



Ressort: Politik

Albania took over OSCE Chairmanship for 2020

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Under the motto 'Implementing our commitments together', Albania took over OSCE Chairmanship for 2020. OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Albania's Prime Minister and Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Edi Rama, in his address to the Permanent Council in Vienna said Albania will work towards making a difference on the ground, utilizing the Organization's acquis, and enhancing dialogue.

Recalling the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, a milestone politically binding document signed by States of the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe (the forerunner of the OSCE), Rama said that his country had directly profited from this agreement's principles on peace and security.

"As I sit today in this chair, I cannot but pay tribute to all those who fought, suffered, died for Albania's freedom and thank all those who worked hard and contributed in various ways through the long tortuous path of our democratic transition from a brutal dictatorship to a functioning democracy - including also all those who accompanied us in that path. Among them, OSCE was one of the key presences," he declared.

"I feel today all the huge responsibility as well as the great opportunity of having to give something back to our Organization after the OSCE has given so much to Albania for so many years."

The Chairmanship's first priority is 'making a difference on the ground', said Rama and added: "The OSCE has proven time and again that it can deploy to conflict and post-conflict settings, often where and when no one else can. As the crisis in and around Ukraine remains the most pressing security challenge in Europe, the unique contribution of the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) to reducing tensions and fostering peace, stability and security is essential. While there have been some encouraging signals with regard to the crisis

the road to long-standing peace remains long. The Albanian Chairmanship will do its part to encourage respect for the OSCE principles and commitments and the full implementation of the Minsk Agreements, supporting the efforts of the Trilateral Contact Group and the process of the Normandy Format. The SMM and Ukraine will also be the destination of my first visit, in the coming weeks, as OSCE Chairperson-in-Office."

Conflict resolution efforts such as those of the Minsk Group Co-Chairs on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the Geneva International Discussions and related mechanisms, and the Transdniestrian Settlement Process will also be high on the Chairmanship's agenda, added Rama.

It's important to remember that the Nagorno-Karabakh War

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was an ethnic and territorial conflict that took place in the late 1980s to May 1994, in the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh in southwestern Azerbaijan, between the ethnic Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh backed by Armenia, and the Republic of Azerbaijan. As the war progressed, Armenia and Azerbaijan, both former Soviet Republics, tangled themselves in prolonged, undeclared mountain warfare in the mountainous heights of Karabakh as Azerbaijan struggled to curb the secessionist movement in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The enclave's parliament had voted in favor of uniting itself with Armenia and a referendum, boycotted by the Azerbaijani population of Nagorno-Karabakh, was held, whereby most of the voters voted in favor of independence. The demand to unify with Armenia began in a relatively peaceful manner in 1988; in the following months, as the Soviet Union disintegrated, it gradually grew into an increasingly violent conflict between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, resulting in ethnic cleansing, with Khojaly Massacre being a notable example. Inter-ethnic conflicts between the two broke out shortly after the parliament of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO) in Azerbaijan voted to unify the region with Armenia on 20 February 1988.

The declaration of secession from Azerbaijan was the final result of a territorial conflict regarding the land. As Azerbaijan declared its independence from the Soviet Union and removed the powers held by the enclave's government, the Armenian majority voted to secede from Azerbaijan and in the process proclaimed the unrecognized Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh. Full-scale fighting erupted in early 1992. Rama said that Albania intends to utilize its first-hand experience of hosting an OSCE field operation to explore how to make best use of this potential. The Chair will also promote the role of women in peace and security, taking note of this year's 25th anniversary of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

Under the Chair's second priority, 'leveraging our acquis', the Chairmanship would focus on enhancing security against contemporary threats and challenges such as small arms and light weapons, organized crime, human trafficking, violent extremism, cybersecurity, and on promoting the freedom of expression and of the media, and combating violence against women.

"Advancing good governance is another challenge, and I look forward to focusing on this during a high-level conference on anti-corruption in Tirana," he said. On the third priority, 'dialogue', Rama pointed to "an undeniable surge in hate crimes and hate speech throughout the OSCE region."

According to OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Albania's Prime Minister promoting tolerance and non-discrimination will be a major focus of the Chairmanship and at the upcoming conference on combating anti-Semitism in Tirana, Albania would share its experience of religious harmony. Albania Chairmanship will endeavour to use all OSCE instruments to advance a mutual understanding on today's

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security challenges, starting from the Structured Dialogue, and reducing risks through our confidence- and security-building measures.

Furthermore Rama stated: "There will be dialogue both on policy issues, for example on environmental protection, as well as political, with fellow organizations such as the UN, the European Union, and with the civil society and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. Finally, since many of our challenges and opportunities stem from beyond the OSCE region, we must reinforce our platform for dialogue with the Asian and Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation."

Concluding, he said: "The subtle aim of multilateralism is to keep dialogue open among a community of states, even when all odds are against. I am looking forward to hearing your voices and starting a dialogue, which will last this entire year."

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