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**REPORT BY THE CHAIRPERSON
OF THE**

**CONTACT GROUP WITH THE
ASIAN PARTNERS FOR CO-OPERATION**

**TO THE
TWENTY-THIRD MEETING OF THE
MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

REPORT BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE CONTACT GROUP WITH THE ASIAN PARTNERS FOR CO-OPERATION TO THE TWENTY-THIRD MEETING OF THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

During its Chairmanship of the Asian Contact Group in 2016, Serbia assisted the German OSCE Chairmanship in its activities to promote an open and interactive dialogue between the OSCE and the Asian Partners for Co-operation, following a demand-driven approach and responding to the interests and priorities of the Asian Partners.

Five meetings of the Asian Contact Group were held in Vienna during the course of the year, providing a valuable platform for information exchange and dialogue between the OSCE participating States and the Asian Partners for Co-operation. The subjects of the five meetings were jointly selected by the Serbian ACG Chairmanship and the German OSCE Chairmanship together with the Asian Partners to reflect the wide range of topics of interest to the individual Asian Partner countries. Each meeting featured speakers from one of the Asian Partner countries as well as presentations by experts on topics relevant to the Asian Contact Group.

At the first meeting of the Asian Contact Group, held on 11 March, Mr. Lee Jang-keun, Deputy Director General of the International Organizations Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, gave a presentation about the security situation on the Korean Peninsula, with regard to recent developments and their implications for the OSCE. He said that the Republic of Korea was considering incorporating elements of the OSCE's comprehensive security approach into its own Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI) and he encouraged the OSCE to actively engage in addressing Korean security issues. Throughout 2016, the OSCE and the German Chairmanship had repeatedly voiced their concern about the missile launch by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 6 January, and subsequent failed missile launches, which demonstrated the need for a regional security framework such as NAPCI. Ambassador Fred Tanner, Senior Adviser, Office of the Secretary General, presented the projects and activities of the OSCE Network of Think Tanks and Academic Institutions, which the Asan Institute for Policy Studies, a think tank from the Republic of Korea had joined in February. It was one of only two East Asian research institutes in the Network, together with the Research and Development Institute of Regional Information of Ritsumeikan University in Japan. Following up on Asian Contact Group discussions in 2015 on promoting exchanges on cybersecurity, Ms. Monica Greco, Political Officer at the United States Mission to the OSCE, reported on the activities of the OSCE informal working group dedicated to that topic. That was in line with discussions held in June at the 2016 OSCE Asian Conference in Bangkok. It also led to the initiative to hold a joint OSCE–Korean conference on cybersecurity, which was under preparation throughout 2016 and scheduled to take place in early 2017.

The main speaker at the second meeting of the Asian Contact Group, held on 17 May 2016, Mr. Toshihiro Aiki, Deputy Director General of the European Affairs Bureau at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, delivered a presentation on Japan's enhanced contribution to peace, security and stability in Asia. He highlighted Japan's co-operation and co-ordination with allies and partners, the importance of UN collective security measures and peacekeeping operations and Japan's readiness to contribute to those, as well as the relevance

of new legislation in Japan dedicated to peace and security. The meeting continued with a presentation by Mr. Thomas Wuchte, Head of the Action against Terrorism Unit of the OSCE Transnational Threats Department, who has also provided an update on the Unit's activities.

The 2016 OSCE Asian Conference was held in Bangkok, Thailand on 6 and 7 June. Co-organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand and the OSCE, the conference focused on strengthening comprehensive security with an emphasis on cybersecurity, sustainable development, trafficking in human beings and illegal migration. The event provided a timely opportunity for OSCE participating States and Asian Partners for Co-operation to share views and experiences with a view to identifying avenues for specific co-operation. The three thematic sessions reflected the OSCE's three dimensions while incorporating discussions on current topics of particular concern. In addition, they were intended to follow up on the main conclusions in the joint perception paper of the 2015 Swiss Chairmanship of the Asian Contact Group. The first session was focused on enhancing international efforts to strengthen security co-operation and consideration was given to the potential for co-operation in preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism (VERLT), the potential for enhanced regional and international co-operation, including best practices in information-sharing to combat terrorism and options for interregional exchange on best practices related to efforts designed to enhance confidence between States in the field of cybersecurity and information and communication technology security. In the second session, dedicated to the promotion of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to ensure peace and prosperity, speakers presented model examples aimed at promoting measures to lift people out of poverty and improve their living conditions, as well as initiatives focusing on women's empowerment and enhancing the role of women in economic development. During the discussion that followed, OSCE participating States, Partners and guests outlined their initiatives and activities within the framework of Agenda 2030. The third session addressed the root causes of trafficking in human beings and irregular migration, targeting economic and social development and the improvement of livelihoods in at-risk communities. The relevance of strengthened law enforcement to dismantle smuggling and trafficking networks was discussed as well as the need for enhanced international efforts to ensure protection and assistance to victims of trafficking, especially women and children.

The United States Mission to the OSCE organized a side event at the conference on increasing engagement in cybersecurity and information and communications technology security. The OSCE participating States and Asian Partners contributed to the discussion by sharing OSCE experiences in developing risk reduction and confidence-building measures and considering voluntary measures to promote increased understanding and transparency.

Shortly after the Conference, on 22 July, the third meeting of the Contact Group was held in Vienna, with a focus on potential synergies between the OSCE and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Ambassador Arthayudh Srisamoot, Permanent Representative of Thailand, gave a presentation about enhancing co-operation between the OSCE and ASEAN, outlining recent developments in the ASEAN region and noting similarities in the priorities and visions of the ASEAN Regional Forum and the OSCE; he also highlighted the importance of an exchange of information and best practices between the OSCE and ASEAN. Ambassador Andreas Papadakis, Chairperson of the Economic and Environmental Committee, outlined the Committee's activities, while Mr. Diman Dimov, Project Support Officer, Forum for Security Co-operation Support Section of the Conflict

Prevention Centre, presented an Assistance Mechanism under the OSCE Documents on Small Arms and Light Weapons and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition.

At the fourth meeting on 14 October, Mr. David Lewis of the Permanent Mission of Australia gave a presentation on the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security – Australian perspectives. After presenting a video statement by Lieutenant-General David Morrison in which Australia's zero tolerance approach to violence against women was stressed, Mr. Lewis outlined the National Action Plan on integrating a gender perspective into Australia's activities and policies through "perspective, participation, protection and prevention", which involved concrete steps for the implementation of UNSC resolution 1325 in Australia while at the same time addressing the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda internationally. Ambassador Miroslava Beham, OSCE Senior Adviser on Gender Issues, then gave a presentation on the role of the OSCE in the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda – opportunities and challenges. Mr. Mikko Autti of the Permanent Delegation of Finland to the OSCE presented the activities of the Human Dimension Committee on behalf of the Finnish Chairperson.

The fifth Contact Group meeting, held on 9 November, included a special segment on security, stability and development in Afghanistan – transforming threats into opportunities for the younger generation. The Serbian Chairperson and Permanent Representative of Serbia to the OSCE, Ambassador Vuk Žugić, and OSCE Secretary General, Ambassador Lamberto Zannier, delivered welcoming remarks. The Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Co-operation of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ms. Adela Raz, made a keynote speech on recent developments in Afghanistan, stressing her country's interest in maintaining strong relations with the OSCE and advocating for stronger engagement in the field of economic co-operation aimed at promoting the potential of youth in Afghanistan. The meeting continued with two panel discussions, entitled "Transforming threats into opportunities" and "Assisting Afghanistan: Can we do more?" The first speaker on the first panel was Ambassador Kairat Sarybay, Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the OSCE, who described the traditionally close relations between Kazakhstan and Afghanistan and his country's firm commitment to the OSCE's engagement with Afghanistan. The second speaker, Mr. Haseeb Humayoon, Member of the Board of Directors of the Afghanistan Centre at Kabul University, reaffirmed that young people in Afghanistan should be targeted as a top priority in any initiatives aimed at the country's development. The second panel, moderated by Ambassador Marcel Peško, Director of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre, comprised the following speakers: Mr. Ayaki Ito, Deputy Director of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, UNHCR, Dr. Orzala Ashraf Nemat, an Afghan scholar and expert on local governance in Kabul, Ms. Anna-Katharina Deininger, Special Representative of the OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office on Youth and Security, and Mr. Abdul Hasib Ghafari, a research fellow from Afghanistan at the OSCE Academy in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. The panellists agreed that working together with Afghanistan on the basis of a comprehensive security approach would be vital to tackling the current security challenges in and around that country. Sustained political engagement aimed at peace and stability and concrete actions aimed at bridging the gap between the humanitarian and social and economic aspects of development were also important preconditions to ensuring the voluntary, safe and gradual return of displaced Afghans to their country. The panellists further encouraged the OSCE and its field operations to increase initiatives for and with youth in the organization's future engagement with Afghanistan. Concluding remarks were made by: Ambassador Vuk Žugić, who *inter alia* stressed that borders should not only be controlled, but also used to foster

mutual co-operation through trade and other means; Mr. Hassan Soroosh of the delegation of Afghanistan, who recommended that the OSCE sustain the momentum already established in the development of Afghanistan; Ambassador Clemens Koja, Permanent Representative of Austria to the OSCE, who stressed that the OSCE offered unique tools to contribute to the development of Afghanistan through sharing best practices and lessons learned; and Ambassador Paul Bekkers, Director of the Office of the Secretary General, who concluded that challenges should be addressed at both the political and operational levels and that the OSCE should rethink its engagement with Afghanistan.

The Serbian Chairmanship of the Asian Contact Group expresses its sincere gratitude to all the Asian Partners for Co-operation and the participating States for their commitment and co-operation in the framework of the OSCE Partnership. By wishing the best of success to the incoming German Chair of the Asian Contact Group, Serbia encourages continuing towards concrete and project-oriented interaction with the Asian Partners as suggested in the joint work plan of the 2014 and 2015 OSCE Chairmanships of Switzerland and Serbia.