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DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA
ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE

Statement
in response to the Address by the Chairman-in-Office, Minister for Foreign
Affairs of Slovenia, Dr. Dimitrij Rupel
delivered by Ambassador Jivan Tabibian
at the 540th Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council
January 13, 2005

Thank you very much, dear colleague.

I would like, of course, like all others, to wish a great welcome to our new Chairman-in-Office, Minister Rupel.

In the beginning of this session there was a little bit of an impression of a Hollywood premiere: cameras, lights, excitement, the room full, no empty chair, every Ambassador taking his/her place. Having gone through this a few times, I know that the first encounter with the Chairman is a combination of ritual and celebration, not without a high level of excitement and expectations. As usual, when there are expectations, there are at the very least some kinds of anxieties: not whether the list of what we ought to do is worth doing, but whether we will succeed in achieving them. Anyway, our Delegation is not exempt from that contagious sense of excitement. Now, when cameras have gone and things have calmed down a little bit, we can proceed in a slightly different mode.

One must also say fairly, referring to the CiO's "choppy seas" metaphor that the choppiness of the sea did not begin on the 1st of January 2005. Our dear old Chairmanship of the Bulgarian Delegation had already experienced some kind of swells: the water was rising. For us the idea is to make sure that the combination of leadership and competent captains make sure that we can weather those seas. The burden should not be put only on the captain since the choppiness of the sea is generated across this table, around this table. You may be the captain, but the waves are made here. We ought to try to see that a simple choppiness does not translate into what we might call "a perfect storm."

In situations like today and a few times during the year, there are two-three styles of reacting to a comprehensive programme. One group, which is most of my colleagues, particularly the pragmatists, itemize the presentation of your programme and correctly and by duty to their capitals, tell you which ones they care about, which ones they care less for and occasionally to say, besides the priorities, whether they choose to change tactics.

Of course there are a few, who prefer ex-cathedra pronouncements. Very simply, my Delegation cannot do that. If you visit some great capitals of the world, especially of

Old Europe, and see all those great, impressive cathedrals, you understand why there are ex-cathedra pronouncements. If you visit Armenia, on the other hand, and its thousand medieval or earlier churches, they are characterized by a certain kind of modesty of intention in communicating with the Almighty. Their modesty comes from experience and the cognizance of the limitations of one's own means.

When the resources are rather greater, the temptation to pronounce ex-cathedra opinions increases. I can reassure you my Delegation and I personally cannot speak that way; we cannot, so to speak, convince ourselves that we could speak that way.

Before I get to a couple of minor but important items and then on to a conclusion, let me just say that basically, in my long experience of dealing with peoples' expectations and their own perception of their own possibilities I can see there are three types: there are those who think, and here I ask the indulgence of my American colleagues, because they know exactly what it means, they can eat their cake and have it too. That is one of the greatest ongoing challenges that we are all faced when we have certain conflicts, certain dilemmas, and certain internal contradictions.

Then there are those who realize as realists, that one can either eat or keep one's cake. Finally, there are those who are beyond realism, almost in the sense of self-imposed humility, who realize that if they do not do something, they run the risk of neither eating nor keeping the cake and basically though sitting at the table they may not be served.

We have to realize that around this table we have a combination of Delegations, and therefore States behind them, touched by this combination of desires or beliefs, of convictions about their capacity to contradict this basic choice between eating one's cake and keeping it too.

The challenges ahead of us will impose on us certain tough choices: either/or; though some are not zero-sum games, the benefits of non-zero-sum games or their costs have unequal incidents on various participants.

Having said this, the Chairman's statement has a combination of vision, of goals and objectives, of a strategy, of plans and programmes – itemized priorities. Therefore, it is not surprising that many of my colleagues focus on priorities: they are the most concrete and specific items to consider.

However, two items that are implied and not discussed clearly are: one of approach and the other of method. Approach and method ultimately do determine not only the quality of the process, but outcomes, particularly where there are 55 sovereign states with their own sense not only of their participation in the process, but their own stakes and their investment in the process.

We must remain, therefore, and this goes for all of us, particularly to the Chair, sensitive to approach and method. Otherwise, programmes, no matter how noble or useful in them, may not benefit from collective legitimacy.

The Chairman referred to rebalancing. I want to make a comment about balancing and rebalancing. First of all, balancing what? We have over the years referred to so many

imbalances: regional, geographic, gender, priorities between the three dimensions or pillars. The word “balancing” has become basically trivialized and it really means very little. We may propose an alternative.

But first some specific items to show you that we too can be specific.

One is about decision-making. We welcome very much and we would like to encourage the Chair to be very expeditious initially in its decisions where it pertains to selections, appointments and identifying particular resolutions to competitive situations. If they are not expeditiously dealt with, they have a tendency to be protracted and lead to paralysis of the organization. We have had the experience in the last several years, when so-called normal selections turn out into gridlocks and they create a lot of bad will and a lot of hurt feelings. Therefore, the sooner the better as in an emergency surgery; I assure you we are not far from it.

Nevertheless, I heard the Chairman’s reference to the candidates to the Panel of Eminent Persons with some trepidation, with some concern. We remember spending, as our Delegation did, a long time in Sofia conveying the belief that eminent persons not be seen as the candidates of participating States. The Chair, however, actually thanked gracefully certain Delegations for having put forward candidates.

I do not know how we can change, modify, correct or improve this. The act of making or proposing these candidates ought to be as a courtesy service just in case the Chair is not aware of the eminence and the prominence of certain types of people; like a yellow-pages of preeminent people and everybody who has got a nice yellow-pages catalogue should carefully and discretely put it on top of the Chairman’s desk.

Our Delegation will be watching this very carefully. Eminent persons are not meant to be the representatives of states. They are here to be independent, autonomous, not bound to the states they come from. After all, everybody has an address in the passport, but their main interest or experience, or priority, or sensitivity should be the Organization and the Institutions of the OSCE as a whole, and specially the OSCE’s role in a wider European security environment and structures.

The second specific item we would like to deal with is migration. We could not agree more of how important it is. We think there is a lot to do. We can attempt to conflate the importance of migration and related ideas about borders and border security.

Recently, we came across a story, we will not say in what paper and from what country. The story was about small children: one four years old and another ten. They were not only held in a holding tank at an airport, but they were being considered for, and one of them actually was sent back: not only sent back to her country of origin, but sent back to the country through which the child had transited. We can tell you that the origin country was in Africa, the transit country was in the Far East and the airport was in Western Europe. Ten years old and four years old. The parents or the legal resident/guardians of those children were outside the gate of the airport waiting to meet them.

The OSCE, no matter where the geographic instance of this event happens to be, cannot sit on its behind and ignore similar events just simply because they take place

in otherwise civilized, democratic, advanced, electorally “immaculate” countries. We ought to look into this, because the story, and if I can for a moment adopt the mantle of a bully pulpit, the fate of these ten year old and four year old kids must not be ignored.

Our third item has to do with conflicts. We heard carefully what the reference to conflicts was. We fully agree they ought to be dealt with but we proposed some time ago to drop the word “regional” in describing these conflicts. That phase of the nineties is over. Now conflicts are no longer regional. Regional conflict implies conflicts between states in a region. Otherwise, a region is a geographic designation where conflicts may be located, but they are not “regional” conflicts.

We ought to say therefore “conflicts,” one might even add “in the region of,” but not “regional conflicts.” The Balkan wars were regional wars, but I do not think that all regions so designated should be stigmatized as conflict generating and conflict creating.

A word of great thanks with some caution to our Chair for his reference to the “Prague process,” for the resolution of the NK conflict. We hope the Chair’s hope of progress is not a hope misplaced. Simply, at this moment hope seems to be justified, but as usual with a great dose of caution.

Finally, an item to do with elections. We see the two sides of this story: elections, their implementation, their fairness, their equal application of rules, double standards. This debate has been going on. Our Delegation has a very curious question. What is the reason behind the phobia of submitting all our practices, as we are supposed to do so in all other matters, to a comparative, descriptive, and I use the word “descriptive” deliberately, matrix of those practices?

Our Delegation is less interested, by the way, in legislation than is interested in practice. We are very curious why people are sometimes, and it seems to be a consistent pattern, opposed to having the ODIHR or another specialized group, or maybe we can subcontract it out to somebody from another independent planet to tell us what those practices are, how they vary, how they compare, how they match and what their consequences are.

To us, states which feel so confident and comfortable with their practices, to be so phobic and allergic to having them to be looked at in a comparative context, we find it diplomatically understandable, though indefensible, unreasonable and inconsistent.

Let us conclude, Mr. Chairman, with two related issues. One is the whole reform idea. We appreciate the CiO’s words: “revitalize, reform and balance.” The trick is here. We are obviously in transition and like all healthy international organizations it is a permanent transition. **But the choices we have before us are between adaptive evolution, mutation or even extinction.**

The metaphor of evolution is a very good one. Like any organization we are not completely safe from the possibility of extinction. If we do not adapt, we are extinct. We can mutate; mutation may not be so bad. Or we can evolve in a relatively reasonable, peaceful, cooperative manner. That can be achieved not by statements, but

how the revitalization, the reform and the so-called rebalancing will relate to each other. Those three words cannot function without a very deep interdependence and interrelationship. One cannot do either one of the three without doing the other two successfully. In that sense, we sympathize with the enormous challenges that the Chairmanship faces.

The question is one of confidence, Mr. Chairman. It has got three layers: one is of confidence between states. That is the primary reason, target and objective of this Organization: to create and maintain confidence between the states. The second one is a confidence between states and their citizens. Somehow those two are related and that is one of our dimensions. Finally, we need to have confidence in our collective institutional conduct, judgment, wisdom and fairness. These three layers of confidence mutually reinforce each other; otherwise the OSCE is, to use the negative of your word, in imbalance.

In Sofia, my Minister made a proposal for a concept, as a guiding concept for our objective beyond simply a mechanical balance. Usually, whenever we think of balances we think of circus performers that can balance themselves on the head of a pin and avoid falling. Balancing is a dynamic but unstable act that requires continuous acrobatic adjustment.

By the way, this is not too far from what diplomats take a great pride in doing; they are acrobats of the political world, continuously balancing things on a pinhead. The phrase we rather adopt has a different goal; we call it a “**pluralist equilibrium.**”

We need an equilibrium situation that has some stability, continuity, institutional base and it is pluralist. A pluralist system is different than a balancing act between two or three opposite forces. It is an attempt of making sure that the overall equilibrium has a certain kind of dynamic adaptability without being dependent on item by item, case by case, instance by instance and ultimately crisis by crisis accommodation, where everybody walks away with half a loaf and nobody has a full meal, unless it is even a meal denied to some.

Mr. Chairman, with these thoughts and your full indulgence for having expressed my thoughts in this manner - extended and comprehensive, may I wish you particularly both patience and luck in dealing with the Permanent Council, where some of us have a tendency, without speaking ex-cathedra, do pontificate nevertheless. Also, please convey to our Chairman-in-Office who seems to have taken a necessary and brief break that we wish him all success.

Thank you very much.