

Ms. Söder (Sweden):

I would like to begin by thanking the Ukrainian presidency for organizing today's important debate on conflicts in Europe. I am grateful to the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, and Secretary General Zannier, of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), for their briefings, and I also align myself with the statement delivered by my friend and colleague, Ms. Helga Schmid, Secretary-General of the European External Action Service of the European Union (EU), as well as that to be delivered later on behalf of the Nordic countries.

The European Union, of which Sweden is a proud member, has been the single-most important institutional source of peace and stability in Europe since the end of the Second World War. With its vision of a Europe whole and free, based on democratic values and shared economic prosperity, the EU has been a vital mechanism for conflict prevention on a continent where two world wars originated and where millions of people paid with their lives for the freedom that we enjoy today. The EU partnership with its neighbours in support of democracy, prosperity and human rights has never been a zero-sum game to the detriment of relations with other countries. On the contrary, deepened cooperation with external partners is encouraged. In the western Balkans, for example, the Security Council has gradually handed over to the EU its responsibilities for peacebuilding and security in countries that were once subject to large United Nations operations. Sweden believes that the more inclusive the EU is, the more stable and prosperous our continent becomes.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe is a transatlantic body that offers a unique platform for dialogue on European peace and security, precisely because it is based on commonly agreed-on principles and commitments. Only when the OSCE principles, which are the foundation of the European security order, are fully respected can we achieve lasting security and stability. The OSCE is a vital contributor to sustaining peace in line with United Nations efforts to that end, and confidence-building measures and arms control should now be enhanced again, because a comprehensive concept of security remains a strength and added value of the OSCE and must be upheld.

Respect for democracy, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms remains a precondition for our common security. The OSCE's human dimension and autonomous institutions — the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the Representative on Freedom of the Media and the High Commissioner on National Minorities — should be allowed to play their full role. They are key assets across the conflict cycle and today are needed more than ever as we try to prevent armed conflict. The mandates and budgets of those institutions must be preserved and strong candidates selected to lead them.

Sweden is a militarily non-aligned country. As such, our own security depends on a rule-based international order under which the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, large and small, are respected everywhere, globally. Our long-standing commitment to multilateral cooperation and our staunch defence of international law are rooted in that realization. It is therefore with great concern that we note that Europe is currently facing the most serious challenges to its

security since the end of the Cold War. As we speak, the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, which has already cost some 10,000 lives, is causing inhuman suffering for large groups of innocent civilians. When one State decides to use military force to invade and annex a part of another State and threaten its sovereignty, that is a threat to us all. That is why the European Union has so clearly and unequivocally condemned those breaches of international law and attempts to undermine the rule-based international order and European security order, as enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act, the Paris Charter and the Budapest Memorandum, and in accordance with the rules and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

I would like to point to some specific areas that require immediate action and joint efforts on the part of the members of the Council and other relevant regional actors — the EU, the OSCE and others — in order to secure Europe's future as a continent of peace and prosperity and to accord with Chapter VIII of the Charter. We must ensure that an end is brought to the Russian aggression against Ukraine — as demonstrated in its violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and integrity and its illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol — through implementation of the Minsk process, with deliberations in the Normandy format, and through a decrease in violence.

We must act in a manner that is conducive to long-term stability in the Balkans, and uphold and strengthen the EU enlargement policy. We must commit to efforts to move the promising Cyprus peace process forward. We must resolve the so-called protracted conflicts in Georgia, Moldova and Nagorno Karabakh, without delay and in accordance with international law. We must recognize the importance of peace and security of the EU Eastern Partnership, strengthen the European instruments for confidence- and security-building measures and conventional arms control through the OSCE, actively engage in disarmament to rid the world of nuclear weapons, and involve women as actors in all of this. By supporting these goals, we will not only buttress peace and stability in Europe, but also show that the elected and permanent members of the Security Council are committed to defending the rules and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and our commitment to common gains and security.