

Mr. Zannier:

Let me start out by expressing my heartfelt condolences to the Russian delegation for the passing away of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin. Ambassador Churkin, who I knew well from my time as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, will be remembered and missed by many inside and outside this Chamber.

I would like to thank the Ukrainian presidency of the Security Council for the invitation to address members during today's open debate. As the Secretary-General pointed out, ensuring lasting peace and security in Europe remains a major objective of the United Nations. But it is also at the core of the mandate and activities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). I am glad to say that both organizations are united in their shared priority to address conflict situations in a complementary and mutually reinforcing manner.

After the end of the Cold War, the promise of a common and indivisible security space from Vancouver to Vladivostok, outlined in the Charter of Paris for a New Europe, as well as in the Istanbul Charter, seemed within reach. The vision of a cooperative and rules-based order on the old continent appeared irreversible. Many across the Euro-Atlantic space looked to the OSCE with high hopes and great expectations. But the conflicts that followed the violent break-up of Yugoslavia and the dissolution of the Soviet Union shattered that emerging security paradigm. Borders shifted and re-emerged, dividing peoples and minorities, engendering crisis and human suffering, sowing mistrust and creating different threat perceptions. The dire consequences of those conflicts are still with us today.

Looking back, we must recognize today that the order that materialized after the end of the Cold War failed to bring about full stability or balance. Trust and confidence in East-West relations quickly faded. Where trust is lacking, it becomes difficult to predict State behaviour. That is especially true in times when uncertainty and lack of transparency are intentionally used as political tools.

The OSCE has been a primary actor in addressing conflicts in Europe throughout the last two decades. The organization was transformed in the wake of the optimism of the early 1990s and evolved again in response to the ensuing conflicts. It continues to change today in response to both traditional and emerging challenges, but the fundamental characteristics of the OSCE remain the same. It offers a genuinely holistic view of how different elements of security interact and must be addressed together. It can provide a bridge between sides that sometimes have radically different visions of what security means, and it continues to invest in efforts to prevent destabilization and conflict, and to deal with the consequences when they appear.

Throughout its history, the OSCE has played a clear and active role as a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. In some cases the relationship with United Nations structures has been explicit. The OSCE Mission in Kosovo was linked to resolution 1244 (1999) and was assigned the lead role in matters relating to institution-building and human rights, as a distinct but constituent component in the framework of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo. It had a clear lead in establishing key democratic institutions such as the Kosovo Judicial Institute, the Central Election Commission, the Ombudsperson and the Kosovo Police Service School. And it continues to play an active role today.

Since the first OSCE field operations were established, the Organization's role in south-eastern Europe has adapted and changed in response to changing needs and persistent challenges. This remains the region where the OSCE continues to maintain its largest field presence, which, along with the OSCE institutions, is operating for stability, dialogue and security. We have long focused on supporting election systems in which people have confidence, and on promoting peaceful inter-ethnic relations.

Today the OSCE also focuses on new areas, including youth. We need a new generation able to act as a positive force for change and stability; to question old, divisive messages; and to call for accountable and transparent Government and institutions. In south-eastern Europe, as elsewhere across the OSCE region, we face increasing threats from violent extremism, radicalization and terrorism. The challenge of countering these threats transcends old dividing lines and national interests. The OSCE will continue to work with a wide range of partners to support our participating States in confronting this challenge.

The crisis in and around Ukraine continues to be a major source of tension and instability in Europe. Sadly, it has marked the return of geopolitics on the OSCE agenda, and it is challenging our model of cooperation. Inter-State relations are now more than ever before governed by a zero-sum mentality that we hoped we had left behind. In too many parts of the OSCE region, we still find conflicts and competition continuing, re-emerging and developing, both locally and regionally.

Our swift and flexible response to the unfolding crisis in and around Ukraine in 2014 is the most visible example of the OSCE's ability to live up to its Chapter VIII responsibilities and to take collective action to address a crisis at both the political level and on the ground. We established and continue to run the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) in Ukraine, that is larger than any mission we have run before. Although unarmed and civilian, the Mission is performing quasi-peacekeeping functions, such as monitoring and verifying the ceasefire and the withdrawal of heavy weapons. As such, it has broken new ground in the area of peace operations. I am pleased to highlight that the Mission has established productive working relationships with various United Nations bodies,

including the Security Council. On a number of occasions, both the Chief Monitor in Ukraine, Ambassador Apakan, and the OSCE representative in the Trilateral Contact Group, Ambassador Sajdik, have briefed the Council.

However, progress towards a peaceful resolution continues to elude us. Despite the tremendous efforts to work for peace, recent increases in fighting remind us of the very real risk of escalation, and we are looking at the suffering of the populations affected by combat. The SMM remains closely involved in supporting adherence to a ceasefire and the implementation of the Minsk Agreements. In that connection, I must say that I am concerned by the recent announcement concerning Russian recognition of documents issued by the self-proclaimed republics, as this complicates implementation of the Minsk agreements.

The SMM cannot prevent ceasefire violations or force the withdrawal of weapons that have returned to the line of contact, with a view to ensuring the security and freedom of movement it needs to do its job. For that, we need the political engagement of the various sides and the international community. We are now monitoring the recently announced ceasefire, and we are ready to observe the much-needed withdrawal of heavy weapons — a key step towards de-escalation.

More generally, we are drawing on lessons from our current operation in Ukraine to develop a framework for future missions and crisis response. As the SMM moves into areas of work new to the OSCE, we have also appreciated the expertise and advice of the United Nations, not least on the use of technology, including unmanned aerial vehicles. Currently, we are in negotiations with the Department of Field Support to conclude an agreement in order to utilize United Nations system contracts and to purchase from the strategic deployment stocks in Brindisi. That agreement will be modelled on similar arrangements with the African Union, and we intend to conclude it soon.

Although the crisis in and around Ukraine continues to dominate the OSCE agenda, we should keep in mind the other protracted conflicts in the OSCE area. The OSCE has played an active role in their negotiating processes since the 1990s. We support and facilitate contacts through institutional support and the work of representatives of the annual OSCE chairmanship. That role is bolstered by the inclusive and consensus-based nature of the OSCE. As we step up efforts to prevent further crises and facilitate the resolution of protracted conflicts, the readiness of the parties to conflicts to take responsibility for resolving them remains key to breaking out of the current stalemates.

The Nagorno Karabakh conflict has seen a worrying deterioration on the ground. The hostilities that erupted in April 2016 contributed to the highest number of soldiers and civilians killed and wounded in a single year since the May 1994 ceasefire. The use of

heavy weapons and the clear targeting of villages set a disturbing precedent. And the risk of further fighting remains high. The OSCE Minsk Group co-Chairs continue to seek a way to retreat from violence and work towards a negotiated settlement. So far they have not been able to secure agreement to implement even modest confidence-building measures. Their work keeps a space open for discussions and helps to manage the conflict, but it is for the parties to choose to use that opportunity to take a step forward towards peace.

The Transnistrian settlement process may be less fraught with the risk of violence, but in this too we need a fresh determination to move forward. Last year Germany, as Chair of the OSCE, achieved renewed activity in the 5+2 format. The Berlin Protocol last June marked an encouraging commitment by the sides to work for agreements. We need to maintain and build on this momentum.

Following the conflict in 2008, we have not managed to return to our presence on the ground in Georgia. However, the OSCE's track record of strong relations with the United Nations and its agencies provides a solid basis for further development of our relationship. We work closely together with the United Nations and the European Union as co-chairs of the Geneva international discussions, and as co-facilitator of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism meetings in Ergneti. The OSCE also contributes to confidence-building in the region through targeted initiatives on the ground.

Secretary-General Guterres has sought to launch a surge in the diplomacy for peace and to adopt a comprehensive approach in conflict prevention that marries peace and security, sustainable development and human rights. I strongly support his initiative and look forward to working with him to achieve that. Effective conflict prevention and resolution require building strong coalitions, not only among international organizations, but also with civil society and the private sector. The inclusion of women in all stages of the conflict cycle is key. The OSCE has developed structures and policies to help its membership implement resolution 1325 (2000) and to ensure that women form a natural part of its peace-building efforts. We appreciate Secretary-General Guterres' interest in mediation and share his view of it as a priority. In particular, I look forward to his launch of the mediation initiative to enhance capacities both in the field and at Headquarters. We have pursued the same goals, within our modest resources, and I look forward to further developing cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in this area.

The OSCE has already established a joint strategic work plan with the Department of Political Affairs, including an exchange of experts from our mediation roster and the United Nations Standby Team of Senior Mediation Advisers. There will certainly be lessons we can learn and share from the experiences of the United Nations and OSCE as

we try to close the gap between early warning and early action.

The OSCE will continue to nurture and bolster this valuable relationship with the United Nations by making full use of the potential of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, which continues to be underutilized. During my tenure as OSCE Secretary General, I have strived to operationalize United Nations- OSCE cooperation, not only in mediation, conflict prevention and resolution, but also in other equally important areas, such as the fight against transnational threats or in the economic and environmental sphere. The establishment of the United Nations Liaison Office for Peace and Security in Vienna is a tangible outcome of these efforts.

Looking ahead, I would like to encourage the Secretary-General to pursue the practice of retreats with heads of regional organizations. In this connection, we could look into ways to establish a follow-up mechanism to exchange best practices and promote cooperation among regions in the field of conflict prevention and resolution. I am grateful for the opportunity to speak today and look forward to an interactive discussion.