

**Statement by H.E. Leonid Kozhara,  
Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE,  
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine**  
*(United States Congress,  
Hearings organized by the US Helsinki Commission,  
Washington, 8 May 2013)*

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased and honoured to be here with you today as Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

It is a great responsibility for me personally and for Ukraine to lead the world's largest regional security organization throughout this year.

With 57 participating States stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok, the OSCE is uniquely designed as a comprehensive and an inclusive platform for security dialogue in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian area.

We strongly believe that the OSCE is well suited to address the changing security challenges in its area and that we need to continue strengthening its tool box and improving its coherence.

Ukraine, as the Chairmanship-in-Office, is a consistent advocate of the OSCE concept of comprehensive, cooperative, equal and indivisible security.

We take the view that lasting and sustainable peace and security can only be achieved by pursuing a balanced approach across all three dimensions – the political and military, the environmental and economic as well as the human dimension.

As we approach the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, the “**Helsinki+40 process**”, launched in Dublin last year, should serve, in our understanding, as a catalyst for re-energizing the Organization.

A strong engagement from the United States will be of great importance for success of the effort.

Distinguished audience,

We are convinced that the **Human Dimension** belongs to the core of the concept of comprehensive security.

The Ukrainian Chairmanship outlined the overarching goal of promoting full implementation of the existing human dimension commitments by all participating States.

The *fight against trafficking in persons* remains one of the key issues that are being addressed by the OSCE under the Ukrainian Chairmanship. It is a plague that many OSCE countries, including Ukraine, have been suffering from for many years. We need to combine all possible instruments to meet this challenge.

A set of public events has been organised to this end, one of them being the international conference on strengthening of the OSCE response to trafficking in human beings, to be held in Kyiv in June.

*Fostering the freedom of the media* is also among our priorities in this dimension. A Human Rights Seminar in Warsaw is planned to address the media freedom legislation issues. It would result in developing relevant recommendations for participating States.

We will also strive to achieve progress in the areas of free movement of people, promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination, freedom of association and assembly, inter-religious dialogue, in promoting freedom of religion or belief, as well as democratic elections and election observation.

Attaching great importance to the *promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination through youth education*, the Chairmanship is preparing to host the OSCE Youth Summit in July – August 2013 in Crimea, Ukraine.

We also believe in the importance of constructive *engagement of civil society in achieving the OSCE goals*.

Election monitoring is one of the hallmarks of the OSCE. A smooth co-operation between the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and ODIHR is essential. The OSCE must speak in one voice.

It is for the benefit of all the OSCE participating States to take recommendations made by international observation missions seriously. For instance, following the October 2012 parliamentary elections in Ukraine, its Government approved a relevant Action Plan on priority measures to improve the electoral legislation.

At the same time, to ensure compliance in election observation, it is important to safeguard independence, impartiality and professionalism of observers in line with OSCE decisions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Progress in finding sustainable and long-term solution to the **protracted conflicts** in the OSCE area is on top of our agenda.

My first visit in the capacity of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in January was to **Moldova**. I encouraged the leadership in Chisinau and Tiraspol to engage constructively into the negotiation process.

The political will for mutual rapprochement at both banks of Dniester is a key to finding compromise solutions.

We hope that the results of current political process in Moldova will give a new impetus to further development of dialogue between Chisinau and Tiraspol, to which Ukraine remains ready to contribute.

We remain convinced that success of the **Geneva process** is crucial for improving the security and humanitarian situation in the conflict areas in Georgia.

The Chairmanship welcomes and supports the efforts of the Minsk Group Co-Chairs directed at promoting dialogue between Azerbaijan and Armenia on the settlement of **Nagorno-Karabakh** conflict.

During my upcoming visit to the South Caucasus on 17-20 June I intend to underline the need for a strict implementation of ceasefire, and to support the call of the Minsk Group Co-Chairs for a more active engagement in the negotiations over the Basic principles of the settlement.

Within the **political and military dimension**, we aim at modernizing the OSCE politico-military instruments.

As a strong advocate of non-proliferation, Ukraine attaches special importance to enhancing the OSCE's profile in countering the threat of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

We appreciate the high level of cooperation between Ukraine and the United States on updating the 1994 OSCE Principles Governing Non-Proliferation. We expect that in close collaboration with the United States and other key stakeholders we will be able to finalize this work prior to the Kyiv OSCE Ministerial Council in December this year.

Combating cybercrime remains of paramount importance. To this end, Ukraine will continue to provide support to the OSCE Open-ended Informal Working Group.

We will also work together with its Chair, the Permanent Representative of the USA to the OSCE and all participating States to achieve progress on the initial set of confidence building measures to reduce the risks of conflicts stemming from the use of information and communication technologies.

Distinguished audience,

It would hardly be possible to promote a comprehensive and lasting security in the OSCE region without properly addressing challenges in the **economic and environmental sphere**.

We have proposed to explore whether the OSCE could provide an added value and play a role in the development of the new trade and transport corridors.

The core theme here is also increasing stability and security by improving the **environmental footprint of energy-related activities**

In this context we came out with the initiative to hold a High Level International Conference on energy security under the auspice of the OSCE Chairmanship in Ashgabat in October this year. We count on active U.S. engagement in implementing this initiative.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The withdrawal of international security forces from Afghanistan in 2014 will have considerable security implications for the OSCE area.

As the OSCE Chairmanship we will further explore areas that require enhanced interaction with Afghanistan, as well as synergy in activities of relevant international actors, to effectively address challenges arising from transition of responsibility in the country.

The OSCE has regular dialogue with Partners in the Middle East.

It also promotes concrete projects which can offer the best practices of the OSCE, together with lessons learned, on the challenges of democratic change, upon request by Partners in the region. The number of the requests is growing, and the scope of interest is increasing in all three OSCE dimensions. We remain fully committed to this process.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Now, as I have dwelt enough upon the OSCE Chairmanship agenda, let me put on the toga of the Foreign Minister of Ukraine and say some words about my country's foreign and internal politics, as they are of obvious interest to this distinguished audience.

The Ukrainian politics are currently streamlined by two processes, perfectly complementary to each other.

The first is the ambitious programme of internal reforms that the Government is deliberately implementing under the clear mandate by the citizens that have elected it.

The second is the process of the European integration of Ukraine and, in particular, the preparation for signing of the Association agreement with the European Union in November this year.

Ukraine is focused at conducting successful reforms in budget financing, electoral legislation, rule of law sphere, administrative governance, fight against corruption and public policy.

There are several reforms currently ongoing in Ukraine, but I would like to underline our actions in reforming our judiciary system. The adoption of a new Criminal Procedure Code and laws on Bar became cornerstones of this judiciary reform.

At the same time a special Constitutional Assembly has been established to elaborate approaches and visions for reforming the Constitution of Ukraine.

While reforming the judicial system, we followed direct consultation and expert advice from the Council of Europe and the Venice Commission. Many of the EU's requirements regarding legal reform have already been implemented.

Numerous Ukrainian reforms have been praised internationally. For instance, the pension reform was estimated as one of the most socially balanced reforms in Europe by the World Bank.

The World Customs Organisation has commended the new Customs Code for its compliance with international and European standards.

And the Danish Helsinki Committee for Human Rights together with the Council of Europe experts regards the new Criminal Procedure Code as indeed one of the best in Europe.

The Ukrainian leadership is truly committed to doing everything in its power to ensure the signing of the Association Agreement with the European Union during the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius in November this year.

Nevertheless, in the end we are determined to implement all the declared reforms not so much to report good news to the EU, but to ensure democratic and pro-European development of Ukraine from within.

Let me finally say some words about Ukraine's relations with Russia.

No country can obviously change its geography. This means there's no other option for Ukraine but to strive to maintain good-neighbourly and partnership relations with Russia.

There is an intensive public debate in Ukraine about its relations with the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. Let me be absolutely clear on that.

Russia and the Customs Union as a whole are key trade partners of Ukraine. Should Ukraine not aim at the most favourable trade regime with the Customs Union? Of course it should.

Just two examples: the European Free Trade Association that unites four wealthy European countries has already held eight rounds of talks about a free trade area with the Customs Union. The New Zealand is currently doing exactly the same.

Ukraine has asked for an observer status in the Customs Union. We consider that it would serve Ukraine's interests in its trade with the Union and at the same time would correspond to Kiev's commitments within the WTO and with the European Union. Ukraine's proposal is currently under consideration and we hope for a prompt positive result.

Ladies and gentlemen!

Much speech is one thing, well-timed speech is another, said the great Sophocles two and a half thousand years ago.

As I do not believe either in the effectiveness of sterile monologues or flamboyant speeches, I stand ready, in my both current capacities, to be engaged with you in an informal yet substantial discussion.

I thank you!