



Security Council

Seventy-fifth year

8714th meeting

Thursday, 6 February 2020, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium)

Members:

China	Mr. Yao Shaojun
Dominican Republic	Mr. Singer Weisinger
Estonia	Mr. Jürgenson
France	Mr. De Rivière
Germany	Mr. Heusgen
Indonesia	Mr. Syihab
Niger	Mr. Aougi
Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Ms. DeShong
South Africa	Mr. Van Shalkwyk
Tunisia	Mr. Ladeb
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Ms. Pierce
United States of America	Mr. Barkin
Viet Nam	Mr. Dang

Agenda

Briefing by the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

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20-03029 (E)



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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Briefing by the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Edi Rama, Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and Prime Minister and Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania, to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Rama, and I request the Protocol Officer to escort him to his seat at the Council table.

Mr. Edi Rama, Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and Prime Minister and Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania, was escorted to a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Rama.

Mr. Rama: I am very honoured to address the Council in my capacity as Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). This opportunity for an exchange of views on contemporary security challenges has become a valuable tradition and is an expression of the excellent cooperation between our organizations.

The United Nations and the OSCE are natural partners. As the world's largest regional security organization under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, the OSCE is an important pillar of the international rules-based order. Our work directly supports the implementation of the global United Nations mandate and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Since 1993, a structured framework has guided our cooperation, reinforced by a joint statement issued in December last year. During 2020, it is my resolve as OSCE Chairperson to maximize our practical cooperation. Together, we can address key challenges to international peace and security and promote respect

for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law.

For Albania, assuming the chairmanship of the OSCE is a momentous event, marking a step up in our international leadership. While at the helm of the OSCE, Albania's strategic goal will be to defend multilateralism at a time where we feel that it is under attack. This is the key reason that prompted us to chair the OSCE and that inspires our bid to sit, in the future, in the Security Council.

Let me now describe what we intend to do. The action of the Albanian chairmanship will revolve around three main priorities.

The first is making a difference on the ground. The OSCE has proven time and again that it can deploy in challenging conflict and post-conflict settings. We will promote the work of our Organization where it is closest to our people. Thus, conflict resolution efforts are at the top of our agenda.

The crisis in and around Ukraine remains the most pressing security challenge in Europe, so the unique contribution made by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) to reducing tensions and fostering peace, is essential. Two weeks ago I made my first visit in this new capacity to Ukraine. I met with President Zelenskyy and the entire Ukrainian leadership. I assured my counterparts of our determination and dedication to do our part to advance peace efforts, urging respect for OSCE principles and commitments and the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. We will also support efforts in the Trilateral Contact Group and the Normandy format. The resumption of dialogue in that format and outcomes of the Normandy summit are steps in the right direction. Still, there continue to be civilian casualties and loss of life, and we need primarily to ensure a full and sustainable ceasefire.

What I heard in my meetings in Ukraine was a request for further OSCE monitoring in eastern Ukraine, in the framework of the mandate of the SMM. We will support the SMM in fully implementing its mandate. While travelling to the line of contact, I had an opportunity to observe the practical impact of our flagship operation on the ground. Operating in a challenging and volatile environment, the OSCE SMM offers an essential contribution towards peace. For that to continue happening, however, there is a need to ensure safe and secure access for its staff on

the ground. That requires political will by the sides. I will not stop calling for it. Political will is indeed key to peace, and I could see with my own eyes how the repaired and reopened bridge at Stanytsia Luhanska is relieving the hardship of those living across the line of contact, and how the security and humanitarian aspects of the conflict go hand in hand. Such positive steps need to be replicated and multiplied.

Yet the OSCE's conflict-resolution efforts are broader. During our chairmanship we are also supporting the efforts of the co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group, where talks last week in Geneva saw the exploration of possible next steps to prepare populations for peace, as well as discussion of the principles and elements that could form the basis of a future settlement in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.

Looking to Georgia, together with the United Nations and the European Union, the OSCE is also a co-Chair of the Geneva international discussions, where we keep de-escalation and dialogue at the top of the agenda. While almost 12 years have passed since the conflict, people on the ground are still affected by security and humanitarian challenges, including restrictions on the freedom of movement.

The chairmanship also supports the Transnistrian settlement process and stands by the results-oriented approach to the 5+2 talks to promote progress. Confidence-building measures in the economic, social, education and health fields bring populations on both banks closer together and ease their daily lives. Eventually, they will contribute to a comprehensive settlement based on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova within its internationally recognized borders, with a special status for Transnistria.

Across the OSCE region, our organization also plays a key role in early warning and along all phases of the conflict cycle, in particular thanks to the network of field operations. Their action is crucial to preventing a re-emergence of conflicts and to strengthening institutions.

Women continue to be disproportionately affected by conflicts in the OSCE area and, of course, across the world. They are also unjustly excluded from peace efforts. Inspired by the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), Albania will inject new momentum into promoting the role of women in peace processes. I know at first-hand, in my own

Government, how effective the contribution of women leaders is. I hope that this dossier will be one of enhanced cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE.

Other opportunities for reinforced mutual efforts will include countering violent extremism and terrorism, building on the excellent cooperation with the United Nations Office of Counter Terrorism, and addressing transnational organized crime, in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Albania's second priority is implementing our commitments. The instruments and institutions of the OSCE are essential safeguards for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Their impact reaches beyond our region and benefits the broader international community. Promoting the freedom of expression and the freedom of the media, safeguarding the rights of national minorities and combating violence against women are our immediate, urgent priorities.

Advancing good governance is another challenge of our time. Corruption erodes the very foundations of our society and is a major threat to stability and prosperity. Therefore, Albania will promote the OSCE's efforts in combating this phenomenon and host a high-level conference on anti-corruption in Tirana.

Combating trafficking in human beings is another area where the OSCE is becoming a global player. As co-Chairs of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, we will maximize our action in partnership with the United Nations, marking 20 years since the adoption of the Palermo Protocols.

Since its creation, the OSCE has developed remarkable expertise on arms control. In 2020 we intend to prioritize countering the spread of small arms and light weapons and destroying surplus stockpiles of ammunition.

Our organization also excels in responding to emerging challenges, such as cybersecurity. In that connection, we have developed an important new set of confidence-building measures to reduce the risks of conflicts resulting from the use of information technology.

Our third priority is dialogue, which some might say is the OSCE's ultimate purpose. The divisions in our region show how badly we need it. This year is the thirtieth anniversary of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe. To promote its legacy, I will make it my personal

commitment to advance dialogue among OSCE States and among and within our societies — about 57 countries and more than 1 billion people, from Vancouver to Vladivostok. Key issues such as risk reduction, incident prevention and environmental protection will feature in debates among OSCE States, international organizations and civil society. We will promote the full implementation of OSCE confidence- and security-building measures to ensure military transparency and rebuild trust.

Yet we see a major obstacle to dialogue in the rise of intolerance, hate crimes and hate speech. To reverse that negative trend and work towards full respect for human dignity and human rights, we will redouble efforts to promote tolerance and non-discrimination.

Just before departing for New York, I opened the Tirana Conference on Combating Anti-Semitism. Together we remembered the seventy-fifth anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps. We also proudly shared Albania's experience of providing sanctuary to Jewish people, as we were a rare example of a European country that had more Jewish people after the war than before it. Albania is really proud of its history of interreligious and cultural tolerance, which we see as essential to world peace and security. In our work as honest brokers and as Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE, we will be inspired by our tradition of tolerance, openness and respect.

To face today's broad range of complex challenges, global action must draw on, and coordinate the work of, regional organizations. The OSCE is an effective partner of the United Nations and a venue for promoting the idea that great Power competition must give way to great Power cooperation. I believe that the basic principles of the Helsinki Final Act — respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and defence of human rights — are still today, as they were back then, a simple and effective recipe for security, prosperity and a future of peace. Our task for the year ahead will be to safeguard those principles. Together, now more than ever, the United Nations and the OSCE can be decisive for peace.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Rama for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Heusgen (Germany): It is an honour to have here the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). I think it is very rare that the Security Council meets a person who is at the same time a basketball player, an artist, a Prime Minister and the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office. I welcome him to the Council.

I followed very carefully what he said about the OSCE. He concluded by underlining the principles of the OSCE, which remain as valid today as when the organization was founded. Germany is a founding member of the OSCE and has been very supportive of what it believes to be a key organization. We also subscribe to what the Chairperson-in-Office said about the OSCE and the United Nations being natural partners. Germany therefore very much promotes the partnership between the two organizations, which, after all, share fundamental principles and — as the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office stated — defend multilateralism, which is under threat. Germany engages financially and provides personnel to the OSCE, which we chaired in 2016.

Germany also fully supports the programmes and thematic issues highlighted by the Chairperson-in-Office, including defending fundamental human rights, preventing violence against women, promoting good governance, as well combating anti-Semitism, organized crime, counter-terrorism and the spread of small arms. I would highlight all of those points and, in particular, one issue that is very close to our heart — that is, both the role of women in promoting the participation of women in Government and peace talks and protecting them, especially from sexual violence.

I would like to focus on the first part of the presentation of the Chairperson-in-Office. The work of the OSCE is making a difference on the ground. We very much appreciate the fact that he focused on the protracted crises in the territory of the OSCE. He mentioned the Caucasus and reminded us of Moldova and Transnistria, where Russian troops remain, in violation of the 1999 Istanbul OSCE summit commitments. We can only promote and support the OSCE's efforts.

Over the past six years, the OSCE has invested more in Ukraine than in any other country. Germany truly appreciates the fact that the Chairperson-in-Office's first visit, very early on, was to Ukraine, where he visited Stanytsia Luhanska, whose bridge has on many occasions been the subject of discussions here. I recall

our appeals to both sides to reconstruct the bridge to alleviate the plight of the people. It is wonderful that this is happening, and I thank the Chairperson-in-Office for the message he sent by going there.

Germany remains committed to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. It is now six years since Russia invaded and annexed parts of Ukraine, the Crimea, and it still occupies part of Ukraine, in flagrant breach of international law. Together with France, Germany continues in the Normandy Format to ensure that the situation improves, and some progress was made at the Normandy Four summit on 9 December in Paris. We appeal to all sides to continue to implement the results of the summit. In that connection, I would like to congratulate President Zelenskyy on what he has done since assuming office with regard to the bridge and the implementation of the Steinmeier formula, as well as other gestures he has made. I also appeal to Russia to adhere to the Minsk agreements.

As the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office mentioned earlier, the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) is the OSCE's flagship operation. I would like to take this opportunity to once again congratulate the observers, who are working under difficult circumstances. They are continuously harassed and intimidated and their work is obstructed. We condemn the continued threats and restrictions of movement against the SMM. Those actions occur predominantly in the areas not controlled by the Government, that is, the areas invaded by Russia. We call on both sides to ensure unhindered access for the SMM, which continues to deserve our full support in carrying out its important mandate.

I recall the briefing (see S/PV.8516) in April 2019 by the outgoing Chief Monitor of the OSCE SMM, Ambassador Apakan, who also confirmed the difficult circumstances under which they are operating and the fact that they were harassed primarily in the occupied territories. In that context, I deplore the difficult situation that OSCE finds itself in and note that SMM instruments were also attacked. An SMM unmanned aerial vehicle — a drone — was observing Russian convoys crossing the border and was shot down.

Mr. Dang (Viet Nam): First, I would like to thank the Belgian presidency for holding this very important meeting. I extend my warmest welcome to His Excellency Mr. Edi Rama, Prime Minister and Minister

for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania, and thank him for his very insightful briefing.

We are pleased to note that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has played an important role in addressing a wide range of security-related concerns, which has helped improve security and humanitarian situations and has facilitated dialogue to reach solutions in various parts of Europe.

We welcome and encourage the continued cooperation between the Security Council and regional arrangements, in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. Last week a representative of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations briefed the Council (see S/PV.8711); today it is the OSCE, and later this month there will be a briefing on the European Union. This is a very timely series of briefings from regional organizations. We once again thank the Belgian presidency for a very well-designed programme this month. I would like to make three points on today's subject.

First of all, regional organizations are in a very good position to help maintain international peace and security with ways and means and solutions suitable to the context in the region under consideration. They can play a crucial role in conflict prevention, good offices, mediation, conciliation and other peaceful means of dispute settlement. During the open debate last week (see S/PV.8711) we all heard strong commitments from Member States to that effect.

Secondly, with regard to promoting cooperation between the Security Council and the OSCE, we strongly support the women and peace and security agenda as the top priority. This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. Even though extraordinary work has been done in transforming the perception of the role of women in peace processes, women are still underrepresented and remain vulnerable during and after conflicts. Women can play important and effective roles in other OSCE priority areas, such as combating the spread of hate speech, discrimination and human trafficking. Best practices and lessons learned on the role of women in all stages of peace processes, especially post-conflict peacebuilding, should be widely shared among regions, States and partners. Monitoring and measuring the progress of the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda can benefit

from a comprehensive set of indicators, which can be universal as well as regional.

Last but not least, we support the positive role of the OSCE in monitoring the implementation of the Minsk agreements, thereby contributing to the implementation of resolution 2202 (2015). We call on all parties to make every effort to that end, with a view to finding a peaceful solution for the peace, stability and development of the region. We would like to reiterate that all disputes must be settled by peaceful means, in accordance with international law and the United Nations Charter.

Ms. DeShong (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): Saint Vincent and the Grenadines thanks His Excellency Prime Minister Edi Rama for his briefing. We congratulate him on assuming the chairmanship of the dynamic and proactive Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and we wish him a very successful tenure.

The work of the OSCE is undoubtedly commendable. As the world's largest regional security arrangement, it serves as a platform for preventive diplomacy and multilateral cooperation across the peace, security and development nexus. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines welcomes that multidimensional approach to preventing conflict and ensuring lasting peace. Indeed, existing threats to international peace and security require comprehensive political strategies that address the root causes of conflict. The OSCE's mandate exemplifies the very nexus approach that is so crucial for mitigating existing and emerging transnational risks.

As a small island developing State on the front lines of the fight against climate change, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines considers it its solemn duty to raise the issue of climate-driven insecurity. Complex challenges such as climate change, with its attendant hazards, require multifaceted solutions. We welcome the multi-agency Environment and Security Initiative, within which the OSCE and other partners work to promote transboundary cooperation for environmental management and climate change adaptation.

Women's involvement is critical to political, peace and security processes. Their full and equal participation in all forms of political life is instrumental to well-functioning societies. In observance of the 20-year milestone since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), our delegation welcomes the efforts to further implement the women, peace and security agenda in the OSCE region under Albania's stewardship.

On the crisis in the Ukraine, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reiterates that principles should guide all efforts towards a lasting settlement of the dispute. We welcome the recent efforts made with regard to confidence-building measures, including prisoner exchanges and new areas of disengagement. We emphasize that only through constructive dialogue and the consistent adherence to the principles of international law can a lasting solution to this crisis be crafted and implemented. We hope that in 2020 all parties can work towards the full implementation of the Minsk agreements under the auspices of the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group.

Regarding other border conflicts, including the situations in Nagorno Karabakh and Transnistria, we reiterate that the guiding principles of the Charter of the United Nations with regard to territorial integrity and self-determination for displaced populations remain sacrosanct. We welcome the OSCE's mediation efforts for the comprehensive settlement of those disputes.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is a small island developing State, as I said earlier, with an open economy and no standing army to insulate us against many of today's complex security challenges. We owe our continued peaceful existence to the rules-based multilateral system, where all regional and subregional organizations and their member States work together to advance our common interests of peace and prosperity for all. We recognize that the OSCE, as a key partner to the United Nations, has an important place in our global governance architecture. We extend our fullest support to the OSCE as it continues to promote peace, security and development.

Mr. Ladeb (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank Belgium for organizing this important briefing. My country's delegation welcomes Mr. Edi Rama, Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania, and thanks him for his valuable briefing on the programmes planned in the context of the Albanian chairmanship of the OSCE. I would also take this opportunity to once again congratulate the Republic of Albania on assuming the chairmanship of the OSCE for the year 2020, and I wish it every success in its efforts to promote international peace and security.

Pursuant to Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, the OSCE is the largest regional

security organization. Its Mediterranean, European and Asian dimensions have made it a distinguished partner of the United Nations as it continues to play an active role in strengthening regional and international peace and security.

In view of the OSCE priorities for 2020 that Mr. Rama highlighted today, which are in line with the priorities of the United Nations, particularly those of the Security Council, my delegation supports such priorities and stresses the importance of a stronger coordination and partnership between the OSCE and the United Nations, since they have common values and goals, with a view to strengthening preventive diplomacy mechanisms in line with respecting the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States.

Based on Tunisia's firm belief in the importance of multilateral efforts as the best mechanism to achieve the peaceful settlement of conflicts and conflict prevention, my delegation believes that this noble mission cannot be achieved without strengthening the capacity of regional and subregional organizations, given their knowledge of ongoing situations and the particularities of the regions, as well as their ability to establish direct communication channels between parties to a conflict.

In that context and in view of the important role played by the OSCE in resolving the crisis in eastern Ukraine, my delegation stresses its support for the tireless efforts of the OSCE to reach a comprehensive and balanced solution based on the Minsk agreements of 2015, particularly in line with the framework of the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group. In that regard, Tunisia welcomes the Normandy format summit held in Paris in December 2019 and the agreements reached on a number of confidence-building measures. My delegation also expresses its hope that efforts will be stepped up and a new dialogue opened in order to achieve comprehensive solutions to some of the protracted conflicts in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

Given the connections between the political, security, economic and humanitarian aspects of realizing the concept of comprehensive security and because Tunisia belongs to the Mediterranean region, my delegation stresses the need to confront joint security challenges, whether traditional or emerging, in the Mediterranean, especially in the areas of combating terrorism and violent extremism and achieving environmental security and cybersecurity. We call for

promoting strategic cooperation between the OSCE and various partners to ensure security and stability in the region.

In order to ensure effective multilateral action towards achieving peace and security and preventing conflicts and given the challenges facing the African continent and the effect on peace and security in Europe and the Mediterranean, my delegation hopes to further cooperation between the OSCE and regional organizations on the African continent.

We also support the efforts of the OSCE to promote good governance, a culture of tolerance and non-discrimination as part of the international approach to enhancing human rights and fundamental freedoms. In that context, my delegation welcomes the OSCE's focus on strengthening the role of young people and women as part of building international peace and security.

In conclusion, I reiterate the importance of the collective efforts made by the OSCE and the United Nations, especially in the context of partnership with the Security Council, to achieve international peace and security and to achieve prosperity for humankind.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I warmly thank Mr. Rama for his briefing. Albania can count on the full support of France in implementing the ambitious work programme that it has set out for its chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). There are three matters that merit our particular attention.

Almost six years after the hostilities began, finding a solution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine must remain a top priority. The conflict constitutes one of the gravest and bloodiest violations of the Helsinki principles, upon which the OSCE was founded. I commend the decisive role that the OSCE has played ever since the crisis broke out and, in that regard, I welcome the fact that Mr. Edi Rama, Prime Minister of Albania, made his first official visit to Ukraine as Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE.

The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine continues to observe, on a daily basis, developments in the security situation in all regions of Ukraine and throughout the conflict zone. It also supports the parties in the implementation of the Minsk agreements. In that regard, we welcome the efforts made by the Special Monitoring Mission to observe disengagement

in the three pilot areas of Stanytsia Luhanska, Petrivske and Zolote. We commend the bravery demonstrated by the men and women engaged in the field and resolutely condemn any actions aimed at jeopardizing their security or hindering their mission. The mandate of the Special Monitoring Mission must be fully implemented throughout the entire territory of Ukraine, including near the Russian-Ukrainian border.

The OSCE also plays an essential role in facilitating dialogue between the parties within the framework of the Trilateral Contact Group. That process is advancing in conjunction with political discussions in the Normandy Format, which are now benefiting from an increased momentum since the 9 December summit in Paris — the first held at the Heads of State level since 2016, which France and Germany worked actively to convene. We now await new operational progress within the framework of the Trilateral Contact Group so that the next Normandy Format summit can be organized in spring.

We cannot mention the Russia-Ukraine crisis without returning to Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea. That violation of Ukraine's internationally recognized borders must continue to be vehemently condemned. In that connection, we deplore the increasing militarization of the peninsula, as well as the human rights violations against persons belonging to minorities, in particular Crimean Tatars.

Secondly, with regard to our line of action, France welcomes the OSCE's contribution to the resolution of the protracted conflicts that continue to threaten peace and stability in Europe and weigh heavily on the daily lives of civilian populations.

The recent visit by the OSCE Special Representative for the Transnistrian Settlement Process to Moldova should be welcomed. France hopes that it will help to give new impetus to the negotiations.

On Nagorno Karabakh, France is continuing its mediation efforts as co-Chair of the Minsk Group, alongside the United States and Russia. The recent meeting of the two Foreign Ministers is encouraging and attests to the desire for dialogue between the two parties.

Turning to Abkhazia and South Ossetia, France reiterates the need for the international discussions in Geneva to produce tangible results, as well as its

commitment to the territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders.

In the case of all of those conflicts, it must be underscored that the political will of the parties is critical in order to reach a long-term settlement and strengthen security on the European continent.

Thirdly, and finally, our common objective must be to strengthen the efficiency of the OSCE. France welcomes Albania's decision to make gender equality and the women and peace and security agenda a key part of its chairmanship. We also wish to reiterate our commitment to the multidimensional approach to security that prevails within the OSCE and to the human dimension commitments. With regard to the human dimension, allow me to acknowledge the work done by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and by Mr. Harlem Désir as OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media. We must also commend Albania for making space on its agenda for the question of environmental issues and their impact on security.

Forty-five years after the conclusion of the Helsinki Final Act and 30 years after the signing of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe, the OSCE remains the model of an effective grassroots form of multilateralism that emerged on the basis of common values at a time where political antagonisms were particularly striking. The implementation and strengthening of the OSCE's achievements are among the priorities we share with the Albanian chairmanship, including close cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations like the OSCE. Such cooperation, under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, will enable us to invent a renewed and revitalized multilateralism that is capable of responding to the major challenges of our time.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I thank you, Mr. President, for scheduling this important debate today. I also wish to thank Mr. Edi Rama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania, for taking the time to come here, as I think it is very important for the Security Council to hear from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). We congratulate him on assuming the role of Chairperson-in-Office and wish to assure him of the United Kingdom's support.

The OSCE is a key pillar of the rules-based international system, just like the United Nations itself. It is a crucial institution for European and Euro-Atlantic

security. As Prime Minister Rama highlighted, it is important that, in discharging that responsibility, the OSCE be able to make a real difference on the ground.

As other speakers have noted, the people of Ukraine feel that need particularly acutely. We welcome Mr. Rama's recent visit to Ukraine, where he had an opportunity to witness at first-hand the reality for people living near the line of contact. We believe that he is correct to prioritize the OSCE's response to the conflict in eastern Ukraine. The United Kingdom supports the push for full, safe and unimpeded access for the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, as well as adequate resources to ensure that it is able to fulfil its mandate.

As other speakers have mentioned, we, too, are deeply concerned by the deterioration of human rights in Crimea since the illegal annexation, including arrests, ill-treatment, torture and intimidation against political opponents and minorities and the denial of basic human rights and religious freedoms to those who do not accept the forced imposition of Russian legislation and citizenship on the peninsula. Therefore, the United Kingdom urgently calls on Russia to immediately release the 89 or more political prisoners currently detained in Russia and in Crimea. We welcome President Zelenskyy's commitment to finding a diplomatic solution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine. Ukraine's recent delivery of confidence-building measures led to the December Normandy Format summit in Paris and a further prisoner exchange. We look to Russia to abide by the Minsk agreements commitments it signed up to and to use its influence to ensure the separatists do the same. We also call on Russia to play its part to enable further disengagement and full access by the International Committee of the Red Cross to non-Government-controlled areas.

Russia needs to fully respect Ukraine's independence and territorial integrity, withdraw its forces from all of Ukraine and end its illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol. Crimea and Donbas are part of Ukraine — what Russia has done and continues to do there breaches its obligations under international law and presents a serious challenge to the international rules-based order.

We welcome the OSCE chairmanship's prioritization of conflict resolution, including the work of the Special Monitoring Mission and the Trilateral Contact Group on Ukraine, as well as the resolution of

the other protracted conflicts in the OSCE area. Like others, we attach great importance to the work of OSCE field presences across the region. The United Kingdom has the honour to support Prime Minister Rama's chairmanship by chairing Security Committee of the OSCE. We are very grateful for his determination to tackle organized crime and underline the importance of ensuring that action is taken in compliance with international human rights standards.

The OSCE's cooperation with the United Nations on countering terrorism and violent extremism is particularly strong. We welcome the OSCE's partnership with the Security Council's counter-terrorism bodies and look forward to the OSCE joint forthcoming conference with the Office of Counter-Terrorism in Switzerland on foreign terrorist fighters.

The unique value of the OSCE lies in the consensus approach to principles and verifiable commitments allowing for mutual benefits and the prevention of miscalculation or escalation. In particular, the United Kingdom would like to see the preservation and enhanced delivery of existing confidence- and security-building mechanisms in 2020, including the Open Skies Treaty and the Vienna Document.

We commend the focus of Prime Minister Rama on the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) and the promotion of the role of women in peace and security. Preventing sexual violence in conflict also remains a top priority for my Government. We are very proud to give Prime Minister Rama our full support for his chairmanship of the OSCE.

Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia): First, I thank the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Prime Minister Edi Rama, for his comprehensive briefing on the priorities of the Albanian chairmanship and for his clear focus on the need to comply with the OSCE's norms, principles and responsibilities. That is the basis for security and stability in the entire OSCE area, as well as for conflict resolution. To achieve that, global and regional organizations need to work hand in hand. We need strong cooperation between the OSCE and the United Nations.

Estonia stands strongly for the free and independent work of all OSCE mechanisms and institutions and recognizes that more political support is needed for that. The Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) remains the most reliable source of

information on the situation on the ground in Ukraine. It is therefore regrettable that the restrictions posed on the SMM's freedom of movement have persisted in non-Government-controlled areas in eastern Ukraine, thereby hindering the Mission from fully implementing its mandate. More so, attempts to threaten, intimidate and harass SMM personnel, as well as those targeting and damaging SMM assets, including unmanned aerial vehicles, are deplorable. They are grave violations of international law and of OSCE obligations.

We condemn the illegal annexation of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and the military aggression in eastern Ukraine. International human rights monitoring missions and human rights non-governmental organizations must have access to Crimea, in line with relevant United Nations resolutions.

We are deeply concerned about the fact that the security situation in Donbas has become more volatile. A 400-kilometre uncontrolled section of the Ukrainian-Russian State border remains free to flows of weaponry and personnel, which makes the conflict even more tense and fragile. We call on Russia, as a party to the conflict, to fully implement the commitments of the Minsk agreements, including those undertaken at the Normandy Four Summit in Paris on 9 December 2019. That includes the establishment of a full and comprehensive ceasefire for a situation that has recently worsened and has led to more civilian casualties. More than 13,000 people have been killed. More than 3,000 of them are civilians and in excess of 30,000 have been wounded since the beginning of the conflict. Military and financial support for the armed formations responsible for that has to stop. The de-occupation and effective return of Ukraine's territories are part and parcel of the most efficient way to restore regional security. I would like to ask Prime Minister Rama the following question. How, in practice, might the OSCE and the Security Council assist in pushing for the steps needed to resolve the conflict?

Estonia also reiterates its deep concern about the Russian military build-up in Georgia's occupied regions, which is in violation of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We call on Russia to fulfil the ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008 and its subsequent implementing measures of 8 September 2008 and withdraw its military forces from Georgia's Abkhazia and Tskhinvali/South Ossetia regions without delay.

In addition, we are deeply worried about Russian military exercises, infrastructure reinforcements and borderization activities in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The restrictions imposed on the freedom of movement on conflict-affected populations is an example of such actions. They further divide Georgian communities and create hardship, frustration and fear among local populations. We urge Russia to cease such destabilizing actions in Georgia.

The European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) remains the only international presence on the ground, and we deplore any action to prevent its work. Furthermore, we recall that the EUMM's mandate covers the whole territory of Georgia, including its regions of Abkhazia and South-Ossetia.

We strongly support the OSCE Chairperson's efforts on conflict resolution and underline the urgent need for a meaningful cross-dimensional OSCE presence throughout Georgia's full territory, which would considerably help the OSCE in the Geneva international discussions, the incident prevention and response mechanisms and the implementation of confidence-building measures. We regret that the Geneva international discussions, on its core topics of security and stability and humanitarian issues, remain challenging. We stress that more political will is needed to enhance those substantial discussions in order to achieve tangible results.

Estonia supports the efforts of the OSCE Chairperson, his Special Representative and the Mission to resolve the Transnistrian conflict in Moldova. A peaceful, comprehensive and lasting settlement must be reached, while ensuring the stability, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova, within its internationally recognized borders. We call on the Mission to continue to monitor the situation in the security zone and to report regularly on the incidents taking place there.

Finally, we support the OSCE Minsk Group's work in spearheading the efforts towards resolving the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. We call on all parties to fully cooperate with the Minsk Group mediators and to refrain from destabilizing activities and rhetoric.

Mr. Aougi (Niger) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Prime Minister of Albania and Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, His Excellency Mr. Edi Rama, for

his briefing. The OSCE cooperation model, which is an expression of the shared vision of its members to be responsible for their own collective security, must be commended.

Today's briefing enabled us to understand the main focus of Albania's work at the helm of the organization — that of combating corruption, trafficking in persons and the spread of hate speech, and resolving the conflict in eastern Ukraine and other conflicts in the organization's area of operations. The spread of hate speech, which fosters the violent extremism that leads to terrorism, is a strategic challenge that must be met with further action by the international community. Such action should be demonstrated by concerted efforts in the areas of sustainable development, institution-building, the rule of law and good governance.

The Niger welcomes the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the OSCE and the Office of Counter-Terrorism and the excellent cooperation between them. We encourage the two organizations to intensify their cooperation efforts in areas related to the women and peace and security agenda and urge them to identify opportunities for cooperation in the implementation of resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018), on youth and peace and security.

With regard to the crucial role of regional and subregional organizations in the management and prevention of conflicts, and in line with the principle of subsidiarity, the Niger welcomes the outcome of the meeting of 9 December 2019 on Ukraine, in the Normandy Format, among France, Germany, Russia and Ukraine. It paved the way for the adoption of various confidence-building measures, including the exchange of prisoners, the establishment of new disengagement zones and the opening of new crossing points along the line of contact. We therefore encourage the Albanian chairmanship to work towards restoring peace and stability in Ukraine by bringing together the parties involved to overcome their differences in order to implement the Minsk agreements, in accordance with resolution 2202 (2015), of 17 February 2015.

The fight against terrorism, threats to peace and security, climate change and the management of migration flows are areas of further enhanced cooperation between OSCE and other regional and subregional organizations, particularly those from Africa. Indeed, it is well known that security dynamics

in sub-Saharan Africa impact peace and security in Europe. That is why the Niger calls for the expansion and strengthening of cooperation between the OSCE and those organizations. Such an approach could be considered together with the Group of Five for the Sahel, with a view to seeking solutions, in a spirit of solidarity and concerted action, to the current challenges facing the Sahel region in terms of peace, security and the fight against poverty.

Mr. Barkin (United States of America): It is an honour to have Prime Minister Rama with us today in the Chamber, and we thank him for his briefing. Human rights, democracy, peace and the maintenance of regional stability are vitally important to all of us, but they cannot be preserved without deliberate effort. That makes the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) a crucial partner in promoting those values, as it also complements the Security Council's efforts to address global security concerns.

We face a range of challenges today that threaten democratic institutions. Cyberwarfare and disinformation campaigns, including meddling in the elections of other States, tear at the fabric of free and open societies. Authoritarian States and leaders who disregard the human rights and dignity of their own people, including the freedoms of expression, association, religion and belief and peaceful assembly, also disregard the sovereignty and territorial integrity of neighbouring States. We appreciate the OSCE commitment to combat those attacks on freedom and related challenges during the Prime Minister's chairmanship.

As a member and the largest provider of financial support and personnel to the OSCE, the United States is advancing all dimensions of the OSCE's work. We encourage progress towards a comprehensive update of the Vienna Document to enhance military transparency and rebuild confidence among the 57 OSCE participating States. We also welcome greater OSCE focus on corruption and accountable governance. Some OSCE States have not kept their commitments, or have selectively implemented arms control arrangements. To address those failures, creative and courageous leadership is needed for structured dialogue and security issues.

Nowhere is the OSCE's presence more important than in Ukraine. Russia's ongoing aggression has led to the deaths of more than 13,000 people, displaced

1.4 million people and left 3.4 million in need of humanitarian assistance. That poses the greatest threat to European security since the Cold War. We are encouraged by recent progress, including the recent detainee exchanges between Ukraine and Russia and work to improve humanitarian conditions. That progress has been achieved thanks to President Zelenskyy's extraordinary commitment to achieving a peaceful resolution.

However, we need to see much more from Russia, which still ignores calls for a comprehensive ceasefire. Russia instigated that conflict and continues to arm, train, lead, fund and fight alongside its proxies in eastern Ukraine. It must immediately follow through on its Minsk commitments, withdraw its forces, support further disengagement, expand crossing points and respect Ukraine's sovereignty, both in eastern Ukraine and Crimea. Under such difficult circumstances, we are proud of the work that the OSCE has done in Ukraine, including the Special Monitoring Mission's essential assessments of the situation on the ground. We call on Russia and its proxies to stop interfering with the work of the Mission's monitors and assets and give them full access and freedom to fulfil the OSCE's mandate.

The United States fully supports Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, including its territorial waters. We do not, or will we ever, recognize Russia's purported annexation of Crimea. We join our European and other partners in affirming that our Ukraine-related sanctions against Russia will remain in place until Russia fully implements its Minsk commitments. Our Crimea-focused sanctions will also remain in place until Russia returns full control of the peninsula to Ukraine.

The United States also opposes Russia's continued occupation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which are part of Georgia. Russia's actions contravene its international commitments and violate Georgia's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. Although Russia participates in the OSCE's 5+2 Transnistrian settlement negotiations, it has failed to honour its 1999 Istanbul OSCE summit commitments to withdraw its forces from Moldova. Instead, Russia has used protracted conflicts to obstruct the development of a rules-based order and slow the region's gravitation towards European and transatlantic institutions.

We look forward to working with the OSCE to resolve those conflicts, including the Geneva international discussions and the 5+2 talks. We thank the OSCE Chairperson and participating States for their support of the Minsk Group process, in which the United States, Russia and France are working productively as co-Chairs to help the sides find a peaceful negotiated settlement to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.

As I noted at the beginning of my remarks, the preservation of human rights, democracy, the rule of law, peace and stability requires deliberate effort. The United States is committed to that effort, and we will continue to work closely with both the United Nations and the OSCE to strengthen the principles that undergird free nations, both within the OSCE region and around the globe.

Mr. Yao Shaojun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China listened attentively to the briefing delivered by His Excellency Mr. Edi Rama, Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Prime Minister and Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania.

At present, the international situation is undergoing more rapid and profound changes, with increasing factors causing instability and uncertainty. Unilateralism and protectionism are on the rise, which jeopardize international order and the rule of law. As Mr. Rama mentioned, multilateralism is under attack. No country is immune to the risks and challenges involved.

While the United Nations is at the centre of the international collective security mechanism, regional and subregional organizations have unique advantages in resolving regional hotspot issues. China supports the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in advancing their cooperation, in line with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, with a view to jointly maintaining international peace and security, firmly upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter, vigorously advancing dialogue and consultation to resolve regional hotspot issues and actively conducting preventive diplomacy to diffuse disputes and conflicts peacefully.

The regional and subregional organizations should safeguard multilateralism. Their actions should comply with international law and basic norms governing international relations, in particular respect for national sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

Mr. Syihab (Indonesia): Let me begin by thanking Belgium for convening this very important meeting. I would also like to welcome His Excellency Mr. Edi Rama, Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Prime Minister and Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania, to the Security Council and thank him for his comprehensive and very insightful briefing.

Indonesia welcomes the positive role of regional and subregional organizations, including the OSCE, in dealing with issues of peace and security in their respective regions. Indonesia also welcomes the three key objectives of the Albanian 2020 OSCE Chairmanship: making a difference on the ground, implementing OSCE commitments and building stability through dialogue.

In that regard, allow me to highlight three points.

First, with regard to adherence and respect for international law and norms of international relations, Indonesia views that the activities of regional and subregional organizations must be in line with international law and respect the principles of non-interference, national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Everyone must also abide by the principle of the non-use of force in the resolution of conflicts, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Secondly, dialogue is key to sustaining peace. Preventive diplomacy, with inclusive dialogue, must be prioritized with the full backing of all relevant actors. Every effort must be made to build confidence and resolve conflicts peacefully. We sincerely believe in the value of dialogue and the need to settle disputes amicably. Political will may not always be present among the parties at beginning, but, with sustained dialogue, mutual respect and credible peacemaking, it can be nurtured.

My third point concerns the promotion of regional arrangements. Over the span of two weeks, we have had two Council briefings related to the role of regional organizations. Indeed, the importance of regional arrangements is stipulated in Chapter VIII of the Charter. Political processes to find amicable and durable solutions to conflicts and tensions should be conducted on an ongoing basis both within and among regions.

Presidential statements on the role of regional and subregional organizations, including presidential

statement S/PRST/2007/42, which was introduced and adopted during Indonesia's presidency in November 2007, have recognized that regional and subregional organizations are well positioned to understand the root causes of many conflicts and other security challenges close to home and to influence their prevention or resolution.

We appreciate the commitment of the OSCE to adhering to the spirit of Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter to support the United Nations global mandate at the regional level. The OSCE has great potential to help reduce tensions, rebuild trust and foster cooperation on shared security concerns.

In South-East Asia, where Indonesia and Viet Nam are located, we have the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). One of ASEAN's main purposes is to promote peace and stability through abiding respect for justice and the rule of law in relations among countries of the region and beyond. The dividends are concrete. Since ASEAN's inception in 1967, no major conflicts have occurred in Southeast Asia. With a total population of more than 650 million people, South-East Asia has some of the fastest-growing economies and is the engine of global growth.

Let me conclude by wishing Mr. Rama every success, during his term as Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE, in implementing the three key objectives highlighted in his briefing.

Mr. Van Shalkwyk (South Africa): South Africa would like to thank Prime Minister Rama for his briefing in his capacity as Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). We wish to commend the good work that he continues to do in his region to support the maintenance of international peace and security.

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in the area of peace and security remains a priority for my delegation, and we welcome all efforts made to strengthen the relationship between the OSCE and the United Nations.

This year marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations — the Organization that we value as the embodiment of multilateralism and cooperation, particularly in upholding human rights and maintaining international peace and security, as well as promoting economic development. The three pillars of the United Nations are all bolstered through engagements with

regional organizations that have insight into the local contexts in which they operate. South Africa's support for that relationship is rooted in our belief that multilateralism is strengthened through enhanced cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations.

Article 54 of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, under which the OSCE is briefing the Council today, envisages strong cooperation between the Security Council and regional organizations in the maintenance of international peace and security. Every regional organization faces a unique set of peace and security challenges that are determined by the regions in which they operate and the manner in which such threats are addressed.

Therefore, increased cooperation with the Security Council remains critical. My delegation does not believe that the efforts of regional organizations in maintaining international peace and security absolve the Council of its Charter-mandated responsibilities as the custodian of international peace and security. Their efforts complement each other, and it is for that reason that cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations remains so important.

New and emerging security threats continue to undermine the ways in which we prevent and address challenges, which may be faced by more than one region. In that regard, it may be useful for regional bodies to also cooperate and share experiences, as well as best practices. Deeper cooperation between the African Union — and more specifically its Peace and Security Council — and the OSCE, for example, could contribute to achieving regional and cross-regional peace and security objectives and addressing challenges.

Turning to one of the key areas of the OSCE's work, South Africa welcomes the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the four Normandy format countries — Ukraine, Germany, France and Russia — held in Paris in December 2019. My delegation also wishes to commend the OSCE on its efforts in Ukraine, as it diligently executes its mandate in monitoring the implementation of the 2015 Minsk agreements endorsed by resolution 2202 (2015) on resolving the conflict in eastern Ukraine. In that regard, it remains necessary for all parties to implement their respective commitments under the Minsk agreements.

It is important for the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine to have unhindered access to monitor

and verify compliance with the Minsk agreements in terms of its mandate. In that regard, we also encourage all the parties to strengthen all diplomatic efforts to produce a sustainable and peaceful solution.

Let me conclude by joining other Council members in commending Mr. Rama's efforts to prioritize the women and peace and security agenda, as that is also a priority for South Africa, and the full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions.

Mr. Singer Weisinger (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, we are grateful for the presence of Mr. Edi Rama, Prime Minister and Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania and Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), among us today. We are confident that his experience and leadership will contribute significantly to achieving the Organization's goals. We take this opportunity to congratulate Foreign Minister Lajčák and the Slovak chairmanship on the successes achieved during his term.

We recognize that the OSCE's priorities are consistent with the work being done in the United Nations and the Security Council, namely, inter alia, ensuring the continuity of political commitments, preventing escalation, improving security and strengthening dialogue. We note that its vision and challenges are also in line with multilateralism, regional security and hopes for achieving peace through political dialogue.

We commend the Normandy format meeting held in Paris on 9 December 2019 with the support of the Trilateral Contact Group. The meeting resulted in the exchange of 200 prisoners between Russia and Ukraine on 29 December 2019 under the supervision and facilitation of the OSCE. That sends a positive message that we are moving in a new direction, and we hope that other confidence-building measures opening up new avenues, including the holding of another Normandy format summit in the near future, will become a reality.

Mr. Rama's recent visit to Ukraine has given an important impulse to the efforts of the Special Monitoring Mission in that country. We hope that resolving that conflict will remain a priority objective for the Mission, in line with the Council's concern and willingness to contribute to a peaceful settlement of the conflict through the effective implementation of the Minsk agreements.

The Dominican Republic welcomes the fact that combating violence against women, which is a matter of great importance to the United Nations, is among the urgent issues on the OSCE agenda. In addition, we note with interest the willingness to promote dialogue with a view to reversing the increase in hate crimes and hate speech and fostering tolerance and non-discrimination, as well as exchanges on environmental protection. The OSCE is an important regional hub for such issues, covering more than a billion people, and aligns with the highest interests of the United Nations.

In conclusion, we reiterate our support for the OSCE and the efforts of the co-Chairs of the Minsk Group with regard to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict and the Transnistrian settlement process. We wish the Albanian chairpersonship every success with its agenda for the new session and call for its comprehensive work plan to be taken up with energy and determination, with the support of the Council, in the interest of strengthening multilateralism and its contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Prime Minister and Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania, Mr. Edi Rama, for his briefing on the work of the Organization and the issues on its agenda.

The Russian Federation has consistently advocated strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE on the basis of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations and the 2006 declaration of the OSCE Permanent Council. We believe that this regional organization should complement global efforts on the European continent. We hope that the current Albanian Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE will clearly follow his organization's mandate, play the role of honest broker in achieving consensus and promoting the collective interests and priorities of OSCE member States, and maintain a neutral approach.

Cooperation between the two organizations is, in practice, fairly broad in scope, although there remains room for its further strengthening. For example, the OSCE still has considerable potential to combat transnational threats, in particular those posed by foreign terrorist fighters, the financing of terrorism and the spread of extremist ideology. On counter-terrorism, it is important to adhere strictly to the

guidelines on international cooperation developed by the Security Council. We believe that in order to promote non-consensus initiatives, such as the concept of countering violent extremism, which some members of the OSCE are trying to do, is to move in the wrong direction. We support the plan of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism and the OSCE to organize a conference on the issue of the return of foreign terrorist fighters, on 11 and 12 February in Vienna, and look forward to its success.

The time has come to significantly enhance the OSCE's work on combating the drug threat. We welcome the plans of the Chairperson-in-Office to organize an anti-drug conference. Over the past year, the OSCE's work on security in the context of the use of information and communication technologies has gained new momentum. We hope it will maintain a constructive attitude when considering that issue. Priority should be given to ensuring that negotiations on international information security continue, under the auspices of the United Nations, with a view to developing universal agreements on rules of responsible conduct in cyberspace. Such rules should enshrine equal status for all States in their participation in and governance of the Internet.

In an era of an ongoing global trend of deteriorating mutual trust, regional organizations, including the OSCE, have a special mission to restore an atmosphere of mutual understanding in order to resolve crisis situations in their regions. The main criterion for effectiveness in that regard is, of course, contributing to conflict resolution. For our part, we are striving to provide every possible assistance to efforts within the framework of the OSCE. As co-Chair of the Minsk Group, we are actively supporting the resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict and working to bring the sides closer together in the Transnistrian settlement process. We welcome the cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE in the Balkans, as well as the fact that the two bodies will co-chair the Geneva discussions on stability in the Caucasus.

Naturally, when speaking about country situations on the OSCE agenda, it is impossible not to mention the internal crisis in Ukraine. The OSCE has been playing a very positive role in its settlement and the package of measures under the Minsk agreement is the only path to that end. That fundamental document, endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 2202 (2015), calls for direct dialogue among Kyiv, Donetsk and Lugansk,

for which the Trilateral Contact Group was formed. The Special Monitoring Mission (SMM), whose work we support, plays a key role in OSCE assistance. The Mission should report as fully and objectively as possible on the situation, including on civilian casualties and the destruction of civilian infrastructure, and have direct contact with local authorities in Donbas. We call on the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office to ensure that the SMM publishes thematic reports on civilian victims of the conflict in Donbas and the destruction of civilian infrastructure over the entire course of the conflict.

Unfortunately, despite significant diplomatic efforts, the crisis in Ukraine is still far from being resolved. In that context, we call for an impartial response to the regular statements from Kyiv about its desire to revise the Minsk agreements. By the way, 12 February will mark five years since the agreements were signed. The Security Council expressed its full support for the agreements in resolution 2202 (2015) and confirmed that support in presidential statement S/PRST/2018/12 of 6 June 2018.

There are many examples of Kyiv's revisionist approach. One need only quote the representative of Kyiv at the Trilateral Contact Group, Mr. Oleksii Reznikov, who, in an interview on 23 January, said that the position of President Zelenskyy remained unchanged and could be summarized by the fact that the Minsk agreements should be at least partially revised. It would be interesting to hear the views of our French and German colleagues on how such a statement aligns with their vision of the future of the Ukrainian peace process.

When will they stop denying the obvious? Over the past five years, Kyiv has not fulfilled a single political commitment, has used every possible excuse to refrain from holding a dialogue with its own citizens and has continued to claim a non-existent Russian aggression without offering any evidence thereof. Unfortunately, we can deduce from the words of our colleagues, including the Permanent Representative of Germany, that they remain prepared to support such claims, despite the fact that they have been refuted by the former Chief Monitor of the Special Monitoring Mission, Mr. Ertuğrul Apakan, in this very Chamber.

Overall, as we have heard from the statements of our Western colleagues, none of them has ever read the Minsk agreements or even intends to read them. It would seem more advantageous to continue to stubbornly

present Russia as a party to the conflict — which defies all facts and common sense — thereby contributing to the efforts of the Kyiv authorities to shirk responsibility. They are basically giving Kyiv carte blanche for any discriminatory action that it may take against its own Russian-speaking citizens. By the way, from the statements of some of our colleagues here, who make up fantasies about human rights violations in Crimea, some people might get the impression that the region, which has rejoined Russia, is somehow closed off to foreign visitors and that no one is allowed to go in. That is obviously just a fantasy. Crimea is completely open for any kind of visits that are conducted in accordance with Russian law. That can be confirmed by tourists, of whom there were some 7 million last year. I would therefore ask Ms. Pierce to stop inventing things. I invite her to come and visit Crimea to see how people live.

Despite the contradictory signals from the Zelenskyy team, we would like to believe that, with the arrival of the new administration in Kyiv, they will finally understand what is obvious — any resolution of the situation in the east of the country will be impossible without the direct participation of the people of those regions. Here in the United Nations, that is known as inclusivity. Guided by that principle, we call on the opposing sides of conflicts everywhere to engage in direct communication — from Afghanistan to Syria and Yemen, from Cyprus to Colombia and Venezuela. Only the population of Donbas is being denied that obvious right.

We would like to believe that the OSCE understands the absurdity of the situation and that it is a non-starter. We hope that the new Ukrainian leadership will realize how damaging it is to promote confrontational initiatives that only divide society and restrict the linguistic, educational, religious and cultural rights of the Russian-speaking population and other national minorities. The Kyiv authorities must do the very opposite and try once again to win the trust of people whose interests and vital beliefs were desecrated by the authors of the anti-constitutional Maidan coup d'état. The goal of the OSCE is to assist way that process in every possible, which is critical to the future of Ukraine, rather than abet the short-sighted and noxious nationalistic relapses still prevalent in Ukrainian society.

We believe that the OSCE can and should play a significant role in the establishment of multilateralism as a systematic basis for international relations based on international law, contributing in every way to the

construction of a system of equal, comprehensive system and indivisible security. That is why we are interested in strengthening the role and authority of the OSCE and in expanding its cooperation with the United Nations, as that relationship has tremendous potential. We look forward to seeing the Albanian chairmanship-in-office contribute to that endeavour.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Belgium.

I wish to begin by congratulating Prime Minister Edi Rama and his country on assuming the chairmanship-in-office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

As the largest regional security organization, the OSCE plays a key role in promoting dialogue, building confidence and preventing conflict from the western Balkans to Central Asia. We welcome the goals set and presented by the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office. He can count on Belgium's support in reaching them. I am convinced that they will contribute to the promotion of peace and security, for which the Security Council is a guarantor. I would like to make three points.

First, we welcome the priority Mr. Rama intends to give to the Ukrainian crisis, as demonstrated by his recent visit to that country. The crisis is one of the gravest violations of the founding principles of the OSCE and, I recall, of the Charter of the United Nations. We underline the OSCE's constructive role on this issue, particularly through its Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. The Mission's mandate must be respected, which requires secure, unconditional and unhindered access to all of Ukrainian territory, including in Crimea and along the border with Russia.

We call on all parties to work for a lasting solution to the conflict, which must be based on respect for the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. Dialogue is crucial in that regard, both in the Normandy format and within the framework of the Trilateral Contact Group, which can be fully effective only if the ceasefire is scrupulously applied on the ground.

Secondly, I highlight Mr. Rama's desire to combat violence against women and girls and to promote their role in matters of peace and security. Twenty years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), the integration

of the gender dimension in all our activities must remain a priority. We welcome the commitments made in this area by the OSCE in April 2019. This twentieth anniversary must be used as an opportunity to make an honest assessment of our progress and to chart a path forward.

Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are core elements of the OSCE comprehensive security concept. Unfortunately, we note a disturbing deterioration in the human rights situation in many regions where the OSCE is active. In that regard, we share Mr. Rama's desire to promote tolerance and non-discrimination with a view to combating hate speech.

Thirdly, the OSCE plays a key role in preventing and combating transnational threats, such as terrorism, organized crime and trafficking in human beings. This last point is a priority for our country, as evidenced by the organization by Belgium of an Arria Formula meeting on 25 October 2019. We welcome the good cooperation between the OSCE and the United Nations in that regard, particularly in the context of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, chaired by UN-Women and the OSCE. This unique and innovative model is an example of effective multilateralism, and we would do well to replicate it throughout the United Nations system.

In conclusion, Belgium supports the strengthening and deepening of synergies between the United Nations and the OSCE. The various dimensions of the OSCE reflect an integrated approach to security, which is necessary for the establishment of lasting peace — objectives that the Council must support.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The representative of Germany has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Heusgen (Germany): I am still a bit speechless after having listened to the fairy tale of our Russian colleague. I am under the impression that, if we continue our discussions about Ukraine, one day our Russian colleague will say that Ukraine invaded Russia and not the other way around.

I hope that next time our colleague mentions the implementation of the Minsk agreements, he will finally react to what actually happened after the signing of the Minsk agreements, the most important provision of

which was an immediate ceasefire, which was not upheld by Russia. Instead, Russia continued the fight against the city of Debaltseve. That was at the beginning of the implementation of the Minsk agreements and made it very difficult subsequently to convince the Ukrainians to believe in those agreements and implement them. As I said before, we congratulate our Ukrainian friends on implementing the Minsk agreements.

With regard to the statement of our Russian colleague, I missed a mentioning in it of the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH-17, where Russian rockets brought down a plane, killing 298 people. We all remember the Russian rebels celebrating the successful downing of the plane. To date, there has been no compensation paid by Russia regarding the victims of that incident.

The President (*spoke in French*): The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are always impressed by the institutional memory of Mr. Heusgen, who took part in the negotiations on drafting the Minsk agreements, although his memory has recently started to significantly fail him.

Regarding the aggression against Ukraine, in recent history there is only one example of such aggression, namely, on 22 June 1941. We will not mention the country that carried out that aggression, particularly since the nationalistic forces in Ukraine are trying to forget about it and, in fact, echo Mr. Heusgen's words about the supposed Russian aggression.

I will not return to the issue of Flight MH-17. Our position is well known. There is no convincing evidence. Russia has not been involved in the investigation. I do not think that this is a topic for our discussion today.

I would just urge Mr. Heusgen to act responsibly. He is promoting some very good initiatives, which we support — children in armed conflict and women, peace and security. Each statement in which he abets the Ukrainians' unwillingness to engage in dialogue with their own people does not theoretically promote those initiatives that he supports but has a concrete impact on the women and children in Donbas who are dying due to the bullets of Ukrainian soldiers. He should think about that next time he makes a statement.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Rama to respond to the questions and comments.

Mr. Rama: In his opening remarks, Ambassador Heusgen very kindly mentioned that I play a sport that is all about jumping higher than the others. But I want to make sure that everyone knows that I see the Albanian chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as a mission to remain on the ground. I am well aware that what we, Albania, can contribute to doing in 2020 is not to compete with any of the giants that are involved in formulas, contact groups, forums or formats because it is up to them to push for an ultimate solution.

What we can do and how we can add value is not to forget that, while there are discussions at the highest levels and exchanges such as the one we witnessed, there are people dying. I want representatives to know that more than 4 million people on both sides of the contact line, who have benefited from the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine facilitating ceasefires, are part of that tragic daily life. Let me recount that since December 2019, there have been 20,000 incidents, including 7,000 explosions, and 69 people killed after the ceasefire was declared and accepted by the sides. That is not an insignificant number although, in general, the number of casualties has dramatically decreased.

I would join those who praised President Zelenskyy because I think that he is contributing, through not easy steps, to opening up a more intense and more fruitful dialogue. The exchange of a large group of detainees on 29 December was particularly important. But I also wish to underline that there is something factual. I do not want to take the difficult path of taking sides but I wish to say something factual, namely, that there is a widespread sentiment based on facts that the Ukrainian side is talking with proxies. That is the problem. Something much more substantial is therefore needed on the Russian side by way of contribution and influence because we all know that it can have an important influence on the sides on the ground.

I visited the area and, as I shared with you, Mr. President, one cannot believe the situation, even being there. It is like a post-apocalyptic film, with 10,000 people on average walking to cross a tiny river through a bridge whose width is that of an ambulance, not larger. Incidentally, an ambulance can still not get to its destination because there is not yet an agreement

to allow even terminal patients to reach hospital. They have to get out of the ambulance and walk. There are patients who die while walking in extreme cold — I can say that I had never experienced anything like that — and wind. Ninety per cent of those 10,000 people are elderly people. They have to cross to the other side to get their pensions and for pharmaceuticals.

I do not think that it is difficult for both sides to reach a common understanding regarding those people, who belong to God, while they are asking if they are Russians or Ukrainians and eligible for this or that. It would be appropriate to give them the opportunity to bring their dying family members to hospital without having to stop in the middle of the way. So that is what I think we can, and will, try to do during this year.

In answer to the question of the Estonian Ambassador about how the OSCE and the United Nations can do more, we must cooperate more because, after the United Nations, the OSCE is the second largest organization, with 57 member States, 1 billion people and very many issues.

Frankly, we have to do more to make sure that what was agreed in 1975 remains valid. Territorial integrity, stability and sovereignty should be respected. In 1975, I was a pioneer with a red scarf in a country that was the North Korea of Europe — the only country that not only refused to join the OSCE but bashed the Helsinki Final Act as a new law for the degeneration of both the West and the East. Coming from such a place and looking at the world today, I can say that the Helsinki principles are still valid. However, while following current developments, it often seems that those principles are being used to fight each other rather than as a basis for coming together to resolve our issues.

My final point is that I think the possibility of a United Nations peacekeeping operation in the area under discussion should not be excluded. That is because there is something very disturbing about the situation there. The Special Monitoring Mission has brought about a lot of a lot of change and has, as my Russian colleague said, made an important contribution. However, that is only during the day. Once night falls, it is back to bases and there are explosions and shooting. We have been able to make good progress thanks to the use of technology, because while the Special Monitoring Mission personnel cannot monitor the entire border 24 hours a day, video surveillance can.

A United Nations peacekeeping operation should therefore be considered by all, particularly as a tool to give the process substance in the minds of all those who must guarantee the ceasefire, given that ongoing work to implement agreements, formulas and formats may take a long time. I was very impressed that one of the Council members today brought up the need to implement something that was already decided in 2008. From 2008 to 2020 — a dozen years — people have died, people have suffered and risking their lives while the conflict is still unresolved and may remain so.

That is all I have to say here. The OSCE and the United Nations can do what the parties to the conflict, and perhaps the facilitators, too, are not able to provide — a better life for the normal people who are going through hell while the back and forth continues. The situation is not particularly promising as it could continue for ages.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.