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**FAREWELL STATEMENT BY
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REPRESENTATIVE OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY
TO THE OSCE, AT THE 1063rd MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

23 July 2015

Dear Vuk,
Dear colleagues,

I thank Maria-Pia for her kind and flattering words.

I should like to take this opportunity primarily to express my gratitude for the collegiality, friendship and extensive support I have experienced while working here over the past three years. I wish to thank all of you and also in particular my colleagues in my own Mission who have supported me so actively in my work here. I have greatly enjoyed our collaboration.

My particular thanks also go to the many employees of the OSCE Secretariat, the OSCE institutions and the field missions. They are the ones who enable the OSCE to function and make our work possible. Their motivation, commitment and abilities have greatly impressed me. We representatives of the participating States have a duty of care to them, and we should also be guided by this in the current debates on conditions of employment.

The last three years have been a fulfilling and interesting time for me. My view that we can be proud of the OSCE remains unchanged. It is the model for the creation of an international security regime based on co-operation on equal terms, common values and the building of trust. We Germans are particularly aware of the contribution made by the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe to overcoming the East-West conflict. For this reason we believe the OSCE also has a central responsibility in the current situation. We need an inclusive collective security organization if we do not wish to revert to confrontational constellations and conflict management patterns like those of the Cold War period.

It is time to overcome the crisis in the OSCE which has been going on for almost 15 years. However, we can only do this together, and only if we are willing to leave well-trodden paths, reform the OSCE's mode of operations and agenda and remember the principles laid down at the beginning of the 1990s. We must return to genuine dialogue and effective co-operation.

While I well understand the frustration and anger about the violation of key OSCE principles in the crisis in and around Ukraine, I also very much hope that our dialogue does not become exhausted in mutual accusations. We must not allow the Permanent Council to degenerate into a propaganda event. The Permanent Council – like the Forum for Security Co-operation – is essentially a closed negotiation and decision-making body, and we should use it first and foremost for this purpose. It aims in its debates to establish soberly and objectively what the OSCE can contribute in order to restore lost trust and actively contribute to a diplomatic solution to the conflict. Thus, the key question for us at present should be what the OSCE can do in practice to support the implementation of the Minsk agreements.

Trust can only be restored gradually. It starts with sincerity and a willingness to undertake self-criticism. A military involvement of Russia in eastern Ukraine cannot be denied. However, this is certainly no reason for Western complacency or arrogance. We, too, must accept that we are responsible for failures in the past and that we have made mistakes. Things are not only black and white; there are many shades of grey in between. However, recognizing this is not a means of justifying situations that are irreconcilable with the OSCE principles. We should not return anew to traditional patterns of confrontation.

Finally, I believe it is now crucial to drive military confidence-building forward. This is a requirement of a realpolitik approach. We must consistently learn the lessons from the experience of the conflict in and around Ukraine and also take account of the deployments of the armed forces, which have changed considerably. The increased risk of military escalation and conflict revealed by the crisis underscores the urgency of revitalizing and modernizing our arms control instruments. Unfortunately, despite much lip service, I have not yet seen any genuine willingness for this.

My successor, Eberhard Pohl, will take up his post here in Vienna next week. I ask you to support him in an ongoing way with the preparation for and execution of Germany's Chairmanship in 2016. We should put the OSCE in a position where it can make a key contribution to overcoming the crisis of European security.

In conclusion, I should like to say thank you once again, also expressly on behalf of my wife. The years in Vienna have been a good, enriching time for us, a time on which we will look back with pleasure and nostalgia.

I wish you all the best. Auf Wiedersehen – perhaps in Brussels, my next posting. I would be pleased to meet many of you there again.

Thank you very much.