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Speech of the President of the Russian Federation D.A.Medvedev at the plenary meeting of the OSCE summit

Mr Nazarbayev, Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen,

This is the first time that an OSCE summit is taking place in the eastern part of the region the organisation covers. It makes me doubly happy to be here in the capital of friendly Kazakhstan, whose strenuous efforts and political will as country holding the OSCE presidency have given new impetus to the common European process. I take this opportunity to thank Kazakhstan once again for this summit's excellent organisation.

This meeting is taking place in an anniversary year. The Helsinki Final Act was signed 35 years ago, marking a new stage in the efforts to establish a common security space, and now common democratic space too, from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

The Russian Federation has affirmed its commitment to the Helsinki Final Act and its spirit on numerous occasions. One important step in this direction was the proposal we made in 2008 to conclude a legally binding treaty on European security that would guarantee indivisible security for the entire region. I want to thank you for the support that this initiative has received from the OSCE too.

State representatives, political analysts and experts have been discussing this initiative over the last two-and-a-half years, including in the Russia-NATO Council, at Russia-EU meetings, academic forums, and in the OSCE as part of the Corfu process. Old stereotypes still remain strong perhaps, and this initiative might be a long way ahead of its time, but I am certain that sooner or later this treaty's time will come.

Practically all OSCE members recognise now that dividing lines must become a thing of the past, all citizens, no matter where they live, have equal rights to security, and all countries taking part in whichever alliances must guarantee that their actions will not be to the detriment of the security of countries not part of these alliances. The summit's draft political document on establishing a security community in the OSCE region follows this spirit. I am sure that we will be able to approve a reasonable and balanced document.

The world is changing fast, and the nature of risks and threats is changing with it. The Conference on Security coped with its tasks in the 1970-80s, ensuring that political and ideological differences did not grow into conflict, and maintaining stability in Europe. Today, we must remain unswerving in our commitment to the OSCE principles, which establish peaceful relations between countries, set every human being's right to life as the highest value, and exclude military force as a means for settling territorial disputes.

We are grateful for the support that many countries have given our proposals on arms control and confidence-building measures. The process of renewing the 1999 Vienna document has already begun, and we hope that a new draft of this document will be approved in time for the 2011 ministerial meeting. We hope too to finally break the deadlock on the issue of the conventional arms control regime. This is not just our hope but is something we will work on actively, helping to find solutions to these issues.

The OSCE countries face new challenges in security's humanitarian dimension too. This has already been spoken about today. We are all long since living in a common information space. True, this information space is still far from ideal, and we need to work at national and international level to settle the question of access to information, and also protect the information environment from extremists while at the same time protecting and guaranteeing people's rights and freedoms.

We cannot build a common democratic Euro-Atlantic space unless we fulfil our obligations to give people freedom of movement. Let us recall that the organisation's member states agreed back in 1975 to simplify visa procedures, and in 1989 agreed to examine the question of abolishing entry visas, but sadly, we have made no progress on this issue. It remains one of the big problems that we discuss as part of our relations with the European Union, for example. We are ready to move forward on this issue and take action.

The globalisation era with its openness, access and mobility offers us not just new opportunities but also brings us new trials. We need to manage a constantly changing environment and combine financial and economic interests with the needed level of social protection. Of course, we need to maintain our moral principles too and not be tempted by 'simple solutions' of the kind that populists and radicals like to offer. This is especially important in any case for Russia, with its centuries-old traditions of interethnic and inter-faith harmony.

Of course, all countries have their own national agendas. We are all thinking about how to respond to new dangers, and there are no universal recipes in this sense. But the OSCE, with its unique potential, could do much more to help us resolve these problems and address transnational threats such as terrorism, human trafficking, drugs crime and other threats.

We also need to reflect on the contribution the OSCE can make to cooperation on emergency responses to natural and manmade disasters.

Perhaps most important of all is to develop a set of common principles for conflict resolution, to be applied in all crisis situations and not just selected cases. These principles are not resorting to force, reaching agreements between the parties, respect for negotiation and peacekeeping decisions, and protecting the rights of civilians in the conflict zone. I stress the point that conflicts must be settled exclusively through peaceful means. Using military force, as the Georgian leadership did in South Ossetia in August 2008, is totally unacceptable.

Russia is consistent in its desire to breathe new life into the Helsinki principles and put them into practice. This requires us to modernise the OSCE, modernise its forms and style of work. The organisation has begun to lose its potential, and this is something we need to look at frankly. I think we cannot simply keep producing new obligations and instruments to enforce them, but need to give the organisation a clearer legal base and establish universal rules for the use of its resources.

Russia has worked together with its partners to produce a draft OSCE charter and proposals for improving its organisational work. This is the only way to keep the organisation relevant and integrate it organically into the new global system that is starting to take shape. I am sure that, using the cooperation-based Security Platform that was adopted in 1999, the OSCE can become a driving force for developing cooperation between NATO, the European Union, the Council of Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States, and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation. All of the countries in these organisations are also members of the OSCE, and in this sense the OSCE is a universal forum.

Thirty-five years ago, during the height of the Cold War, our predecessors rose above ideological differences and took decisions that were truly revolutionary for their time. Today, when ideological barriers no longer stand in our way and military confrontation has ended, we can and must join forces to resolve the problems before us.

I want to wish the future OSCE chairs success in their work, and congratulate Ukraine on being chosen to preside over the organisation in 2013. I wish you all success in this difficult but important job. Thank you for your attention.