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Address by Mr. Parviz Shahbazov ENGLISH only
Acting Head of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan,
Chairman of the OSCE Forum for Security Cooperation,
on the occasion of the Fourth Winter Meeting
of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Vienna, 24 February 2005

Dear Mr President,
Honourable Members of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me, in my capacity of the Chairman of the OSCE Forum for Security Cooperation to address the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE during the FSC chairmanship of the Republic of Azerbaijan. It is a particular honour to address so many distinguished parliamentarians from across Europe and North America. On behalf of the Forum, I thank President Alcee Hastings for inviting me to address the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

Allow me to begin by expressing my gratitude to our colleagues in the Troika of the FSC, the former and future Chairmen of the Forum, Austria and Belarus. Our Delegation cooperates closely with the Delegations of these two countries working together to ensure the achievement of the goals of the Forum.

As the OSCE's autonomous decision-making body on arms control and military aspects of security, the work of the Forum will, I believe, raise a lively interest of the parliamentarians from our participating States, who have gathered here today. As the Chair of the FSC, I consider it to be a useful opportunity to inform the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE politico-military dimension.

The Forum for Security Cooperation plays an important role in addressing the issues relating to the political-military dimension and together with the Permanent Council moves towards the achievement of tangible results in ensuring our common security.

As you know, the FSC's mandate is to negotiate new agreements on arms control, disarmament and confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs), as well as to oversee the implementation of the Vienna Document 1999, the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, the OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), the OSCE Document on the Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition and others. Under the FSC mandate, arms control, disarmament and confidence- and security-building measures remain significant elements within OSCE's common, co-operative, comprehensive and indivisible approach to security. In carrying out this mandate we further our political goal of security co-operation and ensure that the

processes of conflict prevention, crisis management, military-civilian dialogue and collective action are facilitated.

Mr. President,

Today the issues of the Implementation of the OSCE Document on SALW and the OSCE Document on the Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition stand high on the FSC agenda. Having started with information exchanges after the adoption of the Document on SALW in 2000 today we have been proceeding with concrete result-oriented activities based upon the request for assistance in the area of SALW destruction, stockpile security and management from several participating States. Until now three requests have been submitted by Belarus, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan to the FSC in order to address the SALW-related problems. Some significant progress in the case of Belarus and Tajikistan has been achieved, by conducting assessment visits and reports as the basis for further analysis and project proposals. It is therefore important to continue this work and come to concrete action in Belarus and Tajikistan as well as to intensify the initial work with the request from Kazakhstan by organizing an expert team for assessment visit as soon as possible.

In the case of Belarus, based on the report of the initial assessment visit and in line with the PC decision 619 the work is going on through detailed assessment visits concerning one aspect of the SALW problem: stockpile security and management. Interested participating States, the United Kingdom, Spain and Switzerland, are conducting a series of expert assessment visits during the beginning of 2005 to sites designated by Belarus. A final report and project proposals will be presented to participating States after the completion of the visits.

In the case of Tajikistan an initial assessment visit has been conducted in a relatively short period of time, thanks to the quick response from interested participating States. The report of the joint mission, assessing the situation with regard to SALW as well as conventional ammunition has been prepared. The OSCE Mission in Dushanbe, in cooperation with the Tajik authorities and the OSCE Conflict Prevention Center (CPC), has produced a number of project ideas on SALW and Conventional Ammunition in accordance with the request from Tajikistan. The project ideas are presented to size and costs on various sites, and in principle they describe the need of assistance within three main areas: training, security and destruction. Since the request from Tajikistan concerns both SALW and conventional ammunition, the work initially is carried out as a "joint effort" in order to find the most beneficial and efficient way forward. A number of participating States have expressed their interest and readiness to assist Tajikistan according to the request, and we hope that the concrete action will start in a near future. National considerations and bilateral consultations have started in order to finalize projects and to reach necessary agreements.

In the case of Kazakhstan, the first step should be to organize an expert team from interested participating States in order to conduct an initial assessment visit. The

Delegation of Kazakhstan is prepared to organize this visit in cooperation with the OSCE Mission in Kazakhstan and the Conflict Prevention Center of the OSCE.

The local OSCE presence, where it is envisaged by the mandate, could play an important role. Wherever appropriate, there should be a continuous information exchange between the “lead nations”, the OSCE mission and the host country to maintain the integrity of the process and to avoid the duplication of efforts. This is the way we, in the FSC, try to proceed with regard to SALW-related problems.

Now allow me to address another issue that has increasingly moved up in the FSC agenda over 2004. I refer to the issue of stockpiles of conventional ammunition, and the risks and dangers that emanate from dangerous accumulations of outdated or excess stockpiles of such ammunition in parts of the OSCE area. In 2004, this issue has become an intensive work area of the FSC, and it is not likely to be less so in 2005.

Why is the conventional ammunition an issue for the OSCE and in the OSCE area? Let me answer this with the following formula: Military *hardware*, such as tanks, combat planes, armoured combat vehicles, etc., was disarmed and dismantled in Europe in the 1990’s in a way that has been rightly termed “historic”. But the *ammunition* that came with this hardware was, in parts of the OSCE area, not significantly reduced, and in some cases even left untouched.

Anyone who remembers the huge amounts of military hardware that piled up during the Cold War in Europe can imagine the grotesque amounts of conventional ammunition – grenades, mortars, rockets, artillery shells, small-calibre cartridges, bombs and other explosive devices, filled mostly with trinitrotoluene (TNT) and hexogen-containing detonators – that were produced and held in stock for the big war that thankfully never materialized.

In addition, there exists an enormous quantity of surplus ammunition that dates back to World War II and even before. The state of degradation of this ammunition, often stored in more than precarious conditions, poses a particular risk.

In its totality, the problem of excess ammunition in parts of the OSCE area poses an array of risks and dangers that must be truly called “*cross-dimensional*”. There is, first, the humanitarian and economic threat of spontaneous, uncontrolled explosions that can devastate not only the storage facility itself, but also surrounding areas, villages, cities, and civilian or industrial infrastructure. Accidents, causing massive loss of life and economic damage, have happened, such as the one near Melitopol in Ukraine in May 2004, and can happen again any moment.

Secondly, there is a risk of large-scale environmental damage through toxic emissions into air, water, or soil. This goes especially for a notorious, highly toxic type of liquid rocket fuel, the so-called *mélange* fuel, which is virtually ever-present in the former Soviet Union. Because of the advancing corrosion of the tanks holding this toxic, a

solution to this issue is becoming ever more urgent. Efforts are already undertaken in some OSCE states to address this issue.

Third, there is a clear and present danger of military ammunition, sometimes of a high quality, ending up in the hands of terror groups or organized crime. It takes little imagination to picture, what such ammunition can do in the hands of terrorists, and how attractive it is for them to gain possession of military explosives. Explosive materials – whether in Beslan, Madrid, Moscow, Baghdad, Istanbul or Jakarta, or many other places over the world – are weapons of choice for terror groups. It is only too obvious, therefore, that all efforts must be undertaken to prevent the diversion of such explosives from military arsenals.

Considerable efforts have been made in many OSCE states to secure and dispose of outdated, dangerous or surplus ammunition, and to eliminate the threats that emanate from these stockpiles. In some states, however, the amount of surplus ammunition has dramatically exceeded existing national capacities for disposal or storage management. There, the problem is in fact becoming more acute instead of improving because more and more ammunition is reaching the expiry of its shelf date and must be added to the category of “dangerous ammunition”.

There are no clear figures as to the overall amount of excess ammunition in the OSCE area that urgently needs to be secured, destroyed or otherwise disposed of. But it is safe to say that the amount is staggering. In Ukraine alone, 300.000 tons of ammunition out of a total of two million tons of military explosives needs to be secured as a matter of urgency. While figures in other OSCE states are also dramatically high, little is known about the situation in yet other states, where relevant data are not available.

Many of you may be aware that following the adoption of the *OSCE Document on Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition* by the Ministerial Council in Maastricht in December 2003 five requests for assistance have been presented to the OSCE in dealing with excess ammunition: requests, very different in size and complexity, by Ukraine, Belarus, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan. A number of practical steps have been initiated by the FSC to find practical solutions to the problems presented in these requests. Fact-finding and project identification are current priorities before physical measures on the ground can be put into place. Predictably, once they reach the implementation phase, a significant price tag will be attached to these activities.

We are still at an early stage in the FSC in our efforts to find proper and workable answers to many challenges connected to these requests and the ammunition issue at large. But we are determined to continue in our efforts. A progress report will be presented to the next Ministerial Council in Slovenia. We believe that the issue of conventional ammunition poses a very serious, real and objective threat and a common security concern to all our states, and that the OSCE can play a significant role to effectively address it.

The active involvement of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly could be of particular importance in awareness-raising among the national parliaments of both requesting and potential donor nations. Better understanding of nature and scope of the threat posed by the stockpiles of conventional ammunition, in our view, could accelerate the solution of this problem. We request your support in this, and with your permission will keep you informed about further developments in this matter.

Finally, Mr. President, I would like to reaffirm that the FSC, as an autonomous body with a broad mandate, links its success to its dialogue and co-operative activities, which are essential for strengthening security through transparency and joint efforts in the politico-military sphere of the OSCE.

Thank you very much for your attention.