**The OSCE in the Ukrainian Crisis and Beyond: Promoting Security and Stability in Europe, Eurasia and Beyond**

***Ambassador Ertugrul Apakan***

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want to express my thanks for this invitation to speak here at the Hiroshima Peace University. It is fascinating for me to be in Japan and I am grateful to have the opportunity to address such a distinguished audience. I would like to take this opportunity to share with you some thoughts on comprehensive security, on the OSCE and on what such organisations can contribute to foster stability and the peaceful solution of conflicts, also in a wider context.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

70 years have passed since the horrendous events at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Hiroshima has become a metaphor not just for nuclear war but for war and destruction and violence toward civilians. The events 70 years ago have also confronted us with the possibility of our extinction as a species, not simply the reality of our individual deaths, but the death of humanity.

Now looking back at these terrible events, inevitably our collective memory has faded and is reshaped by current perspectives. With the passage of time, those who actually experienced the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have become far fewer in number, but the message of the survivors is simple, clear and consistent: "Never Again!" At the monument in Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park is this inscription: "Let all souls here rest in peace; for we shall not repeat the evil." The "we" in the inscription refers to all of us and to each of us.

Yet again, at the beginning of the 21st century the world experiences serious challenges to its security system, and at this point, due to the crisis in Ukraine, some of the core- values of European and global security are again at stake.

Organizations like the OSCE have been created to prevent and address such conflicts.

The OSCE is about to co-operative security and is based on principles and commitments. These principles and commitments were defined at the height of the Cold War, in the 1975 Helsinki Final Act and updated in 1990 with the Charter of Paris. These documents contain ten basic principles, sometimes called the “Helsinki Decalogue”. These basic principles strike emphasize national sovereignty and the inviolability of borders on the one hand, but also recognize the importance of the respect for human rights and other provisions of international law as a security issue.

Under these principles, the OSCE is an inclusive platform for dialogue, now bringing together 57 participating States from the Euro- Atlantic and the Eurasian region. The OSCE is about building bridges and common solutions based on compromise. Its commitments are political, and not legal in nature. Japan joined the work of the organization as a non- participating State in 1992 and has been a “Partner for Cooperation” since 1995.

His Excellency, Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida, at a recent conference stated that these basic principles should be applied not only to Europe but also to international relations covering the entire globe and that that all countries should recognize anew the importance of observing these basic principles.

Based on them, the OSCE addresses security topics in three dimensions: the Political- Security dimension, the Economic- Environmental Dimension and the Human Dimension, dealing with issues such as democracy, human rights, civil society or gender equality. It provides relevant instruments for preventing and resolving conflicts and serves as umbrella for some independent institutions, such as the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, which also deals with the monitoring of elections, or the High Commissioner on National Minorities.

Despite this, after 1990, the OSCE has been faced with a number of violent conflicts, particularly after the dissolution of former Yugoslavia, which has put the principles to the test. The OSCE has ever since then played an important role in maintaining peace in this region. It has also installed institutions and processes to be able to warn participating states of emerging conflicts. Although successful conflict prevention is hard to prove, these measures have widely been considered as successful.

The OSCE, with 57 participating States, is the world’s largest and most inclusive regional organization under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter. Yet in many ways the OSCE remains a unique, complex, sui generis model for co-operative security. It is both a creature of its time and a product of constant evolution. This has allowed the OSCE to do remarkable work in building a broad definition of comprehensive security. It has also proved highly flexible and pragmatic, a key quality in the field of preventive diplomacy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I now wish to share with you some of our experiences from the OSCE’s Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine and discuss what the OSCE has done to react to this conflict.

In the first place, the crisis in Ukraine is a tragedy for the country and for its people. The country had been peaceful ever since its independence in 1991 and had given up its nuclear weapons through an international agreement, the “Budapest Memorandum” in 1994. Two years ago, the Eastern Ukrainian city of Donetsk was proud host to several football matches in the UEFA European Championship that was jointly organized by Ukraine and Poland It was a city of joy, of excitement. Today, Donetsk is a stronghold of irregular armed groups and is surrounded by Ukrainian armed forces. It is a city of fear. The crisis has changed from a political and economic crisis to an armed conflict, which brought about a humanitarian crisis. Ukraine remains extremely fragile. The security and stability of the wider region is at stake.

So how did the OSCE react?

In March 2014, the OSCE’s 57 participating States decided to deploy a civilian Mission to Ukraine with the aim of reducing tensions and fostering peace, stability and security, and to monitor and support the implementation of all OSCE principles and commitments. This decision by the OSCE came at the height of the crisis in Crimea, just a few days after the incorporation of the peninsula into the Russian Federation, which had aggravated the crisis.

When the decision to establish Mission was taken, the Mission deployed within 24 hours. This was followed by a rapid build up in all parts of the country. The concept for the Mission was to be mainly a monitoring instrument for potential violations of human rights, including the rights of minorities. The topics in Ukraine were the aftermath of the “Maidan” movement and the emerging protests in the east of the country. This happened against the backdrop of a double crisis: on the one hand- there was a huge disconnect between the state structures and civil society. And all this happened in the middle of a heavy economic crisis.

In the following months, however, the SMM was overtaken by political and military events. Armed violence erupted in the East of Ukraine. Where initially there had been sticks, there were now guns, then artillery systems. Foreign fighters were on the ground. The Mission was suddenly operating in the middle of an armed conflict, our Monitors were working in a warzone. Eight of my colleagues were abducted and taken hostage by armed groups, and only released a month later.

The civilian Mission, which had been deployed as a reaction to a civilian crisis, and was structured accordingly, suddenly was entrusted with quasi- peacekeeping tasks. The Mission had to adapt swiftly and transformed itself from a political mission to a mission that had to address a military and humanitarian crisis. This “quasi- peacekeeping” Mission now has more than 500 international Monitors from more than 40 participating states, including one Mission Member from Japan, who are deployed in ten locations throughout the whole of Ukraine. They monitor the situation, facilitate dialogue and reconciliation, and try to engage with civil society, women, youth, the elderly and disadvantaged groups, which are often affected most by the conflict. The Mission publishes public daily reports on the internet, as well as public Spot Reports and weekly reports to the participating States.

Also during the tragedy of the crash of MH17 the Mission was there and facilitated access to the site through the establishment of dialogue between all sides.

A Minsk Protocol, stipulating a ceasefire and a political process, was agreed on 5 September Furthermore, a package of measures towards the peaceful solution of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine was agreed on 11 February of this year in the so- called “Normandy format”, consisting of France, Germany, the Russian Federation and Ukraine- the SMM participates regularly in the meetings of this group. The UN Security Council has unanimously endorsed this package of measures.

These agreements, which constitute an integrated whole, gave additional responsibilities to the SMM and foresees a key role for the Mission. *Inter alia*, the OSCE shall facilitate, monitor and verify the withdrawal of heavy weapons from a defined security zone, as well as monitor the withdrawal of foreign armed formations and mercenaries from Ukraine. The monitoring of the agreed ceasefire and the withdrawal of heavy weapons are now the priority of the work of the OSCE SMM on the ground.

These tasks remain challenging: the security zone stretches over a length of 487 kilometres, and encompasses more than 400 kilometres of the international border between Ukraine and the Russian Federation. Moreover, violence remains a daily presence in some hotspots, such as Donetsk Airport or the town of Shyrokyne in the south of the region. This is partly due to weak command and control structures, which lead to a disconnect between agreements on the negotiation table and the realities in the field.

Furthermore, the humanitarian situation in the East of Ukraine is cause for grave concern: there are 1.4 million Internally Displace Persons, and more than 900.000 refugees, who have left Ukraine. So far, the conflict has claimed more than 7.000 lives, and approximately 16.000 people have been wounded. These numbers serve as a stark reminder, why the work of the OSCE in Ukraine is of critical importance.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would now like to highlight the potential role of the OSCE in the context of the security of Eurasia.

Security in the OSCE region is of course inseparably linked to that of its neighbors and can be strengthened through dialogue and the sharing of OSCE norms, commitments and expertise. The OSCE Partnership for Co-operation, of which Japan is a part of, enables the OSCE participating States and Partners to share information about relevant developments, to identify areas of common concern and to generate ideas on jointly addressing security challenges. The involvement of the Partners in OSCE activities has increased over the years. Today, they are almost completely integrated in the work of the Organization.

As the OSCE continues efforts to advance dialogue and co-operation with its Asian Partners, Japan’s role remains critically important. Over the years, Japan has been providing considerable financial and human resources to our Organization. Recent support to the OSCE’s activities in Ukraine illustrates once again its commitment not only to the OSCE but also to peace and security. In particular, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the government of Japan for their support and generous contributions to the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine.

We convene here today at a critical time for global and regional security. Armed conflict is once again a reality on European soil and the East-West divide is growing, undermining the very foundations of both European and international security. But we also face a range of new threats to security with a transnational character, several of which are discussed during the course of this conference. Instability beyond the OSCE region is fuelling radicalization and violent extremism that leads to terrorism. We witness migration at an increasingly large scale and this puts pressure on societies in recipient countries.

The long-standing OSCE- Asian partnership offers a valuable platform for all stakeholders to adapt to the changing international security scenario by sharing experiences and best practices, and to strengthen our relationship across regions, creating new synergies. Thanks to its flexibility, the OSCE has progressively adapted itself to tackle emerging security challenges in Europe, Eurasia and beyond, and has developed significant expertise and valuable experience in this field. There is already a number of security frameworks that could interact with the OSCE to share best practices and lessons learned. ASEAN and its Regional Forum, the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat, and the East Asia Summit are all good examples.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

let me now highlight some of the points that seem to be of particular relevance to preserving security and dealing with upcoming crises from my experience in Ukraine:

More political engagement and preventive diplomacy are important. Early warning mechanisms can help to become active when it is not yet too late. The OSCE provides tools for that purpose.

At the same time, there also needs to be more contingency planning. Even if early- warning takes place, the international system must be in a position to act and react quickly and decisively.

As another point, the OSCE and its institutions also have learned the lesson of the importance of descent statehood and functioning institutions delivering rule of law and justice basis along with basic services for its people.

We also need to promote the emergence of a resilient society within states: a strong civil society is probably the single most effective internal tool for the prevention of violent conflict. So is the Rule of Law, which the OSCE promotes strongly. Where mechanisms exist to solve conflict through dialogue and established means, violence is much less likely to occur.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion: I believe that a multilateral forum like the OSCE can always benefit from exchanges with existing mechanisms for international dialogue and co-operation. We can and should learn from each other’s experiences. The work we do in the OSCE on security issues should, as much as possible, find a positive and complementary echo in other security forums, also in Asia. Each organization has its proper place and role. As we strive for effective and efficient collaboration with other international organizations, this often entails collaborating across a wide diversity of views and approaches to security.

The OSCE can help improve our mutual understanding and identify common ground. It can be a vital catalyst for stronger bonds and higher levels of trust. And it facilitates the joint creation and implementation of norms, thereby strengthening our common security.

Thank you.