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**Farewell remarks by Ambassador Philip McDonagh to the Permanent Council, 31  
August 2017**

Today I feel deep gratitude to many people. My wife Ana has done everything to support my work. Without her, I could never have carried out this assignment or my other assignments abroad.

My colleagues at the Mission – Frank, Tom, Clodagh, Susan, and Joseph – form a great team. Each one serves above and beyond the call of duty.

There's an Irish proverb, *ar scáth a céile a mhaireann na daoine* – we live in the shelter that we provide for one another. This is truer here in the OSCE than in any other posting I have known. I am grateful to colleagues in the Permanent Council, the secretariat, and executive structures for their friendship – and in particular to our Dean for her kind words just now.

As I get ready to leave, I think of the words of the Bosnian writer Ivo Andric:

*Sto ne boli – nije zivot*: what does not hurt - is not life

*Sto ne prolazi – nije sreće*: what is not transient – is not happiness

I think of Ivo Andric also because he was a diplomat and has this to say about our profession:

It means, in effect: living constantly on two levels, the personal, human one and the official, inhuman one, but never in any way showing or betraying to anyone on which level you are at any given moment, or better still: not yourself being completely aware of it, which is the surest way of not giving yourself away.

I first served in the CSCE in Madrid in 1980. After all these years, I propose to comment on our work from what Ivo Andric would call the personal, human level.

I begin with the peace process in Northern Ireland. After decades of instability and conflict, something happened: a switch towards reconciliation. John Hume played a decisive part. John believed, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer had the courage to believe during the war, that 'something new can be born that is not discernible in the alternatives of the present.'

John Hume saw that peace would not eliminate differences or solve all issues at once. Peace meant creating the first link in a new chain of events and focusing energies as much as possible on improving our everyday lives – 'spilling our sweat, not our blood.'

On signing the Helsinki Final Act in 1975, Ireland's Taoiseach Liam Cosgrave stated that 'the use of force, or threat of force, or subversion, in relations between peoples is inadmissible.' This principle needs to be re-invigorated. Some of the lessons learned in Northern Ireland may be useful – regarding, for example, the politics of the next practicable step, or John Hume's conviction that the bigger European picture can contribute to peacemaking in the individual case.

Another friend of whom memory speaks today is Stéphane Hessel, war-hero, colleague of René Cassin in the negotiation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, French ambassador to the UN in Geneva in the 1980s. Hessel was an inspiring advocate of the

North/South dialogue. In 2010, when he was 93, he published the bestselling book *Indignez-vous*. Writing out a deep love of Europe and a deep commitment to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, Hessel calls for a new realism in the multilateral sphere. His premise is that the most important issues for global development are not being properly addressed.

In the OSCE we invest in hopes and ideals. Our Latin motto, if we had one, might sound something like this: ‘*si vis pacem, para iustitiam*’: ‘if you seek peace, do justice first.’ From the beginning, the CSCE had an uncomfortable relationship with geopolitics. But something keeps happening in our midst that Thucydides described 2,500 years ago. Power-projection and the resources invested in weapons, seem real, as if these things gave expression to some inevitable law of the universe; and our activities in the OSCE in the name of peace seem optional, a matter of ‘fine words,’ short on outputs, and deserving of only a tiny budget that we reduce year after year.

We are now at a point of inflection. There are so many players on the international stage, and States have so many vulnerabilities, that military balances are harder and harder to measure. The consequences of using high-tech military means are unpredictable - conflict can mean chaos. We find, as the Athenian democracy found, that security can be threatened by disarray at home, or unforeseen non-military challenges, as much as by our supposed adversaries. Under all these circumstances, we are beginning to understand, or so I hope and believe, that we need to work much harder on dialogue: creating consensus, building legitimacy, and composing a common space, both at home and abroad. We need leaders like John Hume and Stéphane Hessel for whom idealism is the new realism. We need to identify the most consequential issues and make sure that they are on the multilateral agenda.

We are well placed in the OSCE to support this ‘new realism’ – to combine day-to-day business with a longer-term reflection on what Richard Haass calls the ‘contours of the future.’ This is already happening in the structured dialogue led by Ambassador Eberhard Pohl. It is beginning to happen in recent and current work on such issues as migration, economic participation, and youth. As a contribution to what is going on already, let me offer three personal suggestions.

First, democracy.

Peace in Europe will not be a static peace; that was a key assumption of the CSCE. Peace is a journey; and even if the destination of the journey is far away and difficult to reach, it should be understood by the coming generation as worthwhile and convincing and adequate to the historical moment. When I say the ‘coming generation’ I have in mind our extremely talented younger colleagues here in Vienna – our new recruits, our attachés, our interns – and the OSCE’s work with younger people led by Ambassador Victoria Gonzalez Roman.

I put forward for consideration the following definition of democracy, which by the way is a quotation:

Democracy will be fully implemented only when all individuals and all peoples have access to life, food, water, health, education, work, and certainty of their rights, through an ordering of internal and external relations that guarantees everyone a chance to participate.

Second, Europe.

Here in the OSCE, we need to hold onto the word ‘Europe’ in the sense in which it is used in the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris. East and West of Vienna are not two completely separate worlds.

Over the almost 40 years in which I have been a participant in the CSCE and OSCE, the European Union has developed exponentially. Along the way, we have not given full weight to the implications of this for the OSCE, which after all is another process of European unification to which our governments are committed. How do we relate sovereign equality under the Helsinki Final Act to ‘pooling sovereignty’ within the European Union and to other institutional and regulatory realities in the OSCE space?

In Jordan less than two years ago, Foreign Minister Steinmeier outlined criteria for a new multilateral process in the Middle East. A European regional order in which every OSCE participating State has an equal stake will be a sign of hope for the UN and in our neighbouring regions.

Third, religion.

Our Helsinki principles articulate an underlying philosophical orientation while leaving the precise outcomes open. They do not offer a blueprint; on the contrary, they are designed to underpin development and change. Ambassador Hussam Al-Husseini suggests to me the useful metaphor of an operating system. Operating systems can be updated. They can also be made compatible with other operating systems.

We might gradually introduce into our ‘operating system’ the insights that emerge from interfaith and intercultural dialogue. Across Europe, a majority of citizens are affiliated to a religion or faith. The European Union’s Fundamental Rights Agency, here in Vienna, is beginning to explore how people motivated by religion and people motivated by human rights can better come together to shape fair and just societies. Faith and reason, religion and society, can enlighten and support one another.

The three topics I have mentioned – filling out the meaning of democracy, harmonizing the different dimensions of European unification, and the contribution of religion to public policy – are scientific questions in the first instance and can be approached in a spirit that brings us together. Each in its own way is a question about justice.

I often feel as I sit in the Permanent Council that we could do with more humility. Mistakes have been made on many sides. In the post-Cold War period, several participating States have considered broader justifications for using force than our CSCE commitments imply. As Leonard Cohen would say, everybody knows. In other instances, not enough effort was made to seek consensus among the participating States, and the methodology of the CSCE and OSCE was deliberately superseded.

Remember Shakespeare:

The quality of mercy is not strained;  
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven  
Upon the place beneath. It is twice blest;  
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes...

It is enthronèd in the hearts of kings,  
It is an attribute to God himself...

In Northern Ireland, John Hume and many of those who took big risks for peace believed in both justice and mercy and had a sense of responsibility born out of a certain kind of hope. Stéphane Hessel had Jewish background and told me he was more or less agnostic about religion. I am certain, however, that John Hume and Stéphane Hessel had the same vision of creative political change. Both, like Abraham, were ready to cross the desert – like Abraham, to dwell in tents for the sake of a city they might never see.

I end with this quotation from the psalms:

Mercy and Truth have come together,  
Justice and Peace have embraced.  
Truth raised its arms from the earth,  
And Justice bent down from heaven...

This image of truth raising its arms and justice bending down from heaven suggests a child and its parents; peace – a security community from Vancouver to Vladivostok, cultural compatibility from Connemara to Kamchatka - will come to us in the end, *sempre secondo me*, as we say in Italian, as a longed-for gift from the Father of All Things.