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Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Workshop “Towards a Strategy for Reconciliation in the OSCE Area”

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Panel 1: Reconciliation and Convergence – Building the foundation for a security community

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Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Security Community was defined as a common goal of the Astana Summit in 2010. OSCE participating States recommitted themselves with the Astana Commemorative Declaration “Towards a Security Community” to the vision of a free, democratic, common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community rooted in agreed principles, shared commitments and common goals. Irish Chairmanship of the OSCE this year launched the “Helsinki +40” process. This is an inclusive effort by all participating States to provide strong and continuous political impetus to advancing work towards a security community. Reconciliation is an important element in this process. Helsinki + 40 will further strengthen co-operation in the OSCE until 2015, a year that will designate four decades since the signing of the Helsinki Final Act.

This anniversary represents a unique opportunity to reaffirm the participating States’ commitment to the concept of comprehensive, cooperative, equal and indivisible security and ODIHR is an essential part of this. Such reaffirmation would be more convincing if it were accompanied by practical results reflecting intensified efforts to fully implement OSCE commitments, in particular in the Human Dimension.

This has also been articulated in the preamble of the 1990 Copenhagen Document, where participating States expressed their conviction that there is no security without full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the development of societies based on pluralistic democracy and the rule of law that are pre-requisites for progress in setting up the lasting order of peace, security, justice and co-operation that we all seek to establish in OSCE Region.

Security Community is not entirely new concept. It has its roots in Helsinki Final Act. In the deliberations at the OSCE Security Days in June 2012 many described reconciliation as a foundation for process that leads towards a security community in the OSCE area and underlined that it should include achieving justice, as prerequisite for a durable peace. Crucial challenges in achieving this common goal is a lack of trust and reconciliation, on the other

hand, can help to overcome the divisive memories which continue to induce mistrust and suspicion.

In our view all States should redress fundamental and systematic human rights violations which lead to conflict or have the potential to do so. This requires the courage and political will of governments to seek truth and justice, to promote tolerance and non-discrimination, to agree on confidence building measures, and to provide compensation to the victims. In other words lasting reconciliation, and by extension a genuine security community in the OSCE can only be achieved through accountable and functioning democratic institutions.

Accountability for past human rights abuses must be central to any efforts to promote reconciliation between communities affected by conflicts. True reconciliation cannot happen by “forgetting” about or “burying” past, by leaving the victims and their families without justice. Recent history within the OSCE area has shown that successful reconciliation was achieved when past crimes were addressed. On the other hand where this did not happen, conflicts continued or reemerged. When I say justice I do not mean retribution or vengeance. Justice is something else, it is crucial for the reconciliation and convergence, as well as common comprehension of former enemies that they want different and better future for generations to come.

The OSCE is a unique forum that can promote reconciliation. It has plentiful of experience on reconciliation processes. Such is the experience of the Irish Chairmanship in Northern Ireland and for instance Eastern Slavonia. OSCE also has a variety of tools, including its Field Operations and Institutions which can enhance the promotion of confidence building measures and exchange of good practices.

As such, it is only natural that OSCE has made efforts to create a security community. Challenges still remain in relation to the creation of a genuine political environment that respects the vital interests and needs of OSCE participating States. The ongoing protracted conflicts in the OSCE region are the more visible examples of these challenges. When we try to define and implement a reconciliation strategy for the OSCE, we should first call for better use of a wide variety of instruments and tools that OSCE has at its disposal. These involve promotion of networks among people, transfer of knowledge and good practices, the establishment of confidence building measures and regional and bilateral frameworks in areas of common interest.

A human rights approach is essential in framing our efforts to promote reconciliation. Dialogue between States should be grounded in dialogue between the very groups and communities striving to overcome conflict and its consequences. In reaching out to them, we must ensure that all sectors of these communities including women, youth, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, ethnic and other minorities are included in our attempts to achieve reconciliation.

ODIHR as the principal institution mandated by OSCE participating States to assist them in the implementation of OSCE commitments in the Human Dimension, is tasked along with other OSCE institutions to support participating States in the fields of early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation.

There are a number of ODIHR projects and activities that deal with the reconciliation. To promote a sense of mutual trust and common purpose among OSCE participating States ODIHR provides expertise, technical assistance and forums for the exchange of experiences and good practices in the fields of democratization, human rights, elections as well as tolerance and non-discrimination.

The rule of law and strengthening of democratic institutions is important programmatic area that can serve to promote reconciliation in the OSCE region. The consolidation of peace in the immediate post-conflict, as well as the maintenance of peace in the long term, cannot be achieved unless a population is confident that redress for grievances can be achieved through legitimate structures for the peaceful settlement of disputes and the fair administration of justice. In post-conflict situations, judicial systems face particularly significant challenges in administering and delivering justice. Conflict, by its very nature, almost inevitably weakens judicial bodies, and at the same time significantly increases the demands that are placed on them.

The reconciliation processes are essential to achieve a genuine security community within the OSCE as they promote the furtherance of justice, deter violations of human rights, uphold the rule of law and foster public trust in political systems that are based on transparent and accountable governments.

Thank you.