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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANVAR AZIMOV,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

4 June 2009

**In response to the statement by Mr. Samuel Žbogar,
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovenia and Chairman of the
Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe**

Mr. Minister,
Madam Chairperson,

We listened with interest to the statement by Mr. Samuel Žbogar in which he set out in detail the priorities of the Slovenian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and the proposals for strengthening co-operation between the Council of Europe and the OSCE.

Slovenia took over the helm of the Council of Europe in the year in which this respected and indeed the oldest European organization celebrates its 60th anniversary. We sincerely wish our Slovenian colleagues every success in performing this honourable and responsible task.

We hope that Slovenia will follow a balanced policy, taking into account the interests of all the members of the Council of Europe, and preserve the culture of consensus and the traditions of continuity established by the previous Spanish Chairmanship. In that connection, I should like to mention that the Russian Federation is satisfied on the whole with the outcome of the 119th Ministerial Session of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe recently held in Madrid and with the provisions of its final declaration. In our view, the Madrid forum managed to draw a line under a period of some tension in the Council of Europe and laid the practical foundations for constructive co-operation. We trust that Slovenia will help to strengthen this trend.

We share the determination of the Slovenian Chairmanship to actively promote the rule of law, human rights and democracy. At the same time, we firmly believe that given the current global financial and economic crisis additional use may be made of the Council of Europe's potential, particularly in helping to resolve the socio-economic problems that are primarily worrying ordinary Europeans, and the Council of Europe has a unique instrument for doing just that – the European Social Charter. At its basis lies social cohesion, a prerequisite for resolving Europe's other urgent problems. It is also worth mentioning the

first Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Social Cohesion which was successfully held in Moscow on 26 and 27 February of this year, which confirmed the organization's role in the social sphere. It is clear that the OSCE too could deal more substantively with the socio-economic aspects of human rights, for the stability and security of Europe directly depend on these issues being resolved effectively.

We agree with the Slovenian Chairmanship that it is important to strengthen co-operation between the OSCE and the Council of Europe in the interests of ensuring security and stability in Europe. These are in fact the goals behind the proposal by Russia's President Dmitry Medvedev to conclude a treaty on European security. We are prepared for wide-ranging dialogue on this issue and therefore take a positive view of Ljubljana's idea of discussing the future of the European security architecture at the Strategic Forum scheduled to take place in Bled at the end of August.

We are pleased that the Council of Europe and the OSCE have succeeded in recent years in stepping up their collaboration in combating terrorism and other threats, including the rise in manifestations of intolerance. We are gratified to note that the protection of the rights of national minorities and the fight against discrimination of any kind are among the priorities of the Slovenian Chairmanship. It is important, however, not to limit this work to simply ensuring the rights of Roma and Sinti, although we are entirely in agreement with this priority set by Ljubljana. It is essential to continue to take decisive steps aimed at eradicating statelessness as unacceptable for Europe.

We trust that the Slovenian Chairmanship will, together with the Council of Europe Commissioner on Human Rights and the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, take practical steps to reverse the practice in some countries belonging to both organizations of restricting on a deliberate and massive scale the access of their residents to education in their mother tongue, and what is more not only at institutions of higher education but also in schools and even kindergartens. There is much scope here for fruitful co-operation between the Council of Europe and the OSCE, and the expansion of this co-operation is in our view long overdue.

We cannot but be alarmed at attempts to distort our shared history, including incidents that occurred during the Second World War and its outcome, as well as the growing instances of glorification of the Nazis in certain countries. Our common future depends on how we are able to rebut these revanchist attitudes through joint efforts on the part of the OSCE and the Council of Europe.

On the whole, we are in favour of expanding the list of areas of co-operation between the OSCE and the Council of Europe that were set out in our Joint Declaration of 2005. We support the intention of the Slovenian Chairmanship to further improve co-operation in the area of election monitoring. We are convinced that concerted efforts by the relevant bodies, including the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Venice Commission and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights will make it possible to better organize our work in this important area, including the elaboration of uniform election monitoring guidelines.

We generally believe that the time has come to more clearly divide up the competencies between the two organizations. We are in favour of a rational use of their potential and an end to the duplication of efforts, especially as regards the protection of

human rights for this frequently results in the resources of the OSCE in particular being spread too thinly to the detriment of the two other areas of our Organization's work.

As for another matter touched upon in Mr. Žbogar's statement, namely the situation in Georgia in the light of the decision adopted at the Madrid session of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, we believe that the Council of Europe is in a position to assist with the post-crisis rehabilitation of the country, without duplicating the work of other international organizations. We particularly commend the efforts of Mr. Thomas Hammarberg, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights. We believe that the Council of Europe will be successful only if it works in close contact with the local authorities, especially in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, to prevent the humanitarian disaster that occurred as a result of Georgia's actions last year from being repeated.

We support the Slovenian Chairmanship's attitude towards admitting Belarus as a fully fledged member of the Council of Europe. For many years, Russia has been arguing that the contrived pretexts for Minsk's isolation are inadmissible. It is our hope that this issue will be resolved very soon without any artificial conditions or demands made of Belarus.

We should like once again to wish the Slovenian Chairmanship and you personally, Mr. Minister, every success.

Thank you for your attention.