



OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting in Milano, 6. – 7. December 2018

Statement by H. E. Mr. Sturla Sigurjónsson, Permanent Secretary,

Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland

Mr Chairman,

Security and stability in Europe is being put to test these days. Recent events near the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait give rise to concerns for European security. Violations of the freedom of maritime passage touch a raw nerve in all seafaring nations. We laud Ukraine's restraint in this situation and call on Russia to release the sailors and ships seized.

We support Ukraine's sovereignty and independence within its internationally recognised borders and territorial waters. We also reiterate our support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

There clearly is a need for the good offices of the OSCE, and that all participating states work toward reducing risks, preventing precarious incidents and

increasing military transparency. The modernising the Vienna Document is of paramount importance in this respect.

Now is the time for increased confidence-building measures. All participating states should honour fully the CFE Treaty and the Open Skies Treaty. Otherwise, the successes which our predecessors strived so hard to achieve will be in vain.

We support the Structured Dialogue addressing risk reduction and threat perceptions, and welcome the focus on new kinds of warfare, such as hybrid warfare.

Mr Chairman/Madam Chair,

We value the OSCE work on economic and environmental security, as well as the focus on digital transformation. Digital development effects web and information security, the security of our financial systems, the fight against corruption and terrorist financing. We also emphasize that the increased use of renewable energy means increased energy security.

On the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Iceland remains fully committed to gender equality, the protection of children

and the rights of LGBTI individuals. We strongly support OSCE's Human Dimension and ODIHR and other OSCE Institutions.

The Mediterranean Dimension has grown in importance for the security in the OSCE area. And since the OSCE area reaches from the Mediterranean to the Arctic, allow me to mention that Iceland assumes the presidency of the Arctic Council in the coming year. We will focus on sustainability, environmental protection and the welfare of the inhabitants, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Finally, Mr Chairman/Madam Chair,

I wish Slovakia every success in chairing the OSCE in 2019 and thank Italy for the hospitality here in Milano and a successful chairmanship this year.