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**SPEECH BY
UK SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN & COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS,
RT HON DAVID MILIBAND MP**

Thank you very much Alexander. Congratulations on the way you are hosting this meeting. You know that it is always very worrying when Foreign Ministers seem so young and I feel very worried to have such a young Foreign Minister leading the way as you are. But congratulations on the role that you have played. It is good to be back in Helsinki.

I speak from a country which is in a paradoxical position. We in the United Kingdom have never felt safer. We have never had less threat to our territorial integrity or to our national security. But we feel a strong sense of solidarity with those around this table who feel unnerved by the events of the last six months to a year; who feel that their new-found independence is not as secure as it should be. And I think an important role for the OSCE is to provide a platform for us to share our understanding of the risks we face and find common ways of addressing them.

Of course, being back in Helsinki means we are honour-bound to recognise the human and economic as well as the political-military dimensions of security, of soft security as well as hard security. The years after 1975 were years in which those three dimensions were taken forward strongly to great effect. I think it is very important that we reaffirm our commitment to those three dimensions or baskets of security.

It is important to say a word about what should be our shared commitment to democracy, to free and fair elections, to freedom of the media. We all look forward to the ODIHR report on the recent United States election which I think has been an emblem of renewal for that country, and it is a disappointment

that not every country is as keen to have monitors and observers for their elections because I think it is an important chance to take stock.

The truth is that without respect for human rights, including the rights of minorities and for women, without recognition of our economic interdependence and the issue of climate change (which was rightly mentioned by the Finnish President in her opening remarks), and without the CFE and the network of associated and military CSBMs, there can be no reliable security in Europe and the wider OSCE space. I hope that we can all reflect on the suggestion from Frank-Walter Steinmeier earlier this morning to convene a meeting in Germany to address the CFE and related arms control issues.

We have to be honest that OSCE commitments have been under pressure. Russia has suspended its participation in the CFE. There have been attempts to undermine the work of ODIHR on election observation. And of course in August one of the Frozen Conflicts unfroze in very dramatic fashion. It showed the importance of having live political processes. Because in the absence of a live political process – I would argue using the OSCE as an umbrella - live unpolitical processes can start. And whatever the origins of the events, we believe that the military reaction of Russia was disproportionate and we need to say so; and together with the subsequent recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, a breach of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. I am pleased by the reports of the second round of discussions in Geneva, and I hope that the spirit that was evident in the second round will continue. It is also important for the OCSE to re-establish its military monitoring activities in full, including in South Ossetia, because independent monitoring is the only way for a ceasefire agreement to be fully assessed. And I hope that all of us around the table will take time at least to read the summary of the report from ODIHR and the HCNM about the situation in South Ossetia and its surrounding areas. It does say that some displaced persons appear to have been pressured by Georgian authorities to return to their former places of residence in the areas adjacent to South Ossetia before conditions were in place to guarantee their security. But it also says that within South Ossetia many villages close to Tskhinvali, that were predominantly inhabited by ethnic Georgians, were nearly completely destroyed. It says that in the Akhalkori area the population lives in fear following an influx of military personnel. And in the areas adjacent to South Ossetia, in the so-called buffer zone, many ethnic Georgian villages were systematically looted and burned. Those are grim and dangerous words

that we have to take seriously because they have been written by people who have done serious work on the ground. And if we do not take those words seriously then we are not doing justice to the words that are supposed to bring us together.

However I think the Georgia Crisis also highlights the dangers of allowing conflicts to fester. And that is why I believe that all states have a duty to put renewed energy into the 5+2 process to move towards a solution on the Moldova/Transnistria issue, and into the Minsk Process to build on the Moscow Declaration that we welcome, and the recent positive developments on Nagorno Karabakh.

We will discuss at lunchtime the wider question of European Security and I will save my main remarks for then. But I did open my contribution today by saying that the United Kingdom has never felt safer. And in that context I think the onus is on those making new proposals to show why they would be an improvement on existing institutions and structures such as NATO, the EU, and the OSCE that has done so much to improve security over the last 50 years. I say that, conscious that countries to the east of us are feeling less secure than we are and that is why we do not have a closed mind to these issues. Any country which wants to engage on a serious and wide-ranging discussion about European Security and its architecture will find a ready set of minds in the United Kingdom keen to engage in a serious way on the basis of clear principles. That is certainly the spirit in which we will enter into the dialogue that has now been started about European Security. But we will do so clear that the burden of proof must be on those who seek change and certainly on those who seek to reform institutions which have already served an important purpose.

Thank you very much.