

In that regard, there have been many expectations of the OSCE, which is the successor of the forum that played a key role in establishing a dialogue between East and West during the Cold War. Today provides us with an excellent opportunity to analyse to what extent such expectations were justified.

We are compelled to acknowledge that, faced with the challenges that I just mentioned, the OSCE is undergoing its most severe crisis since it was established almost 50 years ago, which has been exacerbated by attempts by a well-known group of States to use the organization to serve their own political interests and turn it into a tool of a Western crusade, unleashed against Russia. That transformation did not happen overnight. The system of regional security, built within the framework of the OSCE and based on the principles of indivisible security from Vancouver to Vladivostok was truly unique in its nature. The OSCE succeeded in meeting the challenges of the times, and the efforts of its good faith participants in the process allowed for agreements to be reached on any urgent matter. A striking example was the signing in Istanbul in 1999 of a number of important documents, such as the Charter for European Security and the Agreement on adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) — a fundamental instrument for ensuring European security and military predictability.

However, the will to strengthen security in a changing world was not shared by all. As we know, the United States, which sought to maintain NATO's dominance, on the basis of the previous version of the CFE, forbade its allies from ratifying the revised version of the Treaty. Washington's subsequent actions — its withdrawal from the Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems and the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and its dismissal of the Treaty on Open Skies, with the complicity of European countries — led to an even greater erosion of global and regional security.

However, even amid attempts to turn the organization into a kind of supervisory body for the policies of States to the east of Vienna, the OSCE continued to be needed. Its activities raised hopes for an improved environment in Europe and a transition to mutually beneficial cooperation and development. Its mediation potential was also sought out. The OSCE was called upon to play an important role in the implementation of the Minsk agreements between Ukraine and the Donbas republics, against whose population the Kyiv regime unleashed a bloody war in 2014. To that end, a robust toolkit was provided under the aegis of the OSCE, which provided a platform for direct dialogue between the parties to the conflict within the Trilateral Contact Group and its working subgroups. But Kyiv

systematically avoided participating in substantive dialogue with representatives of the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic, while continuing to shell their peaceful cities. To that end, Kyiv received help from NATO countries, which invested in supplying the Kyiv regime with weapons and equipment and encouraged Ukraine's crimes against civilians. The OSCE leadership's response to all that was often highly questionable or absent. As a result, the organization has not only failed in its primary task to achieve peace, based on the good faith implementation of Minsk agreements, but was actually made the West's accomplice, which not only does the bidding of one side to the conflict, but also provides it with sensitive information.

It comes as no surprise that, after the exacerbation of the Ukrainian crisis in February 2022, the organization unequivocally and obediently took Kyiv's side, while performing the task of serving the interests of individual OSCE States and their alliances. The entire work of the organization was subordinated to promoting Western approaches to the situation in and around Ukraine. The OSCE leadership's guidelines to act publicly in strict accordance with the consensus position were forgotten. As a result, instead of a platform for dialogue, it quickly became a platform for Russophobic invective and hysterical accusations against our country. The Ukrainization process, which the Polish chairmanship was particularly successful in promoting last year, has led to the lacklustre implementation of the organization's mandate, and its long-standing experience and competencies are not being used for their intended purpose.

The artificial frenzy around the Ukrainian issue comes at the expense of dealing with other crises, of which there are many in the OSCE area. The situation in the Balkans continues to deteriorate. The worsening situation in Kosovo, owing to the actions of the Pristina authorities with the full complicity of their Western sponsors, is causing increasing concern. Against that background, we see the lack of a balanced response to events by the OSCE, although the organization remains part of the international efforts to settle the situation in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999).

We are compelled, unfortunately, to note the lack of progress by the OSCE in reaching a settlement of the Transnistrian conflict, in particular within the framework of the 5+2 negotiation process, which has been put on hold since October 2019. As is well known,

the mission's mandate in the Republic of Moldova was conferred upon it 30 years ago, but apparently, this is not enough to provide participating States with tangible results. Of particular concern is the subversive role that Ukraine is currently playing in Transnistria, which demonstrates its willingness to intervene, including with the use of force.

We regret the politicization of the Geneva International Discussions on security and stability in the Transcaucasus, which led to the unjustified cancellation of two consecutive meetings and a break in the pace of the negotiation process. We believe that such steps reflect attempts by our Western colleagues to cause the confrontation to spread from Ukraine to the South Caucasus and sacrifice the Geneva format to geopolitics. Such dangerous behaviour calls for an immediate response by the co-chairmanship of the United Nations, the OSCE and the EU. For our part, we reaffirm our commitment to the Geneva International Discussions as a unique platform designed to ensure ongoing direct dialogue between Tbilisi, Sokhumi and Tskhinvali. The alternative to a negotiations vacuum is the degradation of the situation on the ground.

Owing to the actions of the United States and France, the OSCE Minsk Group has ceased its activities. Meanwhile, the situation involving Nagorno-Karabakh, including in the area of responsibility of the Russian peacekeeping contingent, the Armenian-Azerbaijani line of contact and the dialogue between officials in Baku and Yerevan, continues to raise serious concerns. We reaffirm the importance of strict compliance with the entire 2020–2022 set of agreements among the leaders of Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan on the normalization of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations. The Russian Federation stands ready to provide Azerbaijan and Armenia, which are close to us, with all the necessary assistance both at the political level and on the ground, with the participation of the commanders of the Russian peacekeeping contingent. Unfortunately, the current North Macedonian OSCE chairmanship has yet to successfully create a unifying agenda and cannot afford to adhere to status-neutral approaches. For example, the Foreign Minister of Northern Macedonia was hardly shy in taking part in a political spectacle commemorating the anniversary of the staging in Bucha, thereby grossly violating the mandate of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office.

At the same time, the Chairperson-in-Office and the secretariat of the organization remain shamefully silent

about the politically motivated persecution by the Kyiv regime of the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church, in exactly the same way they remained shamefully silent with regard to the atrocities committed by the Maidan authorities and the crimes by Ukrainian nationalists, who burned people alive in the Trade Union House in Odesa, exactly nine years ago. The tragedy is repeating itself today, and the pressure by Ukrainian State institutions and its security services on the Church and their interference in the lives of religious communities and freedom of religion are not being scrutinized, despite Ukraine's blatant violations of its international legal commitments, including those undertaken under the OSCE. We demand that the Chair-in-Office take meaningful steps to protect religious freedom in Ukraine in accordance with OSCE principles and commitments.

The short-sighted confrontational policy of the Western alliance of States, led by the United States, is not only provoking an acute crisis in the OSCE area, but is also essentially forcing the organization itself to make a critical choice: either it will take up the crucial task of forming a sustainable European security architecture based on the principle of indivisibility, enshrined in many OSCE documents, including the Charter for European Security of 1999, also known as the Istanbul charter, and the Astana Commemorative Declaration of 2010, or it will continue to do the bidding of the West, which understands security as the limitless expansion of the aggressive NATO alliance and the widespread imposition of how the West conceives of political, economic and human rights principles.

Nevertheless, we maintain our faith in the potential of the OSCE and will not give up the attempts to hold a dialogue on the Vienna platform. One only has to spend a little time at the meetings of the OSCE Permanent Council to observe the fundamental difference between the hysterical, offensive statements of Western delegations and the verified, factual reports of our Vienna colleagues. We will continue to calmly convey information on the real state of affairs — as the Bible says, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” The OSCE still has a chance to play a role in bringing together what are sometimes polarized and irreconcilable points of view and developing a platform for dialogue and a framework for peaceful coexistence, just as Soviet, American and European negotiators did in the early to mid-1970s. But for that it is essential not only to stop demonizing one's opponents but also to abandon a logic of confrontation and zero-sum games.

As for the actual announced topic of our meeting today, concerning the interaction between the two organizations under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, we believe that cooperation should be conducted in full transparency and accountability to participating States. It should serve the quest for unifying principles rather than promoting confrontational attitudes. However, we want to point out that the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security lies with the Security Council. It seems that some parties in Vienna may have forgotten that in their enthusiasm for anti-Russian projects. The sooner the OSCE returns to much-needed calm and mutually respectful dialogue, the greater its chances of fitting into the new world order. We would like to believe that those in and around Vienna are fully aware of that.

Mr. DeLaurentis (United States of America): I would also like to thank Foreign Minister Osmani for his participation today and for North Macedonia's principled leadership at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). His comments about Ukraine were particularly pertinent. From the civilians brutalized by Russia's missiles in Uman and other cities last Friday to the children Russia has forcibly transferred and deported, the human cost of Russia's aggression is immeasurable and the damage to Ukraine's infrastructure massive. As Mr. Osmani highlighted, the OSCE has been at the forefront of the international community's efforts to shine a light on the actions of the Russian Federation's military forces in Ukraine through the superb fact-finding and reporting resulting from repeated invocations of the OSCE's Moscow Mechanism by as many as 45 participating States.

The rapporteurs who prepared those reports are professionals in their fields, scrupulous in documenting findings of brutality and disregard for innocent lives. The Moscow Mechanism rapporteurs have likewise revealed the violence of the Belarusian regime's efforts to suppress dissent and the Kremlin's crackdown on all voices critical of its policies, as well as its efforts to strangle free media. A Moscow Mechanism report on the forcible transfer or deportation of Ukrainian children to Ukrainian territory temporarily occupied by Russian forces or to the Russian Federation itself is being presented in Vienna today. A further report on Belarus is in progress. We hope that everyone will read those reports, given the grave human rights crisis in

Belarus and the unconscionable actions of the Russian Federation, which will inevitably have implications for regional security.

We believe that regional organizations and their cooperation with the United Nations are more important than ever in helping to maintain international peace and security. As the world's largest regional security organization, the OSCE's close cooperation with the United Nations is essential to ensuring that the Council can deliver on its mandate for international peace and security. The United States welcomes the cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE as they work together to prevent any resurgence of violence in post-conflict situations, including through the close cooperation of OSCE field operations with United Nations agencies and missions. One such example is the OSCE mission in Kosovo, which is a partner of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo.

Despite Russia's efforts to obstruct the OSCE and sabotage its budget, the OSCE has continued to operate, contributing to regional peace and security, including with the donor-funded support programme for Ukraine to replace the Special Monitoring Mission forced to close by Russia.

The United States values the OSCE as a vehicle for effective multilateralism and for promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, arms control, regional stability, post-conflict reconciliation, confidence and security-building measures, economic prosperity and sustainable environmental policies. We hope that through continued cooperation with the OSCE on shared agenda items such as those, the United Nations and, by extension, the entire international community can leverage strengths and realize lasting benefits.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Osmani to respond to the comments made at this meeting.

Mr. Osmani: Let me thank you once again, Mr. President, for giving me an opportunity to address the Security Council on North Macedonia's chairpersonship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which has coincided with the thirtieth anniversary of the establishment of cooperation and coordination between the United Nations and the OSCE. I would also like to thank the representatives of the Security Council members for their kind words of support. They represent the wind at our back in boldly continuing to steward the organization during this challenging time.

However, I would like to just briefly comment on some of the remarks by the representative of the Russian Federation regarding our non-status neutral position as Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE.

The OSCE is indeed a platform for dialogue among non-like-minded countries. Our role as Chairperson-in-Office is to be an honest broker of that dialogue. However, that dialogue takes place within the framework established by the principles and commitments of the organization, which we have voluntarily agreed to uphold and obey. They are non-negotiable. Our role as Chairperson-in-Office is to safeguard those principles and commitments. We will therefore function as an honest broker enabling a conducive atmosphere for dialogue in order to achieve and uphold those principles and commitments. Those commitments are related to respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of participating States of the OSCE, and to refraining from the violation of borders and the use of force to achieve political gains. That is how we will proceed during our chairpersonship-in-office.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Osmani for the clarifications he provided.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.