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

Madrid, 29 November 2007

Mr. Chairman,

We should like to associate ourselves with the words of gratitude addressed to the Spanish Chairmanship and Minister Moratinos personally for their hospitality and excellent organization of our meeting.

We note with satisfaction the balanced and sound style of work of the Spanish Chairmanship. In the difficult circumstances involving deep-seated differences in the views of the role, purpose and future of the OSCE, the Chairmanship has actively sought points of contact between the participating States on a wide range of issues concerning the Organization's work.

Of course, it is not the Chairmanship's fault that so far we have been unable to overcome the negative trends in the evolution of the OSCE. Our meeting is taking place at a critical period for Europe. The "moment of truth" has come for a whole range of fundamental problems concerning European security. Unfortunately, the OSCE both as a real instrument for ensuring security and as a forum for dialogue and the seeking of mutually acceptable solutions continues to remain on the sidelines of the main developments.

This is manifested most clearly in the problem of Kosovo, where incorrect, hasty and, as some think, inevitable steps in circumvention of the United Nations Security Council run the risk not only of the long-term destabilization of the Balkans and other regions in the OSCE area but also shake the very foundations of our Organization, first and foremost its main pillar — the Helsinki Final Act.

By and large, the Organization's lack of relevance today is a direct result of unilateral group interests being placed above pan-European ones.

The essence of all of the OSCE's problems has to do with the attitude of the participating States themselves towards it and their real as opposed to their declared willingness to use the Organization's resources to resolve pan-European security problems. I should like all our partners to be aware of their responsibility for preserving the unity of the Euro-Atlantic space, which we were able to find after the end of the Cold War. The speedy transformation of the OSCE into a fully fledged regional organization would help to achieve this task. Life is not standing still and the logic of developments is already pushing things in the direction of the fragmentation of the pan-European space, something that is not in the

interests of Europe, the Europeans or indeed the world as a whole. This trend needs to be reversed, otherwise the entire European architecture will come crashing down.

It is important to decide how we all want to see the OSCE — a competent organization with a distinct structure or putty out of which anything can be moulded that is called for as “politically expedient” or more simply an opportunistic demand.

I shall now say a few words about some points that are causing us particular concern.

First, there are the attempts to violate the principle of equality among the participating States of the OSCE. This is manifested most clearly in the approaches of a group of countries with which we are all familiar to Kazakhstan’s bid to assume the OSCE Chairmanship in 2009, a bid which is supported by all the members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and that means by one fifth of the OSCE’s membership. Unlike all the others who have so far been approved without any problems for the role of “taking the helm” of the OSCE, there have been attempts to force our friends from Kazakhstan to somehow additionally prove their “suitability”. This kind of double standard is absolutely unacceptable. It is our hope that common sense will prevail after all and that we shall now approve Kazakhstan for the Chairmanship of the OSCE.

Second, is it conceivable that a key pan-European organization — which the OSCE is supposed to be — could exist without a Charter, without a fundamental document defining its goals, arrangements and mechanism for functioning. We believe that the fears that the adoption of a Charter might undermine the participating States’ OSCE commitments are unfounded. To realize this, one need only carefully study the draft Charter prepared by Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. We are in favour of the adoption at our Ministerial Council meeting of the decision on the establishment of an expert group, which would be instructed to conduct negotiations on the draft Charter with a view to adopting it at the next Ministerial Council meeting in Helsinki. Only then will it make any sense to adopt the Convention on the International Legal Personality, Legal Capacity, Privileges and Immunities of the OSCE.

We insist on the accountability of OSCE field missions, first and foremost with regard to the transfer of their functions to the host countries, as required by the Charter for European Security adopted in Istanbul in 1999.

The time has come to put the financial sphere in order as well — this involves both having the ability to pay reflected in the scale of contributions and ensuring transparency in the use of extrabudgetary funds. Abuses in this area have become infamous.

The “erosion” of the OSCE’s inter-State format is continuing. Marginal and altogether “phantom” non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with extremist views are indiscriminately invited to OSCE events to the detriment of constructive co-operation with participating States. Belarus, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have presented concrete proposals on rectifying the situation in this area. Nothing in these proposals is connected with attacks on the freedom of NGOs or on their co-operation with the OSCE. What is involved here is developing relations with NGOs in a civilized manner along United Nations lines.

All of the problems I have just mentioned are manifested in an even more graphic way in the work of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). Here this involves both the unfounded claims of the Office to some kind of autonomy from the

participating States and attempts to place itself above them, as well as the failure to comply with the instructions of the intergovernmental bodies of the OSCE and the division of participating States into “first and second class” countries, in particular when organizing the observation of elections. It would seem that we have reached the “point of no return”: either we shall all agree together on rules for election monitoring or the differences in this area will threaten the prospects of the ODIHR as one of the institutions of our Organization.

We still have a chance: Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have submitted a draft OSCE Ministerial Council decision on the adoption of basic principles for the organization of ODIHR observation of national elections, in which it is proposed that the procedure for the formation and work of monitoring missions be clearly prescribed. We trust that there will be a serious discussion on this document. We also propose that next year a conference be held for the heads of the central election commissions of OSCE countries with a view to exchanging best practices and elaborating possible recommendations.

In returning to the question of the failure to respect OSCE documents, I cannot but mention the ever more frequently encountered cases of failure to observe procedures for the appointment of heads of the Organization’s field operations, when this happens without the opinion of the host country being taken into account or when a post is de facto assigned to a particular country.

This year there have been some signs that the work of the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) has become more intensive. The “Security Dialogue” has become more substantive. A series of discussions were held on ABM issues, a subject which is of direct relevance for strategic stability in Europe. For the first time in many years, a special FSC meeting was held on existing and future arms control and confidence- and security-building measures. Lastly, the Forum has for the first time agreed on and submitted for approval by the Ministerial Council a separate draft decision on its work, which contains important reference points for the future reflecting both national and common priorities.

However, in spite of these positive developments we cannot talk of significant progress yet. The inertia of old approaches still shows. For example, despite the positive and concerned attitude of many delegations towards Russian initiatives to develop the Vienna Document 1999, some countries are attempting to attach strings to any decisions on them.

All in all, there is still much to be done if the FSC is to live up to the hopes placed on it with respect to achieving goals in strengthening the politico-military dimension of security in the OSCE area.

In this context, I should like to say a few words about the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty).

Let us try to examine this question in an unbiased manner, putting aside well-worn political stereotypes.

The truth is that our Western partners among the NATO countries introduced a de-facto moratorium on the adapted CFE Treaty in 2001. In spite of the fact that Russia had at that time met all of its “Istanbul commitments” that had any relevance to the Treaty, they linked the start of the ratification of the Agreement on Adaptation with Russia’s compliance

with artificial conditions that had nothing at all to do with the CFE Treaty, while the old Treaty of 1990 was generally recognized as being out of touch with the new realities already by the mid-1990s. This means that at least since 2001 we have been living in a situation of legal uncertainty.

For a long time now, Russia has been warning that this situation cannot go on indefinitely. Nevertheless, for many years we have shown self-restraint and patience and proposed ways out of this deadlock to our partners. However, there has been no willingness to listen to us. At the same time, the politico-military situation in Europe continued to change. Without being developed, the CFE regime rapidly lost touch with reality. All this left us with no other way out but the suspension of the operation of the Treaty, which will come into effect on 12 December of this year.

Russia demonstrated its real commitment to arms control instruments in Europe by ratifying the Agreement on Adaptation of the CFE Treaty. We now remain open for dialogue and joint efforts to find solutions to ensure the earliest entry into force of the adapted CFE Treaty and to restore the viability of the European arms control regime as a whole.

We regard the attention the Organization is paying to new threats as something positive. Spain's decision to make anti-terrorist issues one of the priorities of its Chairmanship of the OSCE has proven to be entirely justified. We take a positive view of the results of the events held on this subject in 2007, first and foremost the OSCE Political Conference on the Partnership of State Authorities, Civil Society and the Business Community in Combating Terrorism, the High-Level Meeting on Victims of Terrorism and the Workshop on Combating Incitement to Terrorism on the Internet. We are pleased with the joint work with our United States partners to put forward a draft Madrid Ministerial Council decision on public-private partnerships in countering terrorism. We also agree with another important document that has been submitted to this Ministerial Council meeting, namely the statement on supporting the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

We are in favour of further strengthening anti-drugs co-operation within the OSCE. This is the purpose of the draft Permanent Council decision on combating trafficking in narcotic drugs, distributed by Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

We welcome the stepping up of the OSCE's co-operation with Afghanistan. First and foremost, we regard as useful the OSCE's experience in combating drug trafficking and ensuring border security in providing the relevant assistance to Kabul. Russia has already made its contribution in this area by launching a pilot project to train Afghan anti-drugs police at the All-Russian Institute for Further Training of Russian Ministry for Internal Affairs personnel at Domodedovo, a project which we hope will become a continuous one. The countries of the Central Asian region have an important role to play in resolving Afghanistan's problems. We are also in favour of the development of co-operation between the OSCE and the Collective Security Treaty Organization in countering the flow of narcotic drugs from Afghanistan. Any project that goes beyond the geographical framework of the OSCE must be as specific and targeted as possible and designed to resolve a real problem that is threatening the security of the Organization's participating States.

We are paying attention to the development of the economic and environmental "basket" of the OSCE's work. Here it is important not to go beyond the natural limits of

OSCE competences and expert capabilities and not to duplicate the work of other specialized international organizations, forums and initiatives.

In the humanitarian area, we are giving priority to questions concerning the protection of the rights of national minorities, efforts to overcome intolerance, the combating of different forms of xenophobia and politico-religious extremism, and the elimination of conditions that serve as a breeding ground for terrorism. It is essential to develop common norms and standards in the area of election processes, the prevention of trafficking in human beings and migration issues.

The practice of arbitrary deprivation of citizenship is unacceptable in modern-day Europe. We shall systematically work to guarantee the rights of the Russian-speaking population in Latvia and Estonia in accordance with the decisions and recommendations of the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the OSCE. The current chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe — Slovakia — has proclaimed the building of a “citizens’ Europe” as one of the priorities of its chairmanship. Through joint efforts, including those involving the active participation of the OSCE, let us make 2008 the year in which massive statelessness is eliminated in Europe.

As regards the human dimension of the OSCE’s activities, I should like to reiterate the absolute unacceptability of attempts by some countries or groups of countries to claim “absolute knowledge” with regard to the nature and principles of democracy and to use the OSCE for “lessons in democratization”. No one has a monopoly on the truth. Dialogue on the humanitarian agenda can only be equal and mutually respectful.

Mr. Chairman,

As a separate point, I should like to say a few words on behalf of the Barents Euro-Artic Council (BEAC), of which Russia has just assumed the chairmanship. The BEAC continues to be strengthened in its role as a major instrument for building an area of stability, confidence and sustainable development in Northern Europe. The leitmotif of the Russian chairmanship will be the comprehensive solution of socio-economic and environmental problems existing in the region, the intensification of integration processes in relations with our Northern European partners and the securing of the specific interests of the indigenous Northern peoples. We shall endeavour to focus the BEAC on further concrete and fruitful work.

In summing up, I should once again like to point out that Russia has a positive agenda in the OSCE. We are doing everything possible to preserve the Organization, to give it a “second wind” and to ensure its worthy place in the new Euro-Atlantic security architecture. Today, when all the other international and regional organizations are busy with reforms and striving to adapt to the needs of the times, attempts to artificially isolate the OSCE from these objective processes are destructive for its future.

In 2008, Finland will take over the “reins of government” in resolving the tasks facing the OSCE. We wish Helsinki every success in this difficult venture. For our part, we are ready to co-operate most actively with our Finnish partners.