

November 28th, 2023

Joint Statement by the Foreign Ministers of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

For the past two years we have witnessed how one OSCE participating state has actively and brutally tried to annihilate another. Let us be very clear: Russia's war of aggression and atrocities against its sovereign and peaceful neighbor Ukraine blatantly violate international law, including the UN Charter, and constitute an attack on the OSCE and its underlying principles.

We have also seen nothing but Russia's obstructive behavior within the OSCE itself – first, by blocking any OSCE presence and activities in Ukraine, then by blocking Estonia's 2024 chairmanship on completely fabricated reasons and now by blocking constructive solutions for keeping the organization alive and functional.

We deeply regret the decision enabling the personal participation of Russian Foreign Minister S. Lavrov at the 30th Session of the OSCE Ministerial Council in Skopje. It will only provide Russia with yet another propaganda opportunity.

S. Lavrov's attendance at the OSCE Ministerial also risks legitimizing aggressor Russia as a rightful member of our community of free nations, trivializing the atrocious crimes Russia has been committing, and putting up with Russia's blatant violation and contempt of the OSCE fundamental principles and commitments. We, the Ministers of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, will not be part of this and will not share responsibility for consequences it will create.

What we need today is an immediate unconditional halt to Russia's aggression, withdrawal of its troops from all occupied territories, compensation of damage caused, and full accountability for perpetrators of international crimes. None of this is in place. Nor do we see signs that Russia is even remotely considering compliance with its international obligations and OSCE commitments.

The OSCE was originally designed to build European security, to prevent conflicts and to preserve peace. And Russia has, through its unlawful and atrocious actions, proved time and again that it is not a security partner to Europe. In fact, today Europe needs security *from and against* Russia, rather than *together with* it.

That is why we, the Foreign Ministers of the Baltic States, decided not to attend the OSCE Ministerial Council in Skopje. We remain ready to work with partners and participating States in upholding the OSCE principles, and against Russia's aggression and the ideology behind it.