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Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the OSCE

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXEY N. BORODAVKIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

13 January 2005

**In response to the statement by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office and
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovenia, Mr. Dimitrij Rupel**

We should like to welcome the distinguished Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovenia to the OSCE. We have listened with interest to his statement outlining the key priorities for the Slovenian chairmanship of the OSCE in the coming year. We agree with many of them and support them.

In view of the numerous anniversary dates, the coming year can rightly be called a landmark year. The 30th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, the 15th anniversary of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe and the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War give us good reason to reflect on the progress made and on future opportunities for building a common European security space and the role of the OSCE itself in this process. Is the Organization, its agenda and operational tools still up to the task of uniting the peoples of the continent on the basis of democratic principles and values common to all? How effectively is it coping with its appointed role as a forum for dialogue on the basis of equal rights and collective decision-making on an entire range of questions concerning European security? How can we enhance its strongest and most advantageous aspects and rectify the shortcomings that prevent it from operating in a normal manner and developing? It is only after we have answered these questions that we will be able to preserve and strengthen the unique role of the OSCE in the new security structure in Europe and its task of bringing peoples together.

In that connection, the Russian Federation believes that the comprehensive reform of the OSCE and the updating of its political priorities must be at the centre of the work of the Organization and the chairmanship in 2005. The need to adapt the OSCE's agenda and mechanisms with due regard for the new political realities was mentioned in the Declaration of the Heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States of 3 July 2004 and in the Appeal by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Commonwealth of Independent States to their OSCE partners of 15 September 2004.

The decision adopted by the ministers in Sofia on the establishment of a Panel of Eminent Persons and on subsequent high-level consultations creates the necessary organizational framework for this work. We expect it to begin as soon as possible. The situation has reached a critical point and any further delay in specific steps regarding reform threatens serious political consequences for the OSCE. We cannot allow the genuine reform of the OSCE to become lost in endless and futile discussions. The stakes are too high — namely the future of the Organization. We expect tangible decisions to be adopted at the Ministerial Council meeting in Ljubljana to enable the process of reforming the OSCE to really get off the ground.

The decisions adopted last year as regards the combating of terrorism represent a graphic example of successful co-operation within the OSCE. We are convinced that the importance of this aspect of the Organization's work will continue to grow. We need to move away from general theoretical discussions and declarations towards the elaboration of "pinpointed" practical measures for meeting counter-terrorism commitments and standards adopted at the global and regional level. Of the specific subjects that we believe the OSCE could tackle in the coming year, the problems of the extradition of terrorists and their accomplices, the suppression of the financing of terrorism, the role of civil society in the fight against terror and the prevention of the use of the Internet for terrorist goals, to name but a few, are of particular interest. It would be worthwhile resuming the inter-institutional meetings of heads of counter-terrorism organizations, the so-called Lisbon meetings. It goes without saying that monitoring whether participating States are meeting their international counter-terrorism commitments must remain an important area of the Organization's work.

In our opinion, the key tasks for the OSCE in the coming year include the continuation of work to further develop politico-military aspects of security, the expansion of the agenda of the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) and the strengthening of its autonomous status. In that context, we consider the initiative to hold a high-level seminar this year on military doctrines to be an important one. We are certain that within its mandate the FSC can and should make a worthy contribution to the work of the Annual Security Review Conferences, something which should serve to strengthen its institutional links with the Permanent Council.

The OSCE must continue its efforts to settle unresolved conflicts, operating within the established negotiation formats. At the same time, consideration might also be given as to how the OSCE's tools may be used to help achieve a peaceful settlement of other conflict situations throughout the OSCE area, and not only to the east of Vienna.

The further development of dialogue among participating States on current economic and environmental problems and the comprehensive implementation of the economic strategy must take priority. The inclusion in the economic dimension of issues of practical interest to all participating States both from the point of view of their socio-economic development and from the point of view of strengthening inter-State co-operation is an important task. We include among these issues efforts to ensure energy security and we propose that a separate conference be held under the auspices of the OSCE on that subject this year. We reiterate our proposal to make the problems of transport development the central theme of the OSCE Economic Forum in 2006.

The OSCE is facing serious problems in the human dimension. The Organization's humanitarian tools — the Secretariat, the Special Representatives of the Chairman-in-Office

and the institutions — must continue to be actively involved in the efforts to solve problems that are of relevance to everyone, first and foremost with regard to countering all forms of discrimination and intolerance, combating trafficking in human beings and protecting fundamental human rights and freedoms, including the rights of national minorities, and freedom of the media.

At the same time, it is in the human dimension where the main systemic shortcomings of the OSCE have manifested themselves most prominently and continue to remain, shortcomings which have given rise to criticism on the part of many participating States of “double standards”, politically motivated and biased assessments and approaches to particular countries and regions and the use of human-rights issues for exerting political pressure. If we in the OSCE do share common democratic values, then it is inadmissible for us to accept a situation where people who have lived in a particular country for dozens of years cannot receive citizenship, are not entitled to participate in municipal elections and their right to receive an education in their mother tongue is infringed. What is behind the passive stance taken by the OSCE, which remains silent on these intolerable issues — it is not difficult to guess. But as a result of this unjustified position, the OSCE may lose its reputation as an “honest broker” and consequently its political usefulness for a great many countries.

The work of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) with regard to elections requires particular discussion. The method employed today by the Office for the monitoring and assessment of elections and its claim to be the “supranational” objective arbiter of whether or not various countries meet international standards of democracy are examples of flagrant political hypocrisy. Last year there were quite a few instances when the same violations during election campaigns and voting were assessed differently in different countries depending on political leanings. This practice cannot be allowed to continue. Urgent steps are needed to improve the system of objective criteria for election assessments and the procedures for planning, conducting and staffing monitoring missions, taking into account the principles of geographical and linguistic balance. This is not the first year that there is the question of the ODIHR conducting a comparative analysis of election laws in participating States and the adoption of additional obligations regarding elections in the form of a “Copenhagen plus” document. Piles of proposals on this subject by Russia and other countries are gathering dust in the OSCE’s archives. No progress has been made.

Without a proper solution to these problems, the monitoring of election processes is not only ceasing to make sense but is also becoming an instrument of political manipulation and a destabilizing factor. We will not accept such a state of affairs.

The restructuring of the system for financing the OSCE must be an integral part of the reform. We cannot hide our regret that last year we missed out on an opportunity to agree on what was if not the newest scale then at least a temporary mechanism for financing the Organization that would have allowed it to continue functioning in stable and predictable conditions. It is clear that a settlement on the scale and the budget for 2005, which must reflect the priorities of all countries and not merely individual countries or organizations, must become the number one task for the month immediately ahead.

Unfortunately, as the analysis of the budget proposal for this year has shown, the proposal is repeating the defects of the 2004 budget. Furthermore, the blocking by a number of delegations of Permanent Council decisions on the holding of events such as the

Conference on Energy Security and the Seminar on Military Doctrines further aggravates the imbalance between the three dimensions of the OSCE's work. Yet it is a fact that these events could be the first steps towards rectifying the blatant asymmetries that have taken root within the Organization.

Efforts should continue to introduce order to extra-budgetary spending. There should be no further delay in the settlement of this overdue issue.

In conclusion, we should like to wish the new chairmanship every success. Ahead of them they have extremely responsible work and at times tasks of unprecedented difficulty. However, it is indeed this year that may be a decisive one for the OSCE. Whether it will turn out to be a turning-point towards a new regenerated organization serving the interests of all States and peoples or whether, on the one hand, the process of the Organization's marginalization to the periphery of European politics will continue, will in many respects depend on all of us.

Russia has shown flexibility and is willing to continue to do so and to take into account the interests of its partners. We trust that in the coming year we will be able to carry out our common work on the basis of the values and interests that unite all the OSCE participating States. If we are able to do this it will be easier to resolve those issues on which there is disagreement within the OSCE.

Thank you for your attention.