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**STATEMENT BY
MR. YURY AMBRAZEVICH, DEPUTY MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
BELARUS, AT THE THIRTIETH MEETING OF THE
OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Skopje, 30 November 2023

Ordinary people in our countries believe that the purpose of our meetings is to solve important problems. I am glad that a number of statements today met these expectations. Unfortunately, in their statements, most of the NATO and European Union States have slipped into repeating well-known clichés and far-fetched unfounded political accusations against the Republic of Belarus in the notorious and convenient “highly likely” style.

I really did not want to begin my statement by exercising my right of reply, but I will comment on a couple of points.

First. In response to the deep concern expressed by a number of European Union countries about respect for human rights in Belarus, I would point out that none of our critics in this room will convince me that the human rights situation in their countries is any better. To see for yourselves that I am right, it is sufficient to take a look at the results of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in the United Nations Human Rights Council for each of the Western countries. If that is not enough, I suggest that the Maltese Chairmanship include something along the lines of the UPR for the OSCE participating States in its programme work for the OSCE. I would suggest starting with Latvia.

The second point concerns the accusations or conjectures made about the forced relocation or deportation of children from Ukraine. Here my reply is very brief. No one has come to us with a single surname. We are waiting.

An international conference on Eurasian security was held in Minsk in October 2023. Many of its participants agreed that the main European security problem is the dilemma between the principle of the indivisibility of security and the principle of the sovereignty of States to determine their foreign policy.

The Belarusian recipe for solving this problem has long been no secret. Let me remind you of the logic behind our reasoning.

Every State is an external factor in someone else’s security because we are all interconnected. Critical needs and dependencies that threaten our security and the possibilities for our development define our area of interest and influence. By operating within this area, we meet our primary needs and protect our legitimate interests.

It is therefore a fantasy – a denial of reality – to claim that there are no spheres of interest or influence. These areas are predetermined for us. It is a fact. That is what realistic policy is about. You are, of course, entitled not to want to be inside someone else's sphere of influence, but that will not change the opinion of those who consider you to be a factor in their security.

Depending on the circumstances, geography, history, economy and so on, everyone can be in the area of interest of one, two or more partners. For some, the area of interest may include only one neighbour, for others it takes in half the globe.

Thus, each State should understand that its rights, interests and actions affect other players to some degree or another, that its sovereignty and freedoms are not absolute and often run counter to the legitimate interests of other parties.

The refusal to take into account the fact that you are inside someone else's area of influence, the refusal to consider how someone else's legitimate interests are affected by your actions, and the refusal to engage in dialogue with the affected party in order to jointly find mutually acceptable solutions should differences arise – that is the main cause of inter-State conflicts.

Some believe that they can strengthen their security through unilateral actions, simply excluding an inconvenient neighbour from the process, simply building a fence, imposing economic restrictions and suspending air traffic.

However, such actions lead to an impasse in relations, to an escalation of tensions and to a deepening of mistrust. As a result, everyone suffers.

So, the dilemma in question can be solved simply:

- We must recognize that, as different as we all are, we all have the right to exist, are a factor in someone else's security and are within someone's area of interest or, if you prefer, influence;
- We need proactive and responsible consideration of and respect for the legitimate interests of the parties affected by our actions;
- We need to find a mutually acceptable solution to our differences through negotiations.

This is exactly how Belarus has always acted in all areas of its foreign policy, demonstrating a responsible approach to objective reality.

All our actions, including the suspension of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and the deployment of Russian tactical nuclear weapons, are reactive measures and have been forced upon us.

I was asked by colleagues here: "Come on, do you really feel that someone is threatening you?" Well, how else are we to assess the economic sanctions against 70 per cent of our exports, the almost complete closure of our borders from the west and the north, the cessation of air traffic, rail links and so on? Is that not aggression? I asked: "Do we have the right to act beyond merely expressing concern?" In reply, I heard: "No, you have to conduct negotiations." I think the analogy is clear.

Unfortunately, the overall dynamic of relations in European security, especially after the collapse of the USSR, was shaped for many years by the players west of Vienna, as they say at the OSCE.

Unfortunately, these acted exclusively in their own unilateral interests, ignoring the concerns of others. They bear the brunt of responsibility for the current security crisis.

But Belarus does not participate in the OSCE so that it can accuse others. We do so with the sole purpose of guaranteeing our national security – not against anyone, but together with everyone.

That is why, as before, we call upon all interested parties to engage in dialogue and negotiations. Belarus is confident that we are capable of working out the principles of our peaceful coexistence not only in Europe, but also in Eurasia. It is becoming obvious to everyone that, in the twenty-first century, European security is inseparable from Eurasian security.

These principles should restore the indivisibility of security, take into account the concerns of all parties without exception, and ultimately guarantee the security of each and every one. Belarus invites all interested parties to begin urgent work on such a document in the spirit of Helsinki and in the spirit of San Francisco. We will share its elements with everyone in the near future.