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**STATEMENT BY
MR. SERGEY LAVROV, MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE TWENTY-THIRD MEETING
OF THE OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Hamburg, 8 December 2015

Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. Secretary General,
Madam President of the Parliamentary Assembly,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Colleagues,

The situation in and around Europe remains unstable. The foundations of politico-military security continue to be eroded and acts of terror are on the upsurge. Diplomacy and mutually beneficial economic ties are being replaced with ultimatums, double standards and attempts to exert unilateral pressure and practise coercion. I don't think that this is the kind of Europe we all want to see.

We have been talking about the reasons for this state of affairs for several years now. The euphoria that the West experienced after the end of the Cold War did not allow the sides to develop a common approach to equal and indivisible security in the Euro-Atlantic region.

Instead of eliminating dividing lines, the choice was made in favour of a closed NATO-centric system. As a result, the European space fragmented into separate zones with different levels of security guarantees. Hard security, including its constituent confidence-building measures and arms control regime, found itself in a deep crisis.

Nevertheless, this situation is not irremediable. For a start, we believe it important to put an end to the bellicose rhetoric, which continues to this day. If you want to invite a partner to engage in dialogue, you should not begin your invitation by hurling accusations at him and demanding that this dialogue be based exclusively on your ultimatums. Such attempts undermine the very foundations of the OSCE, which the Chairperson-in-Office, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, has rightly called our common, unique Organization. We want to make it clear once and for all that the political atmosphere required for conducting an objective comparative analysis of military capabilities in Europe can only be created through dialogue based exclusively on equal rights. Together we must take a map of Europe and see who has deployed what and where. We are confident that the results of such an analysis will convincingly dispel the myth of a "Russian threat" and clearly demonstrate where the risks are actually coming from.

Frank discussion is also needed on the reasons underlying the migration crisis in Europe, which was a result of gross interference in the domestic affairs of countries in the Middle East and North Africa. This crisis led to chaos, rampant terrorism, loss of life and suffering. These were all the results of intervention. This lesson really needs to be borne in mind in the OSCE's work on migration problems. It is not enough merely to discuss collective measure for alleviating the consequences of illegal unilateral intervention.

We consider it a matter of urgency to start "de-ideologizing" economic co-operation and agreeing on confidence-building measures. We support the discussion of economic connectivity in the OSCE.

It is also important to promote a positive agenda as regards cyberspace and ensure the efficient operation of the working group established within the OSCE on confidence-building measures in the use of information technologies. We call for a balance in the OSCE's activities in the three dimensions, for security and for a more substantive contribution to combating terrorism and the drug trade.

We support the activities of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine in accordance with its mandate as an important stabilizing factor in the common efforts to resolve the domestic conflict in that country. A settlement is possible only on the basis of the Minsk Package of Measures and United Nations Security Council resolution 2202. It is necessary to stop sabotaging these decisions, which state that there is no alternative to direct talks between the parties – Kyiv and Donbas – under the auspices of the Trilateral Contact Group and with the support of the Normandy format.

Adherence to the agreements achieved is the key to settling all the other complicated issues, including Transdnistria and Nagorno-Karabakh. All conflicts need to be resolved within the agreed formats, with the full participation of the parties involved and with a balanced account taken of their interests.

We regard the OSCE as a major platform for discussing ways of co-operating on key European issues. Building a community of equal and indivisible security must remain our common long-term goal, and we need to begin, of course, by restoring the trust that has been lost. This can be achieved only if there is political will, mutual respect and a strengthening of the inter-State foundations of the OSCE.

The long-overdue reforms of our Organization should not be put off any further. Needless to say, we must stop any attempts at moving away from the consensus principle, which could consign the OSCE to its grave.

We thank our German colleagues for their hospitality in Hamburg and very much appreciate their efforts to maintain the high profile of the OSCE. We wish the Austrian Chairmanship every success.

The complete text of our statement will be posted on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.