

VALLETTA, 4 December 2024 — The 2024 OSCE Parallel Civil Society Conference, held today in Malta, underscored the important role of civil society in promoting peace, security and democratic resilience across the OSCE region. Civil society representatives from across the region discussed ongoing challenges and presented actionable recommendations to OSCE leaders and participating States ahead of the 31st OSCE Ministerial Council from 5 to 6 December.



Civil society representatives present recommendations to OSCE leaders during the Civil Society Parallel Conference, Malta, 4 December 2024 (OSCE)

PRESS RELEASE

Civil society's role in strengthening resilience highlighted at OSCE Civil Society Conference

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The 2024 Malta Declaration emphasizes the need to strengthen the OSCE amidst unprecedented geopolitical crises, particularly Russia's war against Ukraine, which has severely tested the principles enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act. It highlights the importance of democratic oversight of the security sector, accountability for human rights violations, and the inclusion of civil society in OSCE processes. The Declaration also underscores the relevance of addressing emerging challenges, including climate change, discrimination, and shrinking civil society space, while reaffirming the OSCE's foundational commitment to comprehensive security and multilateral co-operation.

In his remarks to conference participants, OSCE Chair-in-Office, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Tourism of Malta Ian Borg, emphasized the vital role civil society plays in upholding OSCE commitments and contributing to regional stability.

“Civil society shines a light on trends that challenge democratic institutions and fundamental freedoms, reminding us where our commitments are being breached. Their work strengthens the OSCE, its institutions, and participating States by fostering accountability and resilience,” he said.

Borg described the 2024 Malta Declaration as “a robust call for action to the OSCE, its executive structures, and the participating States to advance the principles of peace, security, and accountability”.

The Conference discussions focused on key issues, notably protecting human rights defenders and addressing the shrinking civic space, and strengthening accountability mechanisms for human rights violations in conflict situations, particularly in relation to the war against Ukraine. Emphasis was also placed on advancing inclusive approaches for women, youth, and persons with disabilities within the OSCE’s work, and tackling climate-related security challenges through collaboration with civil society.

“Co-operation and dialogue with the civil society are integral to the OSCE. Finland strongly supports inclusive engagement. Throughout Finland’s Chairpersonship of the OSCE in 2025, we will put special focus on strengthening the role of civil society,” said Finland’s Foreign Minister Elina Valtonen.

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of North Macedonia, Zoran Dimitrovski, during the closing remarks highlighted “This year’s conference confidently builds on the legacy of the Parallel Civil Society held last year in Skopje, showcasing our unwavering commitment to civil society activism. The collective resolve to foster dialogue, promote unity, and strengthen resilience is a powerful testament to our determination to confront the ever-growing challenges for our democracies.”

Dimitrovski added, “As we gather here, we are not just participants in a conference, but also champions of civic solidarity, advocates for justice, and builders of a brighter future. Together, we must continue our journey toward greater understanding and co-operation, ensuring that the values we uphold resonate powerfully beyond these walls.”

“Strengthening partnerships through closer collaboration with civil society is essential to promote accountability and advance human security,” said OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President Pia Kauma (MP, Finland). “As directly elected representatives of the people, OSCE parliamentarians strongly rely on civil society’s expertise to ensure that human rights remain central to our agenda.”

H.E. Marie Louise Coleiro Preca, Special Representative of the OSCE Chair-in-Office on Civil Society, highlighted the significance of engaging civil society voices. “Civil society provides an essential challenge and early warning of negative trends, helping us address threats to democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. It is this Chairpersonship’s strong conviction that democratic governments must consider civil society perspectives as a core pillar of democratic resilience.”

The Parallel Civil Society Conference is organized by the [Civic Solidarity Platform](#) with the support of the OSCE Maltese Chairpersonship. The Conference has taken place every year on the margins of the OSCE Ministerial Council since 2010.

For PDF attachments or links to sources of further information, please visit:

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