

# UK closing statement at the OSCE Ministerial Council 2021

Thank you Madam Chair. At the end of a challenging year you have faced a tough challenge of hosting 56 other participating States, made harder with COVID-19 continuing to impact us all. So, first I would like to thank you and all your colleagues for the great hospitality which you have shown us all here in Stockholm.

The role of Chair comes with much responsibility, and we welcome both Estonia and Finland's willingness to take on the role. We congratulate Finland on their appointment for 2025 and regret that we have not reached consensus on Estonia's bid which has our strong support.

But to return to Sweden, Madam Chair, we have been grateful for your leadership in the face of numerous challenges. In their interventions many of our Ministers mentioned our failure to agree a unified budget until August and noted our inability to reach consensus leading to the delay of the Annual Security Review Conference (ASRC) and summer recess, and a failure to hold the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM).

Sadly the issues have not been linked solely to process. We have yet to see the full consequences of the refusal by Russia to renew the mandate of the Border Observer Mission along the Ukrainian Russian state border. This is especially troubling given that the ongoing restrictions to the access of the Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine impact on the Mission's ability to deliver its mandate as our eyes and ears. The Secretary General spoke movingly of the service by the men and women of the SMM. We are grateful for their work under difficult circumstances. We also recognise the contribution of all those working for the OSCE in its many structures, institutions and missions and as the Secretary General said "getting on with their job".

Recent events underline the need to fully implement the OSCE's politico-military instruments – as well as to ensure they remain fit for purpose. We were disappointed that fruitful areas were blocked in the Forum for Security Cooperation for a second year in a row. We hope that next year will bring a renewed desire for constructive cooperation.

I have been honoured, Madam Chair, to have supported your Chairpersonship through my role as Chair of the Security Committee. I am disappointed that we were not able to reach consensus on any of the four strong draft Ministerial Council texts in the Committee this year – four texts on topics core to the work of the Committee. However, I believe that there were elements that were able to achieve a wide consensus and which provides a foundation to build upon next year.

As participating States we also have a role to play in meeting our principles and commitments and in holding one another to account. As we declared 30 years ago in Moscow, commitments in the human dimension are matters of direct

and legitimate interest to all participating States and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of participating States. We heard yesterday in a side event that the human rights situation in Belarus continues to deteriorate. We call again for the Belarusian authorities to live up to their OSCE commitments and international human rights obligations. We were disappointed we were unable to find consensus in the human dimension this year.

We also welcome the suggestions put forward on the unified budget cycle which we believe provide the basis for future collaboration.

I want to take a short moment to recognise the agreement we were able to reach on climate. This is particularly important less than a month after [COP26](#). We hope we can build on that work and also enhance our efforts to mainstream gender across all dimensions of the OSCE's work. Advancing full implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda is essential for our approach to comprehensive security.

Madam Chair, as we look forward to next year, we offer our full support to Poland as incoming Chair. We are under no illusions. Their task will also be a challenging one, but we are fully committed in our support. We hope that others will also find the political will to work together to find consensus on the range of issues which merit our attention.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.