

Save Europe's Overarching Security Structure

Participating States Should Exercise Utmost Political Responsibility to Resolve Crisis in the OSCE

**Appeal by members of the Civic Solidarity Platform
16 July 2020, updated signatory list by end of the day**

In the past weeks, a shocking process has unfolded of delegitimizing the work of four top officials of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) by States participating in the organization and thus putting in question the value of the work of the institutions and bodies they have been leading. Details of choices they have made in their work have been blown up out of proportion in relation to the great volume and importance of the work realized. Much-needed reform activity started by Secretary General Thomas Greminger has been thwarted by linking his re-appointment to the re-appointment of the three heads of institutions. This threatens further the continuity and quality of the OSCE's activities. Participating States' Ministries of foreign affairs should urgently invest energy and time in this situation at the highest level.

Appointments to the positions in question should be based on merits in multilateral diplomacy, on success in previous governance and management roles, and strategic insight in what comprehensive security means in our days, including cooperation with civil society. No such process has been put in place. In fact, the future of any of the four has been linked to bickering over details in the operations of one or more of the other three.

We strongly support the notion of comprehensive security. A cross-dimensional approach linking security issues to civic freedoms and to economic and environmental matters is a unique chance to overcome dividing lines, create trust and invest in human well-being. Building of real trust among our countries is conditional on the availability of freely gathered information and open debate about it. Trust is needed to stop a renewed arms race, resolve existing conflicts and protect sovereignty of states. Free information collection is a requirement for exposing rampant corruption, which crosses borders with the greatest ease and is a threat to us all. The looming of irreversible climate change and new public health challenges oblige us to cooperate internationally.

In all these fields, the OSCE has an important role to play. The stakes are high and only highly qualified persons should lead the organization. An open and transparent (re-)appointment process must be put in place.¹ The appointment of one person should not depend on that of one or more others. Steps must be taken to secure the continuity of work of the OSCE Secretariat and the institutions as long as no regularly appointed mandate holders are in place.

Participating States should exercise utmost political responsibility in these challenging times to urgently solve the crisis that is threatening the OSCE. We call on the Ministers of foreign affairs to engage in high-level dialogue immediately to agree on a constructive process of (re-)appointment for the four positions. States should not put their perceived national short term interest above the common long-term interest of more than one billion people all the way from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

¹ The process used for the appointment of the UN Secretary General could be an inspiration, <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/appointment-of-the-secretary-general/>

ARTICLE 19 (UK/ international)
Association UMDPL (Ukraine)
Austrian Helsinki Association
Belarus Helsinki Committee
Belarusian Association of Journalists
Bir Duino (Kyrgyzstan)
Bulgarian Helsinki Committee
Center for Civil Liberties (Ukraine)
Centre for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights (Russia)
Centre for Participation and Development (Georgia)
Centre de la Protection Internationale (France)
Citizens' Watch (Russia)
Crude Accountability (USA)
DRA (Germany)
Georgian Centre for Psychosocial and Medical Rehabilitation of Torture Victims
Helsinki Citizens' Assembly – Vanadzor (Armenia)
Helsinki Committee of Armenia
Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia
Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (Poland)
Human Rights Center of Azerbaijan
Human Rights Centre (Georgia)
Human Rights Center ZMINA (Ukraine)
Human Rights House Foundation (Norway/ international)
Human Rights Monitoring Institute (Lithuania)
Hungarian Helsinki Committee
IDP Women Association "Consent" (Georgia)
Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and the Rule of Law
Kharkiv Regional Foundation "Public Alternative" (Ukraine)
Legal Policy Research Centre (Kazakhstan)
Macedonian Helsinki Committee (North Macedonia)
Minority Rights Group Europe (Hungary/ international)
Moscow Helsinki Group (Russia)
Netherlands Helsinki Committee
OMCT (Switzerland/ international)
Promo LEX (Moldova)
Public Verdict (Russia)
Public Association "Dignity" (Kazakhstan)
Social Action Centre (Ukraine)
Sova Center for Information and Analysis (Russia)
Swedish OSCE Network
Swiss Helsinki Committee
Truth Hounds (Georgia/ Ukraine)
Women of the Don (Russia)
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Germany