

**Address**

**by H.E. Mr. Edi Rama,**

**Prime Minister and Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania  
and OSCE Chairperson-in-Office**

**Priority Outline for the Albanian OSCE Chairmanship 2020**

**To the United Nations Security Council**

**New York, 06 February 2020**

*Madame / Mr. President,*

*Members of the Security Council,*

*Excellencies,*

*Dear colleagues,*

I am honored to address this distinguished Council in my capacity of Chairperson-in-Office of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe. 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 UN and the OSCE are natural partners. As the world's largest regional security organization under Chapter Eight of the UN Charter, the OSCE is an important pillar of the international rules-based order.

Our work directly supports the implementation of the global UN mandate and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Since 1993, a structured framework has guided our cooperation, reinforced by a joint statement 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 this distinguished Council.

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

**Number one: 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 given by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine to reducing tensions and fostering peace, is essential. Two weeks ago I made my first visit in this new capacity to Ukraine. I met 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 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 this format and outcomes of the Normandy summit are steps in the right direction. Still, there continues to be civilian casualties and loss of life and we need to ensure primarily a full and sustainable ceasefire.

In my meetings in Ukraine, what I heard 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 contact line, I had the 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 in Stanytsia Luhanska is relieving the hardship of those living across the contact line, 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 conflict resolution efforts are broader.

During our Chairmanship we are supporting also 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 freedom of movement.

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

Across the OSCE region, our Organisation 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 prevent reemergence of conflicts and to strengthen institutions.

Women continue to be disproportionately affected by conflicts in the OSCE area and across the world. They are also unjustly excluded from peace efforts.

Inspired by the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, Albania will inject new momentum in the promotion of the role of women in peace processes. I know first-hand in my own Government how effective the contribution of women leaders is, and I hope that this dossier will be one of enhanced cooperation between the UN and the OSCE.

Other opportunities for reinforced mutual efforts will be on countering violent extremism and terrorism, building on the excellent cooperation with the UN Office of Counter Terrorism, and addressing transnational organised crime, in cooperation with the UN 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 freedom of expression and 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 times. Corruption erodes the very foundations of our society and is a major threat to stability and prosperity. Therefore, Albania will promote 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 UN, 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 the destruction of surplus stockpiles of ammunition.

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

### **Our third priority: dialogue**

Some might say that dialogue is the OSCE's ultimate purpose. And the divisions in our region show how badly we need it.

This year is the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe. To promote its legacy, I will make it my personal commitment to advance dialogue between OSCE states, and among and within our societies – more than a billion people.

Key issues such as risk reduction, incident prevention and environmental protection will feature in debates between OSCE states, international organizations and the civil society. We will promote 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 this 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 to New York, I opened the Tirana Conference on Combating anti-Semitism. Together, we remembered the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps. We also 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 proud of its history of inter-religious and cultural tolerance, which we see as essential to world peace and security.

In our work as honest brokers and chairs of the OSCE, we will be inspired by our tradition of tolerance, openness and respect.

Dear Excellencies,

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 to promote 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 guard these principles.

Together, the UN and the OSCE can be decisive for peace. Now more than ever.

I thank you for your attention.