



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Opening Address by the Chairperson-in-Office and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland Elina Valtonen

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Katherine Brucker
to the Special Permanent Council, Vienna
January 23, 2025

Minister Valtonen, welcome back to Vienna. The United States applauds Finland's sustained commitment to the OSCE and the principles on which it was founded. We look forward to cooperating with you on your pragmatic agenda. We have an opportunity under your leadership to defend and advance the principles and provisions of the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris.

Half a century ago, the original Final Act signatories came together in Helsinki to adopt the guiding principles for advancing peace and stability in this region, leading to the establishment of the OSCE. Today, OSCE participating States face challenges the signers of the Final Act could not have imagined. If we are to meet those challenges effectively, not only today but also over the next fifty years, we must both uphold the OSCE's founding principles and work creatively together to strengthen and equip this organization so it can support timely, flexible responses to changes. We must be ready to tackle today's realities and prepared to meet future security challenges.

We are acutely aware that the Helsinki process's 50th anniversary year has begun with the same sobering reality with which its 49th year ended: Russia, in concert with the repressive Lukashenka regime in Belarus, continues to show contempt for OSCE principles and commitments through an intensifying crackdown at home, aggression against Ukraine, and malign behavior across the region.

Minister Valtonen, we were delighted that your first visit as Chairperson-in-Office was to Kyiv.

Beyond the dangerous and irresponsible actions of Russia and Belarus, there continue to be many threats to the security of this region, from unresolved conflicts and economic and environmental challenges to abuses and violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Moreover, new technologies with ever greater reach can be used for great good or misused for malign purposes in this region and around the world. This carries profound implications for all three dimensions of security and will require our innovative thinking and concerted effort.

Minister Valtonen, the OSCE is an adaptable and relevant organization that has evolved over time to seize emerging opportunities and to confront evolving threats. You are right to focus on resilience as part of this adaptation. We agree that human rights, democracy, and the rule of law lay the foundations for healthy societies and regional peace. We also commend your inclusion of all aspects of the OSCE's work and focus on supporting the role of civil society in our region. We look forward to working with you to advance a practical agenda with the goal of promoting peace throughout the region, and prosperity and security at home for all participating States.

We would also like to take this opportunity to express our deep gratitude to Malta for its principled and successful chairpersonship in 2024 under the exceptional leadership of Ambassador Natasha Meli Daudey and Foreign Minister Ian Borg.

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