



**REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS**  
**PERMANENT MISSION**  
**TO THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

Statement as delivered by the Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the OSCE, Ambassador Andreas Ignatiou

OSCE Ministerial Council in Skopje - 30/11 and 1/12, 2023

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Mr Chairman,

Distinguished Ministers,

Excellencies,

Allow me to thank, you, Mr Chair, and your able team for hosting us in Skopje and commend your meticulous work throughout this challenging year, marked by the unjustifiable war in Ukraine.

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine was uncalled for. This absurd war has multiplying consequences to the security and stability for our continent but also for the rest of the world. The use of force cannot and should not replace the rule of law. Respect to international law and the international legal order must prevail.

Cyprus, itself a victim of foreign aggression since 1974, has been adamant: Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, within its internationally recognized borders' must be respected.

Revisionist policies and the use of force and coercion to change borders, has no place in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In the meantime, the situation unfolded in Nagorno Karabakh is also of grave concern and with grave repercussions that need to be urgently addressed. It is imperative to protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all displaced people, including their undeniable right to return safely to their homes. Azerbaijan has a responsibility to provide substantial guarantees. It is our firm position: the full respect to the sovereignty, inviolability of borders and territorial integrity of both Azerbaijan and Armenia. There is no room for double standards on this.

Mr Chair,

Despite the grave challenges, the OSCE remains, the most important regional platform for security and cooperation. OSCE was created with the aim to prevent war and build bridges. Sometimes we will fail but the perseverance of peace and cooperation should be our collective

compass. OSCE and multilateralism must be preserved, not at the expense of our values, but on building upon and safeguarding them. Rules-based order and commitment to our fundamental values must prevail.

We owe to recall what brought us together and reaffirm our commitment for mutual respect, peace, security and stability in the OSCE area and beyond. This is our collective responsibility.

In this framework, I wish to emphasize the importance that we attach to the co-operation with our Asian and Mediterranean partners. As regards the latter, it is our firm belief that the security of the OSCE area is inextricably linked to that of the Mediterranean region. In this respect, we condemn the recent Hamas' terrorist attacks against Israel and acknowledge the right of Israel to defend itself always in line with international law. Civilians pay the heaviest price, and in this regards we call for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages and provision of humanitarian aid to the people in Gaza. Cyprus has offered to help with a comprehensive proposal on humanitarian aid.

Mr Chair,

As regards the Decisions at stake. The North Macedonia Chairpersonship, along with Secretary General Helga Schmid, as well as the Heads of the three autonomous institutions managed despite the challenging circumstances to navigate effectively our Organization. We fully support the nomination of Malta for the Chairpersonship in Office for 2024 and welcome the consensus achieved. We also strongly support the extension of the Mandate of the Secretary General and the Heads of the three autonomous institutions, beyond 2023.

Cyprus will be assuming the Chairpersonship of the Forum of Security Cooperation in January, and I can assure you that we will exert all efforts to preserve the effective functioning of our Organization, while standing up for an international rules-based order, in full respect of the UN Charter and the OSCE principles and commitments.

Thank you Chair