

Mr. Pedersen (Norway):

I would first like to express my heartfelt condolences to his family, friends and colleagues at the Russian Mission on the passing of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin. Ambassador Churkin was a highly respected colleague who sought to find solutions through compromise and great diplomatic skill. I always appreciated our conversations. We have lost an extraordinary diplomat and friend. May he rest in peace.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and my own country, Norway.

Europe has seen much conflict but also groundbreaking cooperation. A robust, comprehensive and inclusive security architecture with the European Union (EU), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), NATO and the Council of Europe has ensured peace in most of Europe since the close of the Second World War. The United Nations must cooperate closely with all those partners in order to address ongoing conflicts and prevent future ones. However, Europe is now facing serious challenges and attempts to undermine that rule-based order. Russia's aggression against Ukraine, as demonstrated in its ongoing violations of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol, constitutes a clear violation of international law.

Apart from the unique role played by the OSCE and the support provided by the European Union, international efforts have not been sufficient. We call on the Security Council, the Secretary-General and the whole United Nations to assess what more can be done to restore security and respect for Ukraine's sovereignty, unity, independence and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. We must see concrete steps taken to implement the Minsk agreements. We commend and fully support the Normandy format efforts.

Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity have been severely compromised, in breach of the Charter of the United Nations. We call for access for international human rights mechanisms to Georgia's breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In many conflicts, multilateral organizations are hindered from fulfilling their role. In Abkhazia, the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia was terminated, and other institutions have not been allowed meaningful access. The Geneva international discussions must continue, and the Security Council resolutions on Nagorno Karabakh must be implemented.

The United Nations has been directly engaged in Cyprus from the start of the conflict. The Secretary-General's good offices and patient support have now produced real prospects for genuine progress. We commend him for his focus on diplomacy for peace.

We remain convinced that when allowed to fulfil its mandate, the Security Council can play an important role in conflict prevention and in upholding a rule-based international order.

The OSCE is also playing a unique role in Moldova. The resumption of the 5+2 negotiations on Transnistria has demonstrated the value of an OSCE-led small- steps approach. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the international community intervened successfully to assist national authorities after an early warning from the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, which probably prevented a wider conflict. An ounce of prevention was worth a pound of cure. In Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the active presence of the United Nations, the EU, the OSCE, NATO and others has provided security and facilitated reconciliation between peoples. Regional cooperation is the key to development and prosperity.

The Nordic countries will continue to promote the effective participation of women and the agenda on women and peace and security wherever there are discussions of peace and security. We urge the Council to work to ensure that gender equality and women's rights are an integral part of its work, as they increase legitimacy and the possibilities for lasting peace.