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Delegation of Belarus

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AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
BELARUS TO THE OSCE, AT THE OPENING SESSION OF THE  
OSCE ANNUAL SECURITY REVIEW CONFERENCE**

Vienna, 23 June 2009

Madam Chairperson,

The delegation of the Republic of Belarus joins in welcoming Mr. Sergey Lavrov, the distinguished Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, and thanks him for his interesting and informative statement.

The Republic of Belarus shares the Russian Federation's view of the general dissatisfactory state of security in the OSCE area and of the negative processes that are continuing to unfold in that sphere. The Belarusian delegation has spoken repeatedly and in detail in various forums about these problems and about the urgent need for collective actions to deal with the new challenges.

Today, at this Annual Security Review Conference, we must, I fear, once again note that the OSCE is far from fully coping with these crucial tasks, which in fact the Organization was originally set up to deal with. In the area of arms control and confidence-and security-building measures there has been a steady accumulation of well-known problems until the point where they have now reached a critical mass. There are ever-more frequent instances when the OSCE's basic principles and commitments in the politico-military sphere are the subject of more than one interpretation. The growing distrust among the partners is preventing a pooling of efforts to counter present-day threats of a transborder nature that represent a danger to all the countries within the OSCE area.

The events of August 2008 in the South Caucasus provided us with a graphic example of the crisis confronting the pan-European security system. Unfortunately, the price paid for that conflict is too high. Belarus has on more than one occasion given its assessment of those tragic events; our position on the matter is well known and remains unchanged. Considering the conditions that have emerged, we regard as one of the most important tasks facing us the devising of effective mechanisms capable of successfully preventing and resolving similar situations in the future. However, the inability to reach an agreement regarding the further presence of the OSCE in last year's conflict zone provides us with an eloquent example of the weakness of our Organization and of the dominant role played within it by politically motivated approaches.

We are in favour of continuing pragmatic dialogue with the aim of defining the arrangements for such an OSCE presence in a way that takes into account the constructive proposals and opinions of all concerned parties.

Madam Chairperson,

The Greek Chairmanship's close attention to the issues involved in shoring up the European security architecture deserves our approval. We note with satisfaction that this matter has been firmly placed on the agenda for the work of our Organization. We support the efforts of the Chairmanship to find and study new ideas and proposals dealing with this area.

We note in particular the stimulating effect exerted on the course of our discussions by the Russian Federation's initiative calling for the drafting of a legally binding Treaty on European Security. Belarus regards this proposal as important and timely. We believe that there is at the present time a unique opportunity for reaching an agreement on measures that will make it possible to further strengthen the observance of generally recognized principles and commitments having to do with European security and arms control, to enhance transparency and to provide equal guarantees of security for all participants.

It is our conviction that by beginning focused work on the Russian initiative it will be possible – not to replace – but to strengthen and expand the existing basis of European security in the spirit of "Helsinki plus". In our view, the OSCE can and must become a platform for open and candid dialogue on this subject. An indivisible and all-embracing approach to security will help us in charting the further course of this work and in determining who should be the main participants in this discussion. At the same time, it is necessary to take into account that it is still the politico-military aspects that decisively influence the state of security in the Euro-Atlantic area.

The Republic of Belarus has high hopes for the informal meeting of the ministers for foreign affairs of the OSCE participating States to be held on the Greek island of Corfu as a forum for further discussion of the issues involved in strengthening the European security architecture. We are convinced that that meeting will serve as a link between today's Conference and the Athens Ministerial Council meeting of the OSCE, which we should approach with specific proposals regarding the problems of European security, including the question of the Treaty on European Security. Belarus intends to take a responsible approach to further discussions in this area and calls upon all its OSCE partners to participate in this dialogue in the most constructive and open manner possible.

In conclusion, allow me to wish all the participants in this Conference successful and fruitful work.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.