



# Security Council

Seventy-fourth year

**8479**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Thursday, 7 March 2019, 10 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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<i>President:</i>	Mr. Delattre . . . . .	(France)
<i>Members:</i>	Belgium . . . . .	Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve
	China . . . . .	Mr. Yao Shaojun
	Côte d'Ivoire . . . . .	Mr. Adom
	Dominican Republic . . . . .	Mr. Trullols Yabra
	Equatorial Guinea . . . . .	Mrs. Mele Colifa
	Germany . . . . .	Mr. Heusgen
	Indonesia . . . . .	Mr. Syihab
	Kuwait . . . . .	Mr. Alotaibi
	Peru . . . . .	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland . . . . .	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Nebenzia
	South Africa . . . . .	Mr. Matjila
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . . . .	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America . . . . .	Mr. Cohen

## Agenda

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

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

### **Expression of thanks to the outgoing President**

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to His Excellency Ambassador Anatolio Ndong Mba, Permanent Representative of Equatorial Guinea, for his service as President of the Council for the month of February. I am sure I speak for all members of the Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Ndong Mba and his team for the great diplomatic skill and effectiveness with which they conducted the Council's business last month, including during at times difficult conditions.

### **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. Miroslav Lajčák, Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, to participate in this meeting.

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

Before giving the floor to Mr. Lajčák, I would like to express my pleasure at welcoming him here today. As Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and former President of the General Assembly, he is a natural bridge between the two organizations.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lajčák.

**Mr. Lajčák**: It is a great honour for me to address the Security Council today as Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). This meeting attests to the excellent relations that the United Nations and the OSCE have built on both the political and operational levels. As the world's largest security organization under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, the OSCE is committed to supporting the United Nations global mandate at the regional level.

I have a very simple message to deliver today. I believe that we need to continue working together, perhaps even more than we are doing now, because the stakes are quite high and they concern the issues that are at the core of the Council — peace and security, or, in the words of the mandate governing this very Organization, to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.

As Chair of the OSCE, I will give the Council a rundown of our priorities and activities through three main points and will then listen carefully to any ideas Council members may have on the way forward. First, I want to talk about preventing and resolving conflicts and mitigating their impact on people, because that is our top priority.

I will start with what is happening in and around Ukraine, which is, frankly, unacceptable. The crisis goes against everything the OSCE and the United Nations stand for. We must be very clear from the start — there is no alternative to the Minsk agreements. That is why we strongly support existing formats, in particular the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group. But we cannot simply wait patiently for progress. There are too many people suffering as we speak. I saw that suffering at first hand when I travelled to the country in January. It was my first trip as Chairperson-in-Office and it is not one I will forget.

In the Luhansk region, elderly women and men on sticks or in wheelchairs are forced every day to make the risky journey across the only open entry-exit point — a bridge on the line of contact in Stanytsia Luhanska that has been severely damaged by the conflict. More than 10,000 people cross daily. They suffer and feel hopeless, neglected and abandoned because the commitments are not upheld, the trust keeps eroding and space for real dialogue is disappearing.

We have been brainstorming since my trip on concrete proposals that could bring about tangible improvements for people on the ground. Some of the measures we have identified include humanitarian demining and repairing the Stanytsia Luhanska bridge. Those measures, and more, have come about through the close engagement with the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission, the Project Coordinator in Ukraine, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the European External Action Service and the United Nations Development Programme. I had a chance to discuss them separately last month with Ministers

Klimkin and Lavrov. I did not hear “no” a single time. I therefore hope we can work to bring those proposed steps forward in the coming months.

I also want to use the opportunity today to express my sincere gratitude to the brave men and women of the Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine. They are the eyes and ears of the international community on the ground. They are operating with great risk and deserve our support.

I know that some people have been talking about a United Nations mission in Ukraine. I want to point out that that is not a new discussion. There is nothing I can add to it today except to reaffirm that we stand ready to engage on any concrete proposals or decisions coming from this body.

While the crisis in and around Ukraine occupies much of our attention, there are still other dark spots of conflict in the OSCE area. The organization works towards conflict resolution and mediation in Transnistria, Georgia and Nagorno Karabakh. I am glad we can turn the spotlight of the Council on those contexts today as well.

Let me start with the Transnistrian settlement process, where we have seen some real momentum. That momentum needs to keep building. During my trip to the Republic of Moldova in January I stressed the need for progress on the package of eight measures to continue. Next steps could focus on public transport and telecommunications. With political will and real dialogue, tangible results for the benefit of the people on both banks of the Dniester can be achieved. We are also prepared to host a 5+2 meeting in Bratislava, depending upon further developments following the recent parliamentary elections. The OSCE International Observation Mission has issued a statement of preliminary findings about the conduct of the elections. I fully support it and want to underline more broadly the crucial role of OSCE election observation, which consolidates democracy in the OSCE region. That is why OSCE participating States must do everything possible to allow those missions to work unimpeded.

Let me now turn to Georgia, where our chairmanship fully backs existing formats and remains committed to the Geneva international discussions and the incident prevention and response mechanisms. I visited the administrative boundary line with South Ossetia, where I saw for myself the urgent need to reopen the crossing points that had been closed for a

few weeks. Their closure creates daily obstacles for the local population, such as limited access to health care. In that connection as well, we aim to focus on projects that could bring about small but concrete results and an improvement of the situation for people on the ground.

There have been some steps forward in Nagorno Karabakh, but we need to see more positive developments. I returned from Azerbaijan two days ago, where I welcomed the intensification of talks and a reduction in ceasefire violations. I will also travel to Armenia next week. Further trips to the Western Balkans and Central Asia are planned. On those and all of my other trips we are following the same strategy, that is, to open up new space for dialogue and practically address the challenges we face right on the spot.

There is a lot of debate about what to call those conflicts. No matter what terms we use — frozen, protracted, dark spots — we cannot escape an undeniable fact, namely, that they have gone on for far too long. Until they are resolved, there is always a risk of escalation. Until they are resolved, people will continue to suffer. And, until they are resolved, they need our attention and our cooperation. United Nations-OSCE engagement must be part of that. There is already constructive dialogue between my special representatives and United Nations envoys and representatives. There are some very positive, concrete projects being implemented on the ground. I think there is still room for more, and that is what I am here to explore today. Therefore, for my second point, I want to talk about what lies ahead.

The United Nations was born from the ashes of the Second World War. Later on the OSCE grew out of Cold War divisions. They both channelled power through systems of agreed rules, principles and norms, which gave everyone a stake in the running of international affairs. They both envisaged new forms of cooperation between decision-makers, so that life could be better for people on the ground. They both aimed to create dialogue in places where there had been none. Now our two organizations face a similar challenge. We are learning how to deal with issues the founders could scarcely have imagined, from climate change to cyberterrorism and violent extremism. That is why we have chosen the theme “A Safer Future” as our second priority. The security landscape is changing. Unpredictability is increasing. Our institutions need to adapt to suit a young century. Again, it is something we can, and must, work on together.

The United Nations took steps to tailor its agenda in 2016, when the Security Council adopted the sustaining peace resolution to try to better address the cycle of peace (resolution 2282 (2016)) — not waiting until conflict has hit to react but, instead, removing the conditions in which it can flourish. That means pooling our capacities in the areas of sustainable development, institution-building, the rule of law and good governance. That is fully aligned with the comprehensive approach of the OSCE to security. As we all work to make sustaining peace a reality, the OSCE's conflict cycle toolbox and related work can offer some lessons from the ground. Let me mention just a few examples, starting with the counter-terrorism portfolio.

Terrorism and violent extremism are not exactly new phenomena, but they pose bigger threats than the founders of our organizations could ever have anticipated. I was extremely glad to hear that a memorandum of understanding had been signed between the OSCE and the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism. Prevention mechanisms are key. The more we work together, the more people we can reach.

Another opportunity for enhanced cooperation lies within the women and peace and security agenda. Both the United Nations and the OSCE are doing valuable work on the ground. We are both supporting women peacebuilders. We are both advocating for inclusive peace processes. We are both mainstreaming gender throughout our field missions. And we are both working to turn the tide on conflict-related sexual violence. The twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) is approaching. As it does, I urge us to look at more ways by which we can reinforce and support each other's activities.

The same goes for youth and peace and security. The narrative has been completely imbalanced for too long. Young people were seen as risks, rather than assets, in the context of peace and security. We are changing that. I see many opportunities for cooperation as resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018) are implemented. But if we are to make any visible progress in any of those areas, we must band together. I suppose members know where I am going with this.

I want to conclude my briefing today by outlining our third priority, one that is particularly close to my heart: effective multilateralism. It appears the world has started to forget the very urgent role played by

multilateralism — this fundamental problem-solving and war-preventing tool in international relations. Some in the Chamber are from countries that are thousands of miles outside the OSCE area, but we are not as far apart as it may seem. In fact, many of the challenges those here face are also being seen within the 57 participating States of the OSCE. For the spectrum of challenges is global: climate change and its effects on the most vulnerable societies; poverty and hunger, which can fuel migration; and growing inequalities and how they fan the flames of conflict and radicalization. Those challenges are completely resistant to any unilateral solutions.

Working together and using multilateral platforms is not a luxury we can afford to opt out of; it is our only choice. We have nothing to lose, and everything to gain, in working together. Our people have everything to gain. Fortunately, when it comes to the United Nations and the OSCE, we are mindful of that. There is strong cooperation between the OSCE and the United Nations entities in Vienna, with crucial projects taking place on the ground. Our field missions, including the Special Monitoring Mission, have benefited from United Nations expertise and support, and we have more memoranda of understanding and letters of agreement than ever before.

The OSCE has a lot to learn from closer United Nations engagement. This includes operational readiness, capacities and capabilities at various stages of the conflict cycle, as well as training and expertise across a wide range of themes and issues. But the OSCE has a lot to give too — from tailored regional knowledge and niche expertise to lessons learned from the ground. Moreover, in this climate of eroding global arms control, the OSCE can be a platform for confidence-building and increased transparency.

I think we could and should see even more engagement in the coming months and years, because there is absolutely no alternative when it comes to the legitimacy the United Nations brings and the reach it allows. And when it comes to the OSCE's 57 members, there is absolutely no alternative to local know-how and field presence. When mobilized effectively and pulled together, the results can be historic.

I came here to New York to talk to the Council's about the priorities of Slovakia's OSCE chairmanship and to focus on opportunities for stronger United Nations-OSCE cooperation in bringing these priorities

to life. I thank Council members for the attention they have given me today, but before I finish I want to make one more thing clear. This briefing alone will not change anything. It will not change anything in our work and it will not change anything in the lives of people. That is why it is so crucial that our words today be followed up by action.

We are willing to do our part. I have already reached out to the Secretary-General and other high-level United Nations officials to invite them to participate in various OSCE events this year. My team has also ramped up coordination with the United Nations Liaison Office in Vienna, and there is ongoing discussion about options for deeper cooperation on the ground. The more we work together, the closer we will get to our shared goals. I am confident that today's briefing is another step along the way.

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

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

**Mr. Hickey** (United Kingdom): I thank Minister Lajčák for his briefing and welcome him back to the United Nations. The United Kingdom fully supports his chairmanship and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and its work to address the serious security challenges we face.

The people of Ukraine feel these challenges acutely. The United Kingdom fully supports Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, including in Crimea as should every member here today. Yet year after year, we see persistent disregard for international law on the part of a permanent member of the Council. Last month marked five years since Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea. Russia has continued this pattern of behaviour, blatantly disregarding the principles set out in the Charter of the United Nations and the Helsinki Final Act, and Russia continues to destabilize eastern Ukraine, interfere with Ukrainian elections and fuel the ongoing conflict, at a devastating humanitarian cost.

Since the conflict in Ukraine began, over 10,000 people have lost their lives, almost 25,000 have been injured and 3.5 million are in need of humanitarian assistance. The efforts of international organizations to deliver assistance to vulnerable people in the Donbas are being restricted. Russia bears responsibility for

this ongoing situation. This conflict will be brought to an end only through the implementation of the Minsk agreements, requiring a truly sustainable ceasefire and genuine political will.

We welcome the personal commitment that Minister Lajčák has shown to mitigating the humanitarian consequences of this conflict. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine plays a crucial and impartial role in monitoring the situation on the ground. It deserves our full commitment and to be able to carry out its mandate free from intimidation, restrictions on access and interference with its equipment. The United Kingdom will remain a resolute supporter of the Mission.

The OSCE and the United Nations continue to cooperate on shared goals. I would like to thank the OSCE and UN-Women for co-chairing the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons. We welcome Minister Lajčák's plans to focus on trafficking supply chains in the OSCE area.

Countering terrorism and violent extremism is another area of important cooperation. Here, we welcome the OSCE's inclusive focus, embedding a whole-of-society approach that fully incorporates the rule of law, human rights, gender and prevention. We also welcome the OSCE's strong partnership with the Security Council's counter-terrorism bodies and collaboration to implement multilateral counter-terrorism frameworks.

As we approach the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), women and peace and security must also remain high on the agendas of both organizations. I agree with Minister Lajčák's comments that we must do more, as the United Nations and the OSCE, to reinforce each other's work in this important area.

The United Nations and the OSCE continue to support the Western Balkans through coordination and collaboration between our respective presences in the region. We should jointly continue to ensure that OSCE activities complement United Nations activities.

We welcome the recent progress in the OSCE's human dimension, with the adoption of a landmark ministerial decision on the safety of journalists and plans for the implementation of that decision. We look forward to engaging with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media ahead of the international



conference on media freedom to be hosted by the United Kingdom in July.

The OSCE is a valuable forum for dialogue, and if all States show political will to engage constructively it can reduce risk and ultimately help rebuild trust. The full implementation and modernization of existing commitments are essential for achieving greater military transparency and predictability. We hope that Minister Lajčák's approach as OSCE Chair will uphold these imperatives. We share his priority of working towards a resolution of the protracted conflicts in the OSCE area and we welcome the commitment he has demonstrated by visiting the region early in his chairmanship.

Finally, let me say that we completely share the call Minister Lajčák made this morning for effective multilateralism. We can only tackle our shared challenges, such as climate change, terrorism and arms control, by working together multilaterally under the rules-based international system.

**Mr. Djani** (Indonesia): Let me first of all thank France for convening this meeting and congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the presidency. You may rest assured that my delegation will cooperate very closely with you during your presidency.

I would also like to thank the presidency of Equatorial Guinea last month.

I would like to welcome the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Minister Miroslav Lajčák, to the Security Council and thank him for his very comprehensive briefing.

Considering the positive contribution of the OSCE and other such organizations from other regions, Indonesia would like to stress three points.

First, Indonesia welcomes the aims of the Slovak OSCE 2019 chairmanship in promoting dialogue, trust and stability in the OSCE area. Indonesia also appreciates the three emphasis areas identified by the Slovak chairmanship, namely, preventing, mediating and mitigating conflict and focusing on the people it affects; providing for a safer future; and effective multilateralism. It is only through those measures can we together overcome such increasingly complex challenges as counter-terrorism, climate change, women and peace and security and others. As we live in a highly interdependent world, we have an unshakeable belief in the virtue of multilateralism in

finding solutions to global challenges and promoting sustainable peace and development. The United Nations itself is a manifestation of multilateralism and outstanding proof that it can uniquely deliver on solving challenges when everyone is fully committed to the Organization's purposes and principles.

Secondly, full respect for non-interference, sovereignty and territorial integrity of States is fundamental in the relations among nations, and each United Nations State Member must abide by those principles. It is equally essential that everyone respect the principle of refraining from the threat or use of force in the resolution of conflicts. We sincerely believe in the value of dialogue and the need to settle disputes amicably, as also rightly emphasized by Minister Lajčák. Political will to that end may not always be a given, but with sustained dialogue, mutual respect and credible peace efforts it can be nurtured. While each conflict is unique, insufficient State capacity and institutions often constitutes a critical impediment to peacebuilding. Indonesia therefore also emphasizes the need to adequately support affected countries, with assistance being guided by their identified priorities.

Thirdly, Indonesia firmly believes in the pivotal role of regional arrangements. Regional organizations and countries, through their bonds of history, shared culture and understanding, can have unique insights into solving conflicts peacefully. We underscore the continued attention by the United Nations to more meaningfully profit from the regional entities, with a view to promoting world peace and prosperity. The Charter of the United Nations also highlights the importance of regional arrangements in the maintenance of international peace and security. Chapter VIII of the Charter is specifically dedicated to regional arrangements, underlining that the Security Council shall encourage the development of pacific settlements to local disputes through regional arrangements.

In our part of the world, we have the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Since its inception in August 1967, ASEAN member countries have shared the responsibility of strengthening peace, stability and security in the region, free from foreign military interference and undue pressure. ASEAN also contributes to the promotion of peace and security in the wider Asia-Pacific region. In that regard, ASEAN has and will continue to engage with its dialogue partners. We believe that genuine dialogue among countries in the region, as well as beyond the region,

including interregional dialogue, will always provide a solid base for a durable solution to any situation that can be acceptable to all parties.

Let me conclude by wishing Minister Lajčák every success during his term as Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE in implementing its noble aims and programmes, as highlighted in his briefing.

**Mr. Yao Shaojun** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I would like to thank Equatorial Guinea for the excellent work it carried out as President of the Security Council for the month of February. I also wish to congratulate France on assuming the presidency for the month of March and assure you, Mr. President, of China's full cooperation.

China welcomes the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of Slovakia, His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, and thanks him for his comprehensive briefing.

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 in the global governance system. The world needs multilateralism more than ever. The United Nations is the standard-bearer of multilateralism, while the Security Council makes up the core of the international collective security system.

Enhancing international cooperation, with the United Nations at the centre, is a general trend in our common aspiration. China supports the United Nations in deepening its cooperation with regional and subregional organizations, in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, with the view to jointly maintaining international peace and security. Such cooperation should resolutely follow the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, vigorously facilitate the settlement of regional hotspot issues through dialogue and consultations, actively promote preventive diplomacy and diffuse tension through peaceful means. Such activities by regional and subregional organizations must be in conformity with international law and the basic norms of international relations, in particular respect for national sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

The OSCE is an important partner of the United Nations. In recent years, the OSCE has been actively

conducting preventive diplomacy, promoting regional security and mutual trust and mediating regional disputes. Since Slovakia assumed the chairmanship, the OSCE has been giving priority to preventing and mitigating challenges, thereby providing for a safer future and enhancing multilateralism. China commends such efforts. China supports results-oriented cooperation between the Council and the OSCE in the areas of peace and security, and hopes that the OSCE will continue to play an active and constructive role in safeguarding regional peace, security and stability.

On the question of Ukraine, the parties concerned, including the OSCE, have made positive efforts towards a peaceful resolution, which China welcomes. We hope that the situation in Ukraine will be stabilized as soon as possible and that the parties concerned will effectively implement resolution 2254 (2015) and the Minsk agreements, stick to the general direction of political settlement and seek a comprehensive solution through dialogue and consultations.

**Mr. Adom** (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): As this is my first statement in a public meeting under your presidency, Mr. President, allow me to extend, on behalf of Côte d'Ivoire, my warm congratulations and best wishes to you and your country. I would also like to commend Equatorial Guinea for its excellent work during its presidency in February.

My delegation thanks Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), whose briefing informs us of the vision and priorities of Slovakia, which holds the chairmanship for 2019. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate him on his assumption of that position and wish him every success in his new functions.

Since its accession to the OSCE chairmanship in January, Slovakia has clearly stated the main focus of all its actions, namely, prevention, mediation, conflict mitigation, strengthening security and promoting effective multilateralism.

With regard to multilateralism in particular, Slovakia is committed to supporting the development of strategic partnerships between the OSCE and international organizations. The relevance of that strategic choice is easily understood in the current context, which is marked by a tendency to question multilateral cooperation frameworks, although they

have demonstrated their full effectiveness in seeking sustainable solutions to global challenges.

The persistence of transnational security threats and current economic and social development challenges require combined efforts at the regional and subregional levels. That is why Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the OSCE as a model of virtuous cooperation — an expression of the common vision of the 57 member States to take ownership of their collective security. We also note the quality of the OSCE's cooperation with the United Nations, which is fully in line with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations.

Côte d'Ivoire appreciates the OSCE's holistic approach to addressing current security challenges, which integrates political-military, economic, environmental and human dimensions. Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the fact that its scope of action encompasses the issues of arms control, the strengthening of confidence and security measures, human rights, the protection of national minorities, the promotion of democracy and the fight against terrorism.

In view of the leading role of regional and subregional organizations in conflict prevention and management, based on the principle of subsidiarity, Côte d'Ivoire urges the OSCE to fully play its rightful role in strengthening peace and security in Europe in accordance with its founding principles. In that regard, my country encourages the Slovak chairmanship of the OSCE to work tirelessly to restore peace and stability in Ukraine and neighbouring areas by encouraging the various stakeholders to overcome their differences, with a view to the effective implementation of the Minsk agreements. Given such a perspective, appropriate measures must be urgently taken to overcome the environment of mistrust that has taken root among those concerned, which will enable maintaining the gains made thanks to the efforts of the OSCE and the international community, thereby fostering the restoration of peace and stability in the region.

It is also important that the OSCE pursue its support for existing mechanisms to resolve the conflicts in Nagorno Karabakh and Abkhazia and South Ossetia to advance peace talks on Transnistria and Georgia, as well as to assist in the stabilization of Kosovo. In that regard, my country welcomes the good offices of Mr. Lajčák, in particular his 15 January visit to Kyiv, the goal of which was to urge the parties to de-escalate and allow the Joint Centre for Control and Coordination

to play its role in supporting OSCE monitors and in monitoring the ceasefire in Donbas.

Concerning its scope of activities, which extend beyond European borders, the OSCE enjoys experience that it could share with other regional and subregional organizations. Threats to peace and security, the fight against terrorism, climate change and the management of migration flows are, inter alia, areas of cooperation that the OSCE should explore with other regional and subregional organizations. My country believes that, while security in the geographical areas under the OSCE's purview and security in neighbouring regions are closely linked, the security dynamics in sub-Saharan Africa have no less of an impact on peace and security in Europe. Accordingly, while we fully welcome the constructive cooperation between the OSCE and its Mediterranean and Asian partners, Côte d'Ivoire calls for broadening such cooperation to include African regional and subregional organizations, which entails seeking lasting solutions, in a concerted spirit of solidarity, to the current evolving challenges involved in achieving peace, security and development.

In conclusion, my delegation once again wishes Slovakia every success in its chairmanship of the OSCE in the implementation of its priorities, including the promotion of multilateralism, to which Côte d'Ivoire remains strongly committed.

**Mr. Matjila** (South Africa): First, let me congratulate you, Sir, for assuming the presidency of the Security Council for March, and pay tribute to Equatorial Guinea for its able work last month. I also thank you, Sir, for facilitating today's briefing by the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic. I thank him for sharing with us Slovakia's vision in chairing the OSCE, centred on conflict prevention and mitigation to preserve peace and responding to new threats through deeper cooperation, including the women and peace and security agenda, the enlistment of young people and effective multilateralism to address global and shared challenges. It is always refreshing to listen to him. I believe that he has literally continued where he left off a few months ago at the helm of the General Assembly. I welcome him back to the United Nations.

It is clear from his briefing that regional and subregional organizations dealing with issues of peace



and security remain important for ensuring sustainable peace and security in their respective regions. The briefing also illustrated the importance of support and cooperation from the United Nations, as the primary international organization tasked with the maintenance of international peace and security. Efforts to enhance the relationship between the United Nations and the OSCE are therefore welcomed. We wish to reiterate that cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in the furtherance of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations is necessary to ensure closer coordination between our organizations.

We acknowledge, however, that every regional organization is unique in terms of the challenges that it faces in the maintenance of international peace and security, as well as the manner in which it addresses those challenges and threats. We must be clear, however, that the efforts of regional organizations in maintaining international peace and security do not absolve the Council of its Charter-mandated responsibilities as the guardian of international peace and security. Those efforts complement one another, and it is for that reason that cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations is so important to muster. Dialogue of such a nature allows us an opportunity to share experiences and best practices between the United Nations and regional organizations, such as the OSCE.

I wish to reiterate South Africa's support for the work of the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which needs to continue to enjoy unhindered access in order to monitor and verify compliance with the Minsk agreements in terms of its mandate. Similarly, my delegation believes that creating a conducive environment towards compromise, reconciliation and long-term stability in Kosovo is the responsibility of all the relevant role players, including the OSCE as one of the largest field operations in Kosovo. That inclusive approach builds a strengthened foundation for support and bolsters international trust-building efforts. The work of the OSCE in Ukraine and Kosovo and support for their efforts towards finding peaceful and sustainable solutions will prove invaluable for their people and the greater region.

I wish to conclude by reiterating that the Security Council, regional bodies, international partners and other actors, such as donors, civil society and youth organizations, should continue to engage in dialogue

and cooperation, in the interests of the people, as well as for the stability of the broader region.

**Ms. Wronecka** (Poland): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, for assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March. I wish you every success, Sir, and I am very pleased to offer you our full support. Allow me also to express our appreciation to Equatorial Guinea for its successful presidency last month. Allow me to turn to Minister Miroslav Lajčák and welcome him to the Security Council. We appreciate his comprehensive briefing and are thankful for his setting out the strategic priorities for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The Minister can count on our full support for his well-balanced and realistic priorities throughout. We should all stand with efforts to support effective multilateralism.

Preserving the security order based on international law remains a core task for the OSCE. The compliance of all participating States with the Helsinki Final Act and subsequent agreements is a precondition for stability and peace in our region. Regrettably, those universal rules are now being challenged by one permanent member of the Security Council, whose sole responsibility is to protect and preserve those rules.

Five years ago, the Russian Federation violated the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, starting with the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, which we have not and will not recognize. Since then, the Russian aggression against Ukraine has remained the most important topic on the OSCE's agenda, and resolving the conflict continues to be an indispensable step towards re-establishing European security. We appreciate Mr. Lajčák's decision to visit Ukraine, including the Donbas region, for the first time in his capacity as OSCE Chairperson-in-Office.

I want to emphasize that Russia's unjustifiable use of military force against Ukrainian vessels, which resulted in its unilateral control over the Kerch Strait, has not been not forgotten. The international calls for the release of the 24 Ukrainian prisoners of war have been ignored by the Kremlin ever since. Russia's impediments to the passage of ships through the Kerch Strait have already caused major socioeconomic damage to Ukraine.

Poland strongly supports the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine and insists that the

safety of its monitors and assets be ensured. It should have unhindered access to every conflict-affected area in Ukraine. Steps must also be taken to strengthen the monitoring of the Ukrainian-Russian border and ensure an additional international presence in the conflict zone.

We want to once again commend Mr. Lajčák's initiative in visiting Georgia and Moldova, two other countries affected by protracted conflicts. We fully support the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group and its search for a fair and lasting political settlement to the conflict in Nagorno Karabakh. We attach great importance to the work of Ambassador Andrzej Kasprzyk and his team, which is a valuable contribution to reducing tensions and implementing confidence-building measures on the ground. We have noted the fact that the Transnistrian conflict remains high on the OSCE's agenda. It remains essential to reach a comprehensive, peaceful and sustainable settlement of this conflict, based on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova.

With regard to the conflict in Georgia, we call on Russia to implement the European Union-brokered six-point ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008 that ended the conflicts in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali/South Ossetia region nearly 10 years ago. Russia should withdraw its military forces from the Georgian breakaway regions with a view to creating the conditions for a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

The security situation in the OSCE area is a cause of growing concern. Military uncertainty is being used as a political tool. Large-scale, no-notice military manoeuvres along international borders and military incidents undermine trust and create tensions in the OSCE area of operations. That is why it is urgent that we reduce any possible risk of a further escalation of tensions by refraining from threatening military action. We should remain committed to the full implementation, in letter and in spirit, of existing commitments on the political and military front. The successful modernization of the Vienna Document would be a positive step towards rebuilding trust and confidence.

Poland opposes any attempts to weaken the relevance of the OSCE's human dimension, and we want to reiterate our strong support for the work of the OSCE's autonomous institutions, particularly the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, located in Warsaw. Let me express our full support for the

promotion of democratic standards and for safeguarding human rights and fundamental freedoms, which are indelible components of comprehensive security, the concept on which the OSCE is founded. In particular, we would like to highlight the role of the Human Dimension Implementation Meetings organized yearly in Warsaw, which represent the biggest conference in Europe dedicated to human rights and the promotion of democratic values. We truly hope that they will be used to further strengthen human rights protection across the OSCE area and to enhance multilateral cooperation in the field of human rights.

Tomorrow we celebrate International Women's Day, which gives me an excellent opportunity to pay tribute to all women engaged in OSCE activities. We hope that the OSCE will strive to maintain the current momentum for further implementing programmes on increasing the participation of women in the political and public arenas, combating violence against women and implementing resolution 1325 (2000), emphasizing the involvement of women in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation.

**Mr. Cohen** (United States of America): I would like to add our voice to the others congratulating you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Council for this month. We also congratulate Equatorial Guinea for its hard work as President during a very challenging February.

I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing today's briefing. We recognize and greatly appreciate the invaluable contributions that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to regional peace and security for more than 40 years. As a former OSCE desk officer in the State Department, I am personally particularly pleased to be participating in today's discussion. I thank Mr. Lajčák for his briefing on the OSCE's activities and for his leadership of the organization. The United States applauds the OSCE for its critical role in developing a robust regional security architecture and promoting human rights, democracy, peace and stability across the vast area of its participating States since 1975. The fundamental principles of the OSCE, as a pillar of the international rules-based system, must be upheld. We underscore its invaluable role as a forum for addressing the most challenging issues of the day through open and comprehensive dialogue. Its unique field-office presence, particularly in the Western Balkans, continues to play a significant and influential role.

Nowhere is the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security and its contributions to promoting the peaceful settlement of conflicts more important than in Ukraine. As has been pointed out, last month marked the fifth anniversary of Russia's illegal occupation of Crimea and its instigation of conflict in eastern Ukraine. Moscow's aggression, beginning in 2014, marked the first instance since the Second World War that a European country has sought to redraw the boundaries of another by force. It is particularly egregious that the aggression was carried out by one OSCE member against another. In November, Russia escalated its aggressive activities against Ukraine when it attacked Ukrainian naval vessels in the Black Sea. The United States again strongly condemns that unjustified use of force and again calls on Russia to return Ukraine's detained personnel and seized ships.

The United States commends the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, which provides the international community with the best source of impartial information on the conflict in eastern Ukraine. The OSCE's work in negotiating ceasefires has also been critical in alleviating the suffering caused by Russia's aggression. We applaud the courage and dedication of the Mission's unarmed monitors.

As we have stated repeatedly in this Chamber, the United States fully supports Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, within its internationally recognized borders, including its territorial waters, as should all OSCE member States. We do not, nor will we ever, recognize Russia's purported annexation of Crimea. We join our European and other partners in affirming that our Ukraine-based sanctions against Russia will remain in place until Russia fully implements its Minsk commitments, and Crimea-focused sanctions will remain in place until Russia returns full control of the peninsula to Ukraine.

The United States also opposes Russia's continuing occupation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which are part of Georgia. There too Russia's actions contravene its international commitments and violate Georgia's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, within its internationally recognized borders. And again in Georgia we have a concerted effort by one OSCE member to destabilize another. Although Russia participates in the OSCE's 5+2 Transnistria settlement negotiations, it has failed to honour its 1999 Istanbul OSCE summit commitments to withdraw its forces from Moldova. Russia has used the protracted conflicts

in these nations to hinder the region's gravitation towards European and western institutions and to slow the development of a rules-based order.

We have urged the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Slovakia, to support ongoing initiatives by the OSCE and participating States, including the Geneva international discussions and the 5+2 talks. The international community must counter one State's actions, which fly in the face of OSCE principles and commitments, undermining the territorial integrity and sovereignty of other OSCE participating States. The international community must also help prepare the ground for the peaceful resolution of these protracted conflicts, which, as Foreign Minister Lajčák noted, have undeniably gone on for far too long.

Additionally, we thank the OSCE Chair and participating States for their support of the Minsk Group process. The United States, Russia and France are working together productively as co-Chairs to help the sides reach a settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The OSCE's crucial role in strengthening human rights, democracy, peace and stability in Europe for more than 40 years cannot be overstated. The United States reaffirms the OSCE's importance as a partner to the United Nations and particularly to the Security Council in addressing critical security challenges. We will continue to support the OSCE's vital work in these and other conflicts.

**Mr. Trullols Yabra** (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to join colleagues in congratulating and pledging support to you in your role as President and also to congratulate Equatorial Guinea on its recent presidency.

The Dominican Republic wishes to thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovakia, Mr. Lajčák, Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), for his informative briefing on the activities of the organization. We congratulate the presidency of Slovakia and avail ourselves of this opportunity to express our support to the OSCE and our appreciation for its tireless efforts to promote security, stability and good governance throughout the region. We note with satisfaction that its priorities are consistent with the work done at the United Nations and by the Council itself, in other words, the prevention, mediation and mitigation of conflicts,

as well as a focus on those affected, in order to bring about a safer future and effective multilateralism.

We acknowledge the fact that its agenda represents both a challenge and an opportunity to follow up on the political dialogue in the region, in keeping with the commitments undertaken and in the framework of the quest for a sustainable solution. We took note with interest of the OSCE's readiness to stress the implementation of the agreements and related responsibilities. In that context, it is an ongoing concern of the Council to follow up on ongoing conflicts in Europe, as promoting the parties' commitment to the implementation of the agreements reached will have repercussions on the living conditions of the civilian population, which usually is the most affected.

The Dominican Republic recognizes the importance for the region of making progress in the situation in eastern Ukraine and agrees with the OSCE as to the need to stress the importance of respecting and implementing the Minsk agreements. We thank it for its availability to work on proposals that will help to promote and restore peace and security to the region.

In that respect, we reiterate our support for the territorial integrity of Ukraine and for the Special Monitoring Mission of the OSCE, which remains the barometer for the international community on the ground.

We welcome the ongoing efforts of the OSCE to resolve the conflicts in Nagorno Karabakh, Georgia and Transnistria. We believe that sustained attention to protracted conflicts must be maintained, as they are the epicentre for the international community in the areas of peace, stability and international security. Our delegation believes that in keeping with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, joint work with regional organizations can ensure a more effective response in preventing, responding to and mitigating conflicts. However, because of the prevailing lack of confidence and because political interests often result in losing sight of the human face of conflict, we must ensure the success of organizations such as the OSCE in resolving vital security situations. In this respect, it is crucial to have the support and legitimate commitment of the parties involved.

We welcome the practice of ensuring the greater participation of women in the various areas of public and political life, in conflict prevention, in crisis management and in peacebuilding, as well as the key

role played by youth in the strengthening of security and cooperation. In that vein, we would stress the importance of the OSCE's various multidimensional initiatives carried out jointly with and for young people, and of giving priority to the bolstering of inclusive youth policies. We deem it vital to continue to hold the conferences on youth and security organized by the OSCE, as they acknowledge the importance of young people and their positive role in the promotion of a culture of peace and in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, in accordance with resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018).

On the eve of International Women's Day, we would like to pay tribute to all the women of the world, especially all those who have left, and continue to leave, their mark on their communities and their countries in the quest for a world that is more equitable, inclusive and participatory.

**Mr. Pecsteen de Buyswerve** (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to echo my colleagues by congratulating you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council and on its very effective work last month. I wish also to thank Minister Lajčák, Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), for his briefing. Belgium associates itself fully with the three priorities that he has just outlined with eloquence and, above all, conviction. He can count on our full support.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe plays a key role in promoting dialogue in a number of conflicts, from Nagorno Karabakh to Transnistria, including the separatist territories of Georgia. It contributes on a daily basis to reconciliation efforts in the Balkans.

Today I wish to focus in particular on the situation in Ukraine, which represents one of the greatest violations of not only the founding principles of the OSCE but also of the principles set out in the Charter of the United Nations. In that respect, I wish to highlight the OSCE's efforts to prevent a fresh escalation of the conflict. We hail the vital work of the Special Monitoring Mission of the OSCE as an observer and a facilitator of dialogue among all parties to the crisis.

We deplore the obstacles hampering the effective monitoring and reporting work of the Mission in Ukraine. We strongly encourage the parties to the conflict to respect the Mission's mandate and to give it safe and unimpeded access to the entire territory



of Ukraine, including in Crimea and along the border between Ukraine and Russia.

We join the call for a lasting political 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. The full implementation of the Minsk agreements is essential in that respect. We continue to support ongoing efforts in the framework of the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group.

We are concerned about the situation regarding human rights and fundamental freedoms, including attacks on human rights defenders and journalists and growing intolerance in the many regions where the OSCE is active. Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law are essential to ensuring sustainable security. We underscore our unwavering commitment to the human dimension, which must be a common thread in the work of the OSCE.

The OSCE makes a significant contribution to preventing and combating transnational threats such as terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization. In that regard, we welcome the memorandum of understanding agreed between the Office of Counter-Terrorism and the OSCE. One of the most effective ways to promote the implementation of the Council's resolutions and strengthen the capacities of Member States is through good collaboration between the Office of Counter-Terrorism and regional organizations.

With 57 members, the OSCE is the largest regional organization of the kind envisaged in Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. It plays an indispensable role in the protection of an international order based on law and the promotion of peace and security in Europe. The various dimensions of the OSCE reflect the idea of an integrated approach to security and sustainable peace, an approach that the Security Council should support.

**Mr. Meza-Cuadra** (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We join others in congratulating you, Sir, and your delegation, on France's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council this month, and we reiterate our gratitude to Equatorial Guinea for a successful presidency last month. We welcome Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic. We are sure that his background and leadership will enable him to make a substantial

contribution to the objectives of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as its Chairperson-in-Office, as he did as President of the General Assembly at its previous session.

In accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, Peru promotes and stresses the importance of developing and strengthening synergies with regional and subregional organizations with a view to preventing and responding more effectively to conflict situations within the framework of the promotion of multilateralism. In that regard, we underscore that the priorities of the OSCE for 2019, as outlined today, converge with those established by the United Nations, particularly many of the priorities that guide the work of the Council. In that regard, we believe it will be helpful to identify three areas where we think complementarity can be exploited.

First, regarding conflict prevention, the Security Council continues to promote the evaluation, analysis and implementation of the sustaining peace approach, while the efforts of the OSCE seek to build on what it calls comprehensive security. Both visions prioritize the crucial importance of people and their welfare. Peru believes that the maintenance of security, including peacebuilding, and the protection of human rights are complementary and mutually reinforcing. We also welcome the fact that the chairmanship of the OSCE is emphasizing the importance of the challenges and opportunities represented by the participation of young people in the OSCE's agenda.

Secondly, regarding the promotion of coordination and regional participation, Peru believes that regional organizations have a crucial role to play in implementing the international normative framework, including Security Council resolutions, and should guide the sustaining peace approach based on the unique characteristics of each subregion. In that regard, I would like to highlight the OSCE's commitment and leadership in combating terrorism and violent extremism. We especially welcome its close cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, a relationship that we believe should be replicated with the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate.

Thirdly, regarding political solutions, we welcome the OSCE's mechanisms for political support and follow-up and for the peaceful settlement of disputes, which have enabled it to contribute to stability in Europe and Central Asia. We consider them a benchmark for

any regional mechanism that seeks to promote peace and security, and in that regard we want to highlight its work in Ukraine, especially on achieving the full implementation of the Minsk agreements, as well as its work in Georgia, Transnistria and Nagorno Karabakh.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate the importance of cooperation and the joint efforts of the OSCE and the United Nations system, especially in partnership with the Council, which my delegation fully supports.

**Mr. Alotaibi** (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): We would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. We wish you and your friendly country every success in managing the work of the Council during this month. We also thank Equatorial Guinea for its presidency of the Council in February.

We welcome Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, who has joined us for today's meeting. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate him on his country's assumption of the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2019, in which we wish friendly Slovakia every success. We also thank him for the valuable and comprehensive briefing he provided at the beginning of today's meeting.

The commitment of the Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE to providing an annual briefing to the Security Council dates back to 2004 and confirms the determination of the OSCE to strengthen its cooperation with the United Nations in order to establish international peace and security, especially in the regions covered by its mandate. As the largest regional security organization in geographical terms, including countries in Europe, Asia and the Mediterranean, the OSCE adds enormous value to our joint quest to achieve international peace and stability, maintain and promote the principle of multilateralism and use it to address the security challenges facing the international community.

As the number and complexity of conflicts increase daily, there is an ever-greater need, repeatedly demonstrated, for regional and subregional organizations to settle internal or external conflicts that the United Nations cannot resolve on its own. The two organizations need and complement each other. While the United Nations plays a key role in the resolution of conflicts that extends to post-conflict peacebuilding and

peacemaking, the support of regional and subregional organizations remains indispensable.

In that regard, Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations guides us and even encourages us to strengthen that cooperation. It is clear that regional and subregional organizations are better and less costly in terms of material and human resources at establishing what is happening on the ground during a conflict. They are also on the front lines in enabling the international community to uncover, better understand and address the nature of such conflicts.

We welcomed the first high-level meeting held between the European Union and the OSCE in September of last year. We are pleased that the two organizations have decided to institutionalize this practice by holding high-level meetings every year. The European continent is a theatre of conflicts that have lasted for too long and require radical solutions, such as those in Nagorno Karabakh, Moldova, Georgia, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Cyprus. We commend the role of the OSCE Special Monitoring Missions, which have been deployed in many conflict regions. We ourselves visited the headquarters of the Mission in Georgia along the borders of South Ossetia and noted first-hand the role that it has played in deescalating tensions, monitoring the ceasefire, encouraging confidence-building measures and facilitating the movement of the population.

We note the OSCE's important role in Ukraine and stress the importance of resolving a crisis that has entered its fifth year. We hope that all parties to the conflict will fully implement resolution 2202 (2015), the 2015 Minsk agreements and the presidential statement of 6 June 2018 (S/PRST/2018/12), while seeking a comprehensive and balanced solution through dialogue based on the Normandy format and the work of the Trilateral Contact Group. In that regard, we commend the role that the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine has played on the ground in facilitating dialogue between the various parties to the conflict, and we sincerely hope that those efforts will help to bring an end to that conflict as soon as possible.

In conclusion, we wish the Foreign Minister every success in achieving Slovakia's priorities and objectives during its chairmanship of the OSCE, as he mentioned in his briefing, in order to promote the main purposes and principles of the United Nations and help to establish security, stability and peace in the world.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would first like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for March and to wish you every success. I would also like to commend Equatorial Guinea for its conduct of the presidency in February.

We are grateful to Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovakia, for his detailed annual briefing on the work of the Organization and the issues on its agenda. His country's chairmanship of the OSCE comes at a difficult time, when the foundations of the multilateral system and international law itself are being severely tested. Lately we have been hearing a great deal about the so-called rules-based order instead.

We are committed to constructive cooperation with the Slovak chairmanship of the OSCE. For our part, we believe that the OSCE should strive to fulfil the functions for which it was established, that is, as a forum for equal dialogue and collective decision-making on security questions. The focus should be on issues such as combating terrorism, drug trafficking and cyberthreats, harmonizing integration processes, supporting traditional values, protecting the rights of national minorities and countering neo-Nazism. We hope to see constructive cooperation continue between the OSCE and the United Nations in those areas, and much has already been done in that regard. It is also important to implement the confidence-building measures developed within the OSCE to reduce the risks of conflict in the area of information and communication technology by preventing the militarization of the information space, interference in the internal affairs of States and violations of their digital sovereignty.

With regard to efforts to introduce into the OSCE's agenda topics such as security-sector reform and governance that do not fall under its remit, we believe that efforts on that front should be conducted within the United Nations on the basis of resolution 2151 (2014), which applies to countries that have been completely ruined by conflict and are in the post-conflict reconstruction phase. There are no such countries in the OSCE area.

Mr. Lajčák has invaluable experience as President of the General Assembly and knows the Organization well. He knows that international organizations today cannot act in isolation. It is in that context that we see

the cooperation between the Organization and regional and subregional organizations on the basis of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations and the 2006 decision of the OSCE Permanent Council.

The cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE on the ground should help to stabilize the OSCE space. That is not possible without resolving the question of Kosovo on the basis of resolution 1244 (1999), seeking compromises on the conflicts in Transnistria and Nagorno Karabakh and establishing a non-politicized dialogue between Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the framework of the Geneva talks on security in the South Caucasus. We hope that the implementation of the OSCE Ministerial Council's declaration on the Mediterranean in Milan will lead to greater stability in the region and in the countries of Europe.

We will continue to participate in the structured dialogue on security threats, which is itself a confidence-building measure and may open up prospects for improving the situation in the Euro-Atlantic area unless, of course, that format is politicized. Listening to some of today's speakers without an understanding of what the OSCE does, one might get the impression that Vienna considers nothing but the situations in Ukraine and the post-Soviet space generally. That is a well-known misunderstanding that our Western partners seem to be trying to embed in the public consciousness. We should not forget that the OSCE, with its 57 member States, deals with security issues in general, working to promote stability, peace and democracy among a population of 1 billion people. In that context, among other things, it discusses issues of arms control, the fight against terrorism, human trafficking, democratization, freedom of the media and the situation of national minorities. There are quite enough problems in those areas to the west of Vienna, and we urge members not to forget that.

Unfortunately, in speaking about OSCE activities, we cannot ignore the internal Ukrainian crisis. On 12 February, the Security Council met to discuss the issue on the occasion of the fourth anniversary of the signing of the package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements (see S/PV.8461). We are grateful to Ambassador Apakan, Head of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, for his frank assessments of the situation on the ground and in particular for his affirmation of the lack of evidence of a Russian military presence in Donbas.

In adopting resolution 2202 (2015), which endorsed the package of measures as the basis for the Ukrainian settlement, all the members of the Security Council affirmed that the key to the country's stabilization was the comprehensive implementation of the Minsk agreements. They reiterated it in June 2018, when they adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2018/12) in support of the agreements, and reiterated it again on 12 February. Today we have already heard words in support of the Minsk agreements and will undoubtedly hear them again. And yet things are right back where they started. We have to admit that without Kyiv's implementation of the Minsk agreements in good faith, no genuine settlement can be achieved. Meanwhile, Kyiv is openly sabotaging the Minsk agreements and pointing fingers at Russia, as its Western partners are also doing and as we have heard more than once today. Kyiv's sabotage is possible only because its Western sponsors cover for it.

A settlement is impossible without the consent of the people in these regions. Here at the United Nations we call that inclusivity, and that principle applies equally to the OSCE. In Syria, Yemen, Libya and Afghanistan — everywhere, in fact — we call on the opposing sides to sit down at the negotiating table and reach a compromise. But for some reason that does not apply to Donbas and its citizens.

For our part, we have a direct interest in a speedy end to the conflict in Ukraine. We urge the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine to intensify its monitoring activities in Donbas. What is needed is not fragmented information but rather a comprehensive look at the military situation of the armed forces in Ukraine. We need a clear determination as to which side is exacerbating the situation and the shelling, and on the consequences for the civilian population and the destruction of civilian infrastructure. We will insist that the Monitoring Mission produce detailed thematic reports on this issue. However, we should point out that the OSCE's mandate is not limited to Donbas but applies to the entire territory of Ukraine. In particular, the Monitoring Mission should be following the situation throughout Ukraine regarding human rights and national minorities, including on the linguistic, religious and education fronts, and ensuring that they are observed, with special attention to issues such as the expansion of neo-Nazism, the falsification of history and the persecution of journalists, which have been flourishing unchecked in Ukraine.

We are outraged by the declaration and the letter from Pavlo Klimkin, Ukraine's Foreign Minister, sent to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in January, concerning Ukraine's refusal to admit observers from Russia into Ukraine for its presidential elections even under the auspices of ODIHR. It is an unprecedented and discriminatory ban and a gross violation of the OSCE's founding commitments, specifically paragraph 8 of the 1990 Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Russia considers the OSCE an important mechanism for building an equal and indivisible system of European security, and we have an interest in strengthening its role and authority. We would like to wish Slovakia effectiveness and every success in its work at the helm of the OSCE in the interests of all of our countries' cooperation and security. For our part, we are willing to have an open and inclusive dialogue on every aspect of its agenda.

**Mrs. Mele Colifa** (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): We congratulate the French delegation on assuming the presidency of the Council for the month of March. We thank the French delegation for its kind words about my delegation and wish it a productive presidency.

The delegation of Equatorial Guinea would also like to welcome to the Security Council Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, and to thank him for his informative briefing on the programme and activities planned under the Slovak chairmanship of the OSCE. We also congratulate Slovakia on its assumption of the OSCE chairmanship and on its commitment to the maintenance of peace in Europe.

I would like to take this opportunity to support the priority issues on the agenda of the Slovak chairmanship of the OSCE, which focus on three areas of action — preventing, mediating and mitigating conflicts by focusing on the people they affect, ensuring a more secure future and promoting effective multilateralism.

Since the continuing crisis in Ukraine is a priority for the OSCE and one of the most critical issues in the region, it is important to remember that the only possible solution to the situation in Ukraine is by peaceful



means, through direct, frank and inclusive negotiations on the basis of the Minsk agreements. Bearing in mind the priorities of Slovakia's chairmanship, we would also like to support its new approach and determination with regard to the so-called protracted conflicts affecting Europe. We therefore welcome Mr. Lajčák's official visit to Moldova in January as part of Slovakia's approach to conflict prevention and mediation.

As one of the largest regional security organizations in the world, the OSCE plays a very important role in maintaining the stability and security of countries in and around the region. As we said in last year's Council meeting (see S/PV.8200), it is important to further strengthen cooperation between the OSCE and the United Nations in order to enhance the OSCE's role in implementing United Nations decisions concerning European conflicts for the benefit of international peace and security.

On the eve of the commemoration of International Women's Day, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea considers it right that the OSCE chairmanship is incorporating a gender perspective as a strategy to promote women's participation in conflict mediation and resolution processes with a view to implementing the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

In conclusion, I would like to highlight the OSCE's excellent work as a mediator to help resolve conflicts peacefully while ensuring that agreements are implemented and fully respected. As we have noted previously, we consider it very important to strengthen the cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE as the sole mechanism for achieving peace and greater stability in the OSCE regions. I would like to wish the Slovak chairmanship every success in fulfilling its priorities.

**Mr. Heusgen** (Germany): I too would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on taking over the joint presidency and presiding over the Security Council for the month of March. We will fully support you in discharging your duties.

As we have said previously with regard to our desire for somewhat more interactive discussions, I would like to thank Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), for circulating the elements of his statement in advance, which enabled us to prepare for this debate. His efforts are very much appreciated. I

would also like to underline what the President said about Mr. Lajčák being a natural bridge between the OSCE and the United Nations, given his former and current roles. I think that bodes very well for cooperation between the two organizations with a view to ensuring functioning multilateralism. Mr. Lajčák can count on our full support.

In his briefing today, Mr. Lajčák also made a point that we believe is key — that his briefing alone will not change anything. It is crucial to ensure that our words today are followed by action. In the same spirit, I was heartened that he cited Ukraine as one of the most important areas of action, the same issue that we mentioned in our 12 February debate (see S/PV.8461) that our Russian colleague highlighted, the question of humanitarian action in the occupied areas of Ukraine and the bridge in Stanytsia Luhanska. I mentioned this two weeks ago, and Mr. Lajčák picked up on the same issue without us talking to one another, which demonstrates how important it is. Given that tens of thousands of people have to cross the bridge every day, is there a chance to develop a road map or something similar that we can not only talk about, but actually implement to repair the bridge? The situation there is terrible.

Together with France, Russia and Ukraine, Germany will continue efforts within the Normandy format to drive the process forward. We also believe that the Minsk agreements form the basis of that. With respect to the implementation of the Minsk agreements, my appreciation of what is happening is a bit different from that of our Russian colleague.

I want first and foremost to pay tribute to the important work of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. Under very difficult circumstances, it does a tremendous job. About two years ago, a colleague of the Special Monitoring Mission lost his life because his car ran over a mine in an area not controlled by the Government. Overall, the OSCE has continued to do good work.

Our Russian colleague just said that the OSCE should step up its monitoring activities, but unfortunately it is all too often prevented from doing that. Last month, the OSCE sent the latest report on the restrictions of the Special Monitoring Mission to all OSCE member States. The report says that in the latter half of 2018, the number of the restrictions on the Special Monitoring Mission's freedom of movement rose. The Mission

encountered 720 restrictions and more than a 60 per cent increase compared to the previous six months. The majority of all restrictions were denials of access. Similar to the first half of 2013, the majority of the restrictions were in the areas not under Government control — 75 per cent in the areas occupied and under Russian influence.

At the same time, the report mentions a number of drones that have been lost, the majority of them over Government-controlled areas. Those are very expensive and their loss is costly for the OSCE member States. I have a specific question in that regard. The report mentions that passage to Novoazovsk, close to the border with the Russian Federation, was denied 54 times. Is there any speculation as to why that was the case? That is a harbour town. Any information on that would be helpful, although the question is probably too specific. When I read the report in the context of freedom of movement, that fact struck me.

With regard to the Sea of Azov, many have mentioned the violation of international law and the fact that the release of Ukrainian personnel has still not happened. As our Russian colleague mentioned, the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission should cover the whole of Ukrainian territory. Could the OSCE employ a ship in the territorial waters of Ukraine to better control the area? So far, there are cars and drones, but perhaps a ship would also be useful.

With respect to Transnistria, we welcome the fact that since 2016 there has been a number of concrete developments in the Berlin Protocol, which is a positive point we must highlight. I would like to echo what my American colleague asked. Is there a chance that in Transnistria we can also now make progress on the implementation of the political declaration adopted at the OSCE Istanbul Summit with regard to the withdrawal of the illegally present troops?

On Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh, we would like to support the Chairperson's activities there. Chancellor Merkel just met with the Prime Minister of Armenia and encouraged him to use his broad mandate to constructively engage in the peace process. There again, the OSCE Minsk Group is in the lead, and I would also encourage the same from the Chairperson.

Let me finish first by taking the occasion to thank the Ambassador of Equatorial Guinea and her delegation for their leadership last month. I would also like to echo what some of those present have said, in particular

the representatives of the Dominican Republic and Equatorial Guinea mentioned International Women's Day. In the Chairperson's briefing, he highlighted, among other things, that he also wants to implement the women and peace and security agenda. I wonder if he has concrete plans to include quotas in the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. Also, as our colleagues from Equatorial Guinea just proposed, in the mediation talks, the Minsk Group, the 5+2 talks or the Trilateral Contact Group in Kyiv, can the Chairperson push a bit more to promote women's participation?

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

I would like to start by warmly thanking Mr. Miroslav Lajčák for his insightful briefing on the priorities of the Slovak chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). We are delighted to have him here with us today. Slovakia can count on France's full support in the implementation of its programme of work, in which the issues of the effectiveness of multilateralism and the protection of civilian populations in conflict zones — two themes that are at the heart of the joint presidencies of France and Germany — are given priority. Two points deserve particular attention in the context of the Security Council's cooperation with the OSCE. I will be brief.

First, with respect to the decisive role of the OSCE in resolving the Ukrainian crisis, the crisis is clearly one of the most serious and deadly violations of the founding principles of the OSCE, which were agreed in Helsinki more than 40 years ago. From the very beginning of the crisis, the OSCE has risen to the challenge. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine therefore contributes on a daily basis to reducing tensions in the east of the country, on the line of contact and throughout the conflict zone, and has made progress towards the implementation of the Minsk agreements by the parties.

We commend the courage of the women and men who are engaged on the ground in that regard and condemn in the strongest terms all actions that undermine their security or seek to obstruct their mission and destroy their equipment, as observed in recent months, especially in the separatist zone.

The OSCE also facilitates dialogue between the parties within the framework of the Trilateral Contact Group. It can count on the political support

of the Normandy format, as my Germany colleague mentioned. However, we must note that those discussions are now at an impasse. More than ever, they require a re-engagement of all parties, in particular Russia and the separatist groups that it supports. That re-engagement can be demonstrated only by through strong political resolve to support those talks, which is both urgent and essential. The parties must assume their responsibilities and meet the expectations of the civilian populations trapped in the conflict. That more constructive attitude should be observed in both the Trilateral Contact Group and the Normandy format.

We cannot talk about the Ukrainian crisis without going back to the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia five years ago. That violation of Ukraine's internationally recognized borders is the cause of growing tensions in the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea. In that regard, we reiterate our call for the unconditional release of the Ukrainian sailors who have been detained since the serious naval incident last November, as well as for the return of the seized boats.

Secondly, with regard to the conflict in Ukraine, we call on all actors in the protracted conflicts and all Member States to support the OSCE's mediation efforts. The OSCE is contributing to the peaceful and political resolution of the protracted conflicts in Nagorno Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria, but in that regard, too, only the political will of the parties can bring negotiations to a successful conclusion, leading to the settlement of those crises. France will continue to be fully involved in the mediation of the conflict in Nagorno Karabakh in its capacity as co-Chair of the Minsk Group, together with the United States and Russia. The commitments undertaken by participating States and the dialogue facilitation activities led by the OSCE demand respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms by all States. The vision of peace and security in Europe, as envisaged at the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, rests on that pillar. France reiterates its commitment to the OSCE as a platform for dialogue with regard to all security issues affecting the European continent and its multidimensional approach to security.

In conclusion, I will recall, on the one hand, the priority that must be given to cooperation between the United Nations and regional agencies in accordance

with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations and, on the other, the large overlap between the work of the OSCE and that of the United Nations. At a time when divisions at the international level were seemingly insurmountable, the Helsinki Final Act, the cornerstone of the OSCE, opened a new chapter in the history of multilateralism. We must now let that example inspire us as a renewed and revitalized form of multilateralism seems to us more necessary than ever to meet today's great challenges. Let us never forget that the two secret weapons of such multilateralism are respect and dialogue. The two organizations foster a shared approach that combines security, development and human rights. It is our duty to continue to support the work of the OSCE to strengthen security at the regional level, in particular in all crises in which that organization is called upon to act. France's commitment in that direction is firm.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lajčák to respond to the comments and questions raised.

**Mr. Lajčák:** I would like to thank all members of the Security Council for their statements and expressions of support for our chairmanship-in-Office and its priorities. It is very encouraging to us. I am also grateful for their assessment of the state of play on different issues and challenges in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. We have duly taken good note of them and will use them in our future work. They are very valuable to us. I am also grateful for the interactive approach of the Ambassador of Germany, and we will provide answers to his questions outside the Chamber. I would like to wish Council members every success in their work because that is what we all need — the successful work of the Security Council. I am very much looking forward to our cooperation throughout our chairmanship.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Lajčák for his additional remarks and his personal commitment and that of his organization to reinforcing the partnership between the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the United Nations.

*The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.*