



## United States Mission to the OSCE

### **Response to the Address by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Marija Pejčinović Burić**

As delivered by Ambassador Michael Carpenter  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
April 20, 2023

Madam Secretary General welcome back to the OSCE Permanent Council. We greatly appreciate the Council of Europe's unwavering support for Ukraine and efforts to ensure accountability for crimes committed by members of Russia's forces in Ukraine.

In fact, the Russian representative earlier nicely summarized his country's many violations of international law: re-education, hybrid aggression, shelling of residential districts, neo-colonialism, looting of cultural heritage - all crimes committed in Ukraine by Russia's forces. And indeed he is right, historical justice will come before long. I hope he is prepared.

In this regard, we welcome in particular the Council's adoption in December of the *Action Plan for Ukraine*. Developed in close coordination with the Ukrainian government, the plan is designed to support Ukraine's physical and economic recovery, strengthen the resilience of its public institutions, and protect citizens' rights to support Ukraine's reform agenda and full integration with Europe.

We note also the Council's support to the Office of Ukraine's Prosecutor General as it manages more than 70,000 reports of war crimes and investigates thousands of credible claims of human rights violations by members of Russia's forces against the people of Ukraine. We commend the Council's efforts to facilitate and enhance Ukraine's coordination with the International Criminal Court, UNHCR, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, and the International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression in The Hague.

We appreciate the establishment on November 7<sup>th</sup> of a Contact Group between the Council of Europe and Belarusian Democratic Forces and Civil Society, including Belarusian democratic leader Svyatlana Tsikhanouskaya. We believe the Contact Group's technical expertise in the areas of human rights, democracy, and rule of law can bolster democracy in Belarus following Russia's exclusion from the Council of Europe and the suspension of activities in Belarus after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine last year.

In this regard, we condemn the sentencing *in absentia* on March 7 of Madam Tsikhanouskaya, exiled opposition leader Pavel Latushka, and three other Belarusian citizens by the Minsk City Court. Let's be clear: The sentences are absurd. Tsikhanouskaya captured the essence of the situation when she tweeted: "Does it change anything for me? Nothing. It is just the revenge of a pathetic dictator who lost power & tries to take revenge on all who stood up for freedom. Belarus needs real justice, not a puppet show."

The United States remains committed to the Belarusian people and their aspirations for a democratic and peaceful future free of politically motivated prosecutions and repression. In this regard, we look forward to the findings of Moscow Mechanism Rapporteur Mr. Hervé Ascensio.

More broadly, the United States supports the Council's work to assist participating States in upholding their commitments, including through regular meetings of the *OSCE-CoE Coordination Group* which ensures our organizations take coordinated and mutually reinforcing positions.

The United States is proud to be a member of both the *Venice Commission* and *GRECO*. We appreciate the *Venice Commission's* cooperation with ODIHR and support to the government of Ukraine as it works toward EU accession.

We also strongly support the Council's work on counterterrorism and emerging threats such as Racially or Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremism. The recently adopted legal recommendations on Battlefield Evidence and upcoming comparative practices for practitioners and policymakers--which the United States is pleased to support--will be central to investigating and prosecuting terrorism and other violations of international humanitarian law.

Finally, we look forward to the Council of Europe's 4<sup>th</sup> Head of State Summit in Reykjavik next month. My colleague Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield, will lead the U.S. delegation. As we continue the work of democratic reform following the Summit for Democracy, we see the Council in Europe as a key partner in advancing shared goals on human rights, democracy, and the rule of law, not only in Europe but across the globe.

Madam Secretary General, in closing, thank you again for addressing us today. Our organizations – and our ability to meet our respective commitments – are stronger as a result of our continued coordination.

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