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The Czech Republic

17th Meeting of the OSCE
Ministerial Council

Statement of H. E. Mr. Jan Kohout

Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Czech Republic

Athens, 1st December 2009

Mr. Chairman, Dear Colleagues,

First, I wish to express my appreciation to the Greek Chairmanship for the hospitality and the effective organization of this Ministerial Council Meeting as well as for its tireless efforts in tackling all the difficult topics during the year.

Czech Republic aligns itself with the statement made by Sweden on behalf of the European Union. In addition, I would like to further elaborate on some issues that are of particular importance for us.

Last year in Helsinki we launched the discussion on the future of European security, a topic of key importance. We have continued in a positive spirit at the island of Corfu and consequently through the informal discussions in Vienna this fall. Looking back at the gist of our debate a year ago, I admit we have made limited progress towards restoring trust and confidence. However, we don't seem to have advanced in fostering a common understanding of the purpose and responsibility for this Organization. We believe the key to the success is cross-dimensionality. OSCE comprehensive security concept is enshrined in all landmark documents adopted throughout the 1990-ties. Structures, treaties, commitments and above all values and principles to govern our cooperative security model have been in place for years and served us largely well, if respected and honoured by all. This may best ensure the viability of the concept of the indivisibility of security in Europe that no single event, even on the highest level, can accomplish.

In order to continue in the positive spirit we should discuss all issues and the legitimate concerns of all state parties in a structured cross-dimensional way during the next year. The future agenda should be comprehensive, but focused, and address the real threats to our common security. The relevant Corfu documents, if we were able to adopt them, would be a good basis for that.

We greatly value enormous contributions to stability and security throughout the OSCE region by OSCE autonomous institutions and field operations. In many ways, they epitomize what OSCE is today all about and assist us in implementing our commitments. They are irreplaceable and indispensable instruments to foster democratization, to deepen respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, to prevent conflicts and crises, to promote economic and judicial reforms and much more.

There is no substitution in OSCE area for free, fair and transparent election and ODIHR is doing an excellent job in monitoring them. We commend ODIHR for widening its geographic coverage and reinforcing its observation methodology. We encourage ODIHR to continue in the same spirit in the future.

In the politico-military dimension, our most imminent task is to achieve progress in settling the protracted conflicts and revitalising the arms control regimes. Tangible progress in these two fields of interest is a necessary prerequisite for the restoration of confidence and trust. This is the objective that we all subscribe to.

One of the most disheartening examples of the consequences of unresolved protracted conflicts is the state of affairs in the South Caucasus. Unfortunately, the situation in Georgia has not improved in 2009. In this context I would like to reconfirm full and unconditional respect for the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty. These principles were clearly

breached vis a vis Georgia. We also very much regret the closure of the OSCE mission in Georgia.

As mentioned earlier, the reinvigoration of arms control regimes is similarly important. Lack of progress in solving the deadlock on CFE is unfortunate. This situation cannot last indefinitely. And while we acknowledge some parts of the Vienna 99 document are outdated and support targeted modernisation of those provisions, we don't support this document being subject of the complete review.

Visible progress in all mentioned areas would further contribute to renewing the climate of confidence and trust. In the year of 35th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act we should vigorously work towards this aim. Czech Republic remains open to a high level event during the next year but we are convinced we need real substance, achieved through further deliberations, before we make decision to hold such a meeting.

Let me conclude by wishing every success to our Kazakh colleagues during their Chairmanship in 2010.