

2016 OSCE Ministerial Council Australian Statement

Delivered by Ambassador Dr Brendon Hammer, Head of Delegation

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First, I would also like to congratulate Germany on its successful chairmanship of the OSCE in 2016, and for your hospitality here in Hamburg.

I would also like to register Australia's appreciation to Serbia for its chairmanship of the Asian Partners Contact Group this year and to Thailand, for hosting this year's Asian Partners Conference.

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

We see your work on all fronts as crucial to maintaining a stable world.

2016 has been another testing year for international security and stability, highlighted - once again - by ongoing violence in eastern Ukraine.

Australia is disappointed that this issue has proven so intractable.

We once again call upon Russia to abide by its international obligations, including that it respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine.

We do not recognise the illegal annexation of Crimea and call upon Russia cease its campaign of destabilisation in eastern Ukraine.

We want to see both sides make good on their undertakings under the Minsk agreements. It is high time that the conflict was resolved.

Until such time, the role of the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine is crucial in assessing the implementation of the ceasefire.

We fully support its continuation, and call for the SMM to be given unfettered and safe access to the conflict areas.

The spectre of terrorism and violent extremism remains a serious threat to international peace and security.

We firmly believe that terrorism can be defeated through united international cooperation and collaboration.

We welcome the activities pursued by the OSCE on counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism.

We believe that these efforts are making a real difference. We look forward to further cooperation within the OSCE on these matters.

I would like to register here that Australia is pursuing our inaugural candidacy for the United Nations Human Rights Council for the term 2018-20.

Our candidacy is a measure of Australia's longstanding commitment to promoting & protecting human rights, both in Australia and around the world.

This reflects our national values, that emphasise human rights, freedom and democracy.

If elected, we would focus on five themes:

- freedom of expression
- good governance
- gender equality and the empowerment of women
- the rights of indigenous peoples
- and strong national human rights institutions and capacity building.

Some of these reflect values that I know are also near to the heart of the OSCE, as laid down in the Helsinki Final Act more than 40 years ago.

We would very much value the support of OSCE Participating States for our candidacy.

Before I conclude, I would like to applaud the work the OSCE has been doing to combat human trafficking.

Australia attended the OSCE Conference on Preventing Human Trafficking in Berlin, as well as the Second Workshop on Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings in Supply Chains through Government Practices and Measures in London.

In a very welcome way, these events highlighted some of the measures that governments can - and should - be implementing to prevent human trafficking and modern slavery.

And we look forward to Austria's Chairmanship next year.