



**Statement by H.E. Helga Hauksdóttir,
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Iceland,
at the 1457th Special Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council,
Vienna, 25 January 2024**

Thank you, Madame Chair,

Iceland fully aligns with the statement of the European Union. I would like to make the following remarks in my national capacity.

Allow me to wholeheartedly congratulate His Excellency, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade, H.E. Ian Borg, and Malta for taking on the Chairpersonship of the OSCE for the year of 2024, and thank you for sharing the priorities and programme for the coming year, in the inspiring opening address this morning. Allow me also to use this opportunity to thank North-Macedonia for their leadership during their time as CiO in 2023.

Malta has shown extraordinary leadership and dedication to the values of multilateralism and diplomacy during a trying time for this organization and amidst the biggest security crisis our region has faced in decades. We welcome your clear priorities that reflect the current security crisis and landscape in our region.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has deeply altered the security situation in the OSCE region. Russia has chosen to wage an illegal and unjustified war against Ukraine and the multilateral system, undermining security in all three dimensions.

It is a blatant violation of international law, including the UN Charter, and our OSCE principles and commitments, enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act

Russia has destabilised and undermined decades worth of work on arms control and disarmament, including by withdrawing its ratification of important conventions in this field. This is extremely alarming and we urge Russia to reconsider its ruinous path.

To rebuild trust, it is necessary to restore respect for international law and our OSCE commitments, the principles we have all agreed upon.

Iceland will continue to call on Russia to immediately cease all hostilities and attacks, completely and unconditionally withdraw its troops from the entire territory of Ukraine and comply with its international obligations. Iceland will continue to support Ukraine for as long as needed.

Madame Chair,

The OSCE remains an integral multilateral institution for European security, for conflict resolution and restoring of stability, not least through the important work of its institutions and field missions across the whole region.

We agree with you that we must support our OSCE institutions that work to protect and promote these important values and hold us, the participating States, accountable in implementing and respecting our commitments. This also means ensuring their leadership and adequate budgets.

Iceland will continue to defend and promote gender equality, human rights, democracy, and the rule of law, which are prerequisites for comprehensive security.

Amidst dramatic degradation of regional security and a frightening trend of democratic backsliding, it is critical that we keep human rights, democracy and the rule of law front and centre.

All participating States have committed to holding democratic and free elections, including by inviting ODIHR to observe elections. Iceland strongly regrets the decision of Belarus not to invite ODIHR to observe its upcoming elections and urges Belarus to reconsider this decision.

Madame Chair,

We share your focus on defending the OSCE principles and commitments and protecting the international rule-based order.

During this critical time for our organization and region, allow me to assure you, Minister Borg, of Iceland's full support as you take on this important role and leadership. We wish you and your capable team in Vienna every success.

I thank you.