



United States Mission to the OSCE

Forum for Security Cooperation Opening Statement

As delivered by Ambassador Michael Carpenter
Vienna, April 26, 2023

Dear Emilia,

It is a pleasure to welcome you personally, and Bulgaria as a country, in your new role as Chair of the OSCE's Forum for Security Cooperation. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has undermined the FSC and challenged the foundational principles of this organization. We find ourselves in a time of crisis and calamity. Yet we have full confidence in Bulgaria's stewardship of this forum based on our shared principles and our shared commitment to pursuing accountability for those who would violate them. As you understand perfectly, this is not a time for business as usual. Not as long as Russia's suicide drones, artillery shells, and bombs keep killing Ukrainian civilians and while Russia occupies more than a sixth of Ukraine's sovereign territory.

I know for some it may be tempting to seek refuge in technical discussions. But how could we possibly hold technical discussions on security cooperation while Russia is deporting Ukrainian children to the Russian federation and while videos surface of Russia's soldiers murdering prisoners of war in cold blood. Adding insult to injury, nearly every week our Russian colleague claims to want "mutually respectful dialogue," and then immediately scurries from this room before listening to what other participating States have to say.

Madam Chair,

What we can do in this forum is continue to hold Russia to account for its crimes against humanity and failure to honor its OSCE commitments, including under the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security. We can shine a spotlight on Russia's lies and disinformation, and we can continue to support Ukraine as it fights every day for its very existence, an existence that is protected by the UN Charter and reflected in the principles of the Helsinki Final Act. Russia has assumed obligations or commitments under all of the foundational documents we respect and yet chooses instead to ignore them as if they were mere scraps of worthless paper, asking for "respectful dialogue" while it plunges its daggers even deeper into Ukrainian bodies.

Accordingly, we must make clear the consequences for a state which violates its international commitments and attacks the very foundations of the international rules-based order to pursue its

imperialistic agenda. We must work together until Russia comes to understand that it cannot seize territory by force and attempt to erase the Ukrainian nation. Russia must recognize that it has no choice but to respect the sovereignty of others and adhere to its international obligations and commitments including those entered into here at the OSCE. The foundational principle of territorial integrity and political independence must be respected, international institutions must be strengthened, and we must do our part here today and every day from hence forward. The very international order that we live in and depend on for security, prosperity, and liberty is at stake.

Madam Chair,

If the past year is any indication, you will face a bumpy road as Chair during this trimester. Nevertheless, you are surrounded by Allies and friends, who will support you and stand with you. You can count on the United States to be there with you every step of the way. I bid a grateful farewell to Belgium as it departs the troika and warmly welcome our neighbor Canada as the troika's newest member.

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