



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

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BRATISLAVA

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2019

**Twenty-Sixth Meeting of the  
Ministerial Council  
5 and 6 December 2019**

**Declarations and statements by the Ministerial Council**

**Decisions of the Ministerial Council**

**Statements by the Chairmanship and delegations**

**Reports to the Ministerial Council**

**Bratislava 2019**

6 December 2019

Original: ENGLISH

MC26EW52

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**I. DECLARATIONS AND STATEMENTS BY THE  
MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**



**COMMEMORATIVE DECLARATION ON THE  
OCCASION OF THE 25th ANNIVERSARY OF THE OSCE CODE OF  
CONDUCT ON POLITICO-MILITARY ASPECTS OF SECURITY**

(MC.DOC/1/19 of 6 December 2019)

On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, we, the ministers for foreign affairs of the participating States of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, wish to emphasize the Code of Conduct's value as a unique, norm-setting document.

We reaffirm the undiminished validity of the guiding principles and common values enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act, the Charter of Paris for a New Europe and the Helsinki Document 1992 – embodying the responsibilities of the participating States towards one another and of their governments towards their people – and, similarly, the validity of other OSCE commitments.

We remain committed to the full, faithful and effective implementation of the Code of Conduct.

In this context, we will continue promoting the Code of Conduct, *inter alia*, by discussing and exchanging information on it in the Forum for Security Co-operation, organizing annual meetings on its implementation and regional seminars, and undertaking awareness-raising efforts.

We reconfirm that the knowledge, skills and experience of both women and men are essential to efforts aimed at furthering peace, security and stability in the OSCE region, including the implementation of the Code of Conduct, and we are committed to ensuring and promoting their equal opportunities and full and meaningful participation in that process.

We welcome the continuation of outreach efforts on the Code of Conduct for the benefit of the OSCE Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation.

**COMMEMORATIVE DECLARATION ON THE  
OCCASION OF THE TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE  
OSCE PRINCIPLES GOVERNING NON-PROLIFERATION AND  
FIFTEENTH ANNIVERSARY OF UNITED NATIONS SECURITY  
COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1540**

(MC.DOC/2/19/Corr.1 of 6 December 2019)

We, the ministers for foreign affairs of the participating States of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, are mindful of the threat posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, their means of delivery, and related materials to international peace and security.

We recall United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and its successor resolutions, in particular resolutions 1977 (2011) and 2325 (2016), which called upon all States to take effective measures to establish domestic controls to prevent the proliferation of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and their means of delivery, and recognized the need to enhance co-ordination of efforts at the national, subregional, and regional levels in order to strengthen the global response to this serious challenge and threat to international security.

We reaffirm the OSCE commitments to prevent proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, contained, in particular, in the OSCE Principles Governing Non-Proliferation adopted in 1994 and updated in 2013, in the OSCE Ministerial Declaration on Non-Proliferation adopted in 2009 as well as in Forum for Security Co-operation Decision No. 4/15 on the OSCE's role in support of UN Security Council resolution 1540 (2004).

We recall that the participating States should implement fully their obligations under the disarmament and non-proliferation treaties and agreements to which they are party.

On the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the OSCE Principles Governing Non-Proliferation, updated by the FSC in 2013, we recognize the continued relevance and undiminishing value of this document, which, *inter alia*, demonstrates the collective commitments of the participating States to address risks and challenges connected with weapons of mass destruction, their means of delivery and related technologies and to strengthen the global non-proliferation regime and stresses the OSCE's contribution as a regional organization under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter to these efforts.

On the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) we recognize the progress achieved in its implementation in the OSCE area at the national and regional levels. At the same time much remains to be done, which necessitates continued and co-ordinated efforts of the international community. We welcome in this regard the OSCE's role in facilitating the implementation of resolution 1540 and subsequent resolutions by participating States in close co-ordination with the UNSC 1540 Committee to complement its efforts.

We reaffirm the readiness of the participating States and of the OSCE, as a regional organization under chapter VIII of the UN Charter, to take an active part in the 2020–2021 Comprehensive Review on the status of implementation of United Nations Security Council



resolution 1540, *inter alia*, with a view to specify the OSCE's role in facilitating its future implementation.

We reaffirm that the participating States are committed to continue to address proliferation risks and challenges resolutely and effectively to ensure peace, security and stability in the OSCE area through full implementation of resolution 1540 and adherence to the OSCE Principles Governing Non-Proliferation.

**Attachment 1 to MC.DOC/2/19/Corr.1**

**INTERPRETATIVE STATEMENT UNDER  
PARAGRAPH IV.1(A)6 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE  
OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND  
CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE**

By the delegation of the Russian Federation:

“Having joined the consensus on the OSCE Ministerial Council document adopted today ‘Commemorative Declaration on the Occasion of the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the OSCE Principles Governing Non-Proliferation and Fifteenth Anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540’, the delegation of the Russian Federation believes it necessary to make the following interpretative statement under paragraph IV.1(A)6 of the Rules of Procedure of the OSCE.

With respect to the fourth paragraph of that Declaration (‘We recall that the participating States should implement fully their obligations under the disarmament and non-proliferation treaties and agreements to which they are party’), the Russian Federation points out that it suspended operation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty) in accordance with international law and that, consequently, the aforementioned paragraph no longer applies to the implementation of the CFE Treaty by the Russian Federation.

I request that this statement be attached to the adopted document.”

**INTERPRETATIVE STATEMENT UNDER  
PARAGRAPH IV.1(A)6 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE  
OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND  
CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE**

By the delegation of Ukraine (also on behalf of the United Kingdom and the United States of America):

“Mr. Chairperson,

Ukraine (also on behalf of the United States of America, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) makes the following interpretative statement under paragraph IV.1(A)6 of the Rules of Procedure of the OSCE.

With reference to paragraph 4 of the Commemorative Declaration on the Occasion of the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the OSCE Principles Governing Non-Proliferation and Fifteenth Anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540, we would also recall the commitments contained in the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances in connection with Ukraine’s accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons signed by the United States of America, the Russian Federation, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, at the OSCE conference in Budapest, Hungary on 5 December 1994.

I request that this statement be attached to the declaration and the journal of the day.

Thank you.”

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT ON THE  
NEGOTIATIONS ON THE TRANSDNIESTRIAN SETTLEMENT  
PROCESS IN THE “5+2” FORMAT**

(MC.DOC/3/19 of 6 December 2019)

The ministers for foreign affairs of the participating States of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe:

1. Recall the past ministerial statements on the work of the Permanent Conference on Political Issues in the Framework of the Negotiation Process for the Transdniestrian Settlement in the “5+2” format;
2. Reiterate their strong resolve to attain a comprehensive, peaceful and sustainable settlement of the Transdniestrian conflict based on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova within its internationally recognized borders with a special status for Transdniestria that fully guarantees the human, political, economic and social rights of its population;
3. Underline the need to continue the result-oriented settlement process reaffirmed by the Hamburg, Vienna and Milan ministerial statements. In this regard, we call upon the Sides to continue to engage accordingly in the negotiation process under the Albanian OSCE Chairmanship;
4. Commend the Sides for further consolidating the achievements reached since the Vienna Ministerial meeting on priority issues and their commitment to achieve the full implementation of all agreements expressed in the protocols of the “5+2” meetings in Rome 2018, Vienna 2017 and Berlin 2016 thus contributing to building a solid basis for further advancing the settlement process;
5. Welcome the steps taken by the Sides this year for facilitating unimpeded travel of officials;
6. Encourage the Sides to develop joint proposals on further confidence-building measures;
7. Call upon the Sides to continue to work at all levels of the negotiation process in a rhythmical manner to achieve tangible progress on all three baskets of the agreed agenda for the negotiation process: socio-economic issues, general legal and humanitarian issues and human rights, and a comprehensive settlement, including institutional, political and security issues;
8. Underline the importance of the Permanent Conference on Political Issues in the Framework of the Negotiation Process for the Transdniestrian Settlement in the “5+2” format as the only mechanism to achieve a comprehensive and sustainable settlement, and reaffirm the important role the OSCE plays in supporting this process;
9. Applaud the commitment, leadership and political will of the Sides which led to the resolution of a number of long-standing issues, as well as the unified and active approach by the mediators and observers in the Permanent Conference on Political Issues in the

Framework of the Negotiation Process for the Transdnistriean Settlement in the “5+2” format in the course of their activities in 2019, including another meeting of the Bavaria conference on confidence-building measures;

10. Encourage the mediators and observers of the OSCE, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, the European Union and the United States of America to continue to co-ordinate their efforts and to make full use of their collective potential to promote progress in achieving a comprehensive resolution of the Transdnistriean conflict.

## **II. DECISIONS OF THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**



**DECISION No. 1/19**  
**OSCE CHAIRMANSHIP IN THE YEARS 2021 AND 2022**  
(MC.DEC/1/19 of 5 December 2019)

The Ministerial Council,

Decides that Sweden will exercise the function of the OSCE Chairmanship in the year 2021;

Decides that Poland will exercise the function of the OSCE Chairmanship in the year 2022.

**DECISION No. 2/19**  
**RENAMING THE CONTACT GROUP WITH THE ASIAN PARTNERS**  
**FOR CO-OPERATION AND THE CONTACT GROUP WITH THE**  
**MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERS FOR CO-OPERATION**

(MC.DEC/2/19 of 6 December 2019)

The Ministerial Council,

Decides to rename the Contact Group with the Asian Partners for Co-operation and the Contact Group with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation to “OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group” and “OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group” respectively.



**DECISION No. 3/19**  
**TIME AND PLACE OF THE NEXT MEETING OF THE OSCE**  
**MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**  
(MC.DEC/3/19 of 6 December 2019)

The Ministerial Council,

Decides that the Twenty-Seventh Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council will be held in Tirana on 3 and 4 December 2020.



**III. STATEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMANSHIP  
AND DELEGATIONS**



**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF SLOVAKIA (ALSO ON BEHALF OF ALBANIA, ANDORRA, ARMENIA, AUSTRIA, BELGIUM, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, BULGARIA, CANADA, CROATIA, CYPRUS, THE CZECH REPUBLIC, DENMARK, ESTONIA, FINLAND, GEORGIA, GERMANY, GREECE, HUNGARY, ICELAND, IRELAND, ITALY, KAZAKHSTAN, LATVIA, LIECHTENSTEIN, LITHUANIA, LUXEMBOURG, MALTA, MOLDOVA, MONGOLIA, MONTENEGRO, THE NETHERLANDS, NORTH MACEDONIA, NORWAY, POLAND, PORTUGAL, ROMANIA, SERBIA, SLOVENIA, SPAIN, SWEDEN, SWITZERLAND, THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA)**

(Annex 10 to MC(26) Journal of 5 and 6 December 2019)

This statement is delivered on behalf of the following participating States: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States of America and Slovakia.

We acknowledge that security sector governance and reform (SSGR) is a crucial part of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security, based on existing principles and commitments and closely related to the politico-military, economic and environmental, and human dimensions. We share the view that security sector governance relates to the principles of good governance and how they apply to security provision, management, and oversight. Security sector governance means that the security sector is subject to the same standards of good governance as any other public sector, and that the security sector is to provide security to the State and its people in an accountable and effective way, within a framework of democratic civilian control, rule of law, respect for human rights, and the promotion of gender equality. SSGR promotes the need for a holistic approach to reform, which takes into account the interlinkages between various actors and components of the security sector and contributes significantly to overcoming structural barriers between the OSCE's institutions and dimensions. In today's world of complex and interdependent security challenges (such as corruption, violent extremism that leads to terrorism, transnational organized crime and trafficking in human beings), national security sectors need to adapt to a dynamic and changing environment. An inclusive, accountable and democratically controlled security sector with full respect for human rights and the rule of law can promote confidence and trust between society and State and stability in the entire OSCE region.

As reflected in United Nations Security Council resolution 2151 (2014) on security sector reform, but also in the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, SSGR plays an important role in contributing to conflict prevention, peace and security. As a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, the OSCE can make a significant contribution to these global initiatives. We believe, in partnerships with others, we

should further build on the OSCE's comparative advantages that lie in its comprehensive and regional approach to security.

We acknowledge the OSCE has a long track record in supporting participating States in strengthening the governance of their security sectors and undertaking reforms in line with the Organization's commitments. We welcome the progress made over the last years towards a more coherent and co-ordinated OSCE approach. At the same time, we believe that more could be done by taking full advantage of our available tools and expertise. The OSCE could become more efficient in this sector by adopting the following measures: place greater emphasis on good governance, strengthen co-operation across all three dimensions of security, further integrate SSGR into the OSCE conflict cycle toolbox, make more efficient use of limited available resources, and enable increased co-ordination with other actors in this field.

We welcome the efforts of the Slovak OSCE Chairmanship towards a common understanding of SSGR in the context of the OSCE. In addition, we deem it important to continue regular discussions on SSGR, as an important step in acknowledging the role of the OSCE in this area.

We underscore that the following principles – all embedded in our existing commitments – should guide the OSCE's support to national SSGR processes:

- National ownership: support provided by the OSCE should be based on a request for assistance from that participating State and aligned with its national priorities for reform;
- Good and democratic security sector governance: OSCE's support should foster of democratic civilian control, rule of law and full respect for human rights;
- The promotion of gender equality: an essential element is the full, equal and active involvement of women in SSGR and that women's participation in the security sector on a strategic and operational level is promoted;
- Holistic and inclusive: a cross-dimensional approach to SSGR support, based on the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security, is required to take account of the holistic nature of national SSGR processes, while promoting the meaningful participation of all segments of society and the engagement of civil society;
- Responsive to the security needs of all people, including youth: SSGR support should take into consideration needs of all segments of society and entail approaches that are gender-responsive and respect human rights. All support should be grounded in a thorough understanding of the context and based on a comprehensive needs assessment;
- Co-ordination and co-operation: OSCE activities should be co-ordinated with other actors at the local, national, regional and international level, building on its added value and comparative advantage.

## **STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF BELARUS**

(Annex 2 to MC(26) Journal of 5 and 6 December 2019)

Mr. Chairperson,

Allow me to read out the joint statement by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Serbia, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the victory in the Second World War.

The text of the joint statement is attached.

Thank you for your attention. I request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

**Attachment to annex 2 to MC(26).JOUR**

**JOINT STATEMENT BY  
THE MINISTERS FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
AZERBAIJAN, THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA, THE REPUBLIC OF  
BELARUS, THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN, THE KYRGYZ  
REPUBLIC, THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, THE RUSSIAN  
FEDERATION, THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA, THE REPUBLIC OF  
TAJIKISTAN, TURKMENISTAN AND THE REPUBLIC OF  
UZBEKISTAN ON THE OCCASION OF THE 75th ANNIVERSARY OF  
THE VICTORY IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR AT THE  
TWENTY-SIXTH MEETING OF THE  
OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Bratislava, 5 and 6 December 2019

In 2020 we shall celebrate the 75th anniversary of the victory in the Second World War – one of the most brutal and bloody conflicts in history, which claimed tens of millions of lives and caused terrible suffering to humanity.

Nazism was defeated thanks to the indestructible unity and solidarity of our peoples and the joint struggle of the countries of the anti-Hitler coalition. We remember all those who showed unprecedented courage at the front and on the home front and saved our civilization from destruction. We bow our heads in memory of the heroic deeds of the anti-fascist underground resistance, the victims of the death camps and the blockades of peaceful cities.

It is our solemn duty to preserve the historical truth. We regard as sacrilege any manifestations of disrespect for the monuments to the soldiers and commanders of the Red Army and desecration of the graves of those who gave their lives to liberate Europe from the

Nazis. There is no justification for vandalism at such memorial sites. We urge all countries to honour the memory of the heroes and liberators and to tend the war graves.

We strongly condemn attempts to falsify the outcome of the Second World War. We are outraged at the endeavours by some countries to rehabilitate and glorify Nazi criminals and their supporters. We believe that there is a need for strict compliance with the judgments of the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg, which have no statute of limitations. Hushing up ethnic and religious hate crimes will inevitably lead the world to a new disaster.

We note the importance of the adoption at the 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly of a resolution entitled “Combating glorification of Nazism, neo-Nazism and other practices that contribute to fuelling contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance”.

History has demonstrated the danger of indulging nationalism, intolerance, discrimination, extremism and ethnic, racial and religious hatred. We recognize the significance of the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide as an important international instrument.

We reaffirm our commitment to the idea of a free, democratic, common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community. The heroic deeds of the victorious soldiers in the Second World War and their selfless sacrifice should be an eternal admonishment to future generations to strengthen peace on the basis of the principles of justice, equality and the indivisibility of security.



**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF NORWAY  
(ALSO ON BEHALF OF BULGARIA, CANADA, THE CZECH  
REPUBLIC, ESTONIA, FINLAND, IRELAND, LATVIA, LITHUANIA,  
POLAND, ROMANIA, SWEDEN, UKRAINE, THE UNITED KINGDOM  
AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA)**

(Annex 3 to MC(26) Journal of 5 and 6 December 2019)

Mr. Chairperson,

This statement is delivered on behalf of Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

We reaffirm our full support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

Eleven years since the Russian military invasion of Georgia, we remain deeply concerned over the continued occupation of the territory of Georgia and underline the need for the peaceful resolution of the conflict based on full respect for the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act, and international law.

We call upon the Russian Federation to fulfil immediately its clear obligations under the European Union-mediated 12 August 2008 ceasefire agreement, including the withdrawal of its forces to its positions prior to the outbreak of hostilities. We also call on Russia to reverse its recognition of the so-called independence of Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions. We do not recognize the legitimacy of the so-called elections held in Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions, nor do we acknowledge their outcome.

We are concerned by the intensified provocations by Russia and the regimes in Sokhumi and Tskhinvali, including the attempted expansion of the occupied area and the building of "posts" by the so-called security forces of South Ossetia region close to Chorchana village on territory controlled by the Georgian Government. We also remain concerned over the installation of barbed wire fences and other artificial barriers along the administrative boundary line in the villages of Atotsi and Gugutiantkari, and lengthy closures of so-called crossing points in Georgia's South Ossetia region. These actions have destabilized the situation on the ground and severely impacted the security, safety, well-being, and humanitarian conditions of people in conflict-affected areas. The recent death of Margo Martiashvili from Akhagori district, who was deprived of the possibility to get prompt and adequate medical care, due to the closure of the so-called crossing points, is another tragic illustration of grave consequences of the continuing restrictions on the freedom of movement for the local population. We are gravely concerned by the detention of Georgian Mr. Vazha Gaprindashvili in the region of South Ossetia and call for his immediate release.

We are concerned by the detention of the EUMM (European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia) monitors on 24 October 2019 by representatives of the so-called security forces of the South Ossetia region, and assess any attempt to impede the work of the EUMM as a provocation against and blatant attempt to destabilize peace and security on the ground.

We reaffirm our unwavering support to the EUMM, as the only international mission in Georgia with a mandate to monitor the implementation of the 12 August 2008 ceasefire agreement and facilitate peace and security on the ground. We call upon the Russian Federation to allow the EUMM to implement its mandate unhindered and in full, including by enabling the EUMM's access to both the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions of Georgia.

We concur with the statement of the Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions of 28 August 2019, that the newly erected structures in the Gugutiantkari area hinder freedom of movement for people living there, prevent them from reaching their orchards and threaten access to irrigation water.

We reiterate our deep concerns over the increased Russian military exercises in, and militarization of, Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions.

We remain deeply concerned over the ethnic discrimination against Georgians residing in the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions and about human rights abuses, including those involving the reported use of torture, destruction of houses of internally displaced persons (IDPs), and undue restrictions on freedom of movement, residence and property. We support the voluntary return of internally displaced persons and refugees to the places of their origin in safety and dignity. We call on those in effective control to enable full and unhindered access by international and human rights organizations to Georgia's regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

We are following closely the case of the death of Georgian citizen Irakli Kvaratskhelia in arbitrary detention at the Russian military base illegally deployed in the Abkhazia region.

We condemn the killings of the Georgian citizens Archil Tatunashvili, Giga Otkhзорia, and Davit Basharuli, and urge the Russian Federation, as the State exercising effective control over the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, to remove any obstacles to bringing the perpetrators to justice. In this context, we reiterate our call for thorough investigation into these and other cases, and for justice to be ensured. We voice our support for Georgia's preventive steps aimed at the eradication of the sense of impunity and note the adoption of the Otkhзорia-Tatunashvili List by the government of Georgia.

We support the Geneva International Discussions as a unique and important format to address the security, human rights, and humanitarian challenges stemming from the unresolved conflict between Russia and Georgia. We note that the 50th session of the Geneva International Discussions is scheduled for later in December 2019. We regret the lack of progress on the core issues of the discussions, including on the non-use of force, establishing international security arrangements in Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions, and ensuring the safe, dignified, and voluntary return of IDPs and refugees in accordance with international law.

We express our support for the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms (IPRMs) and emphasize their important role in preventing the escalation of the conflict and in helping protect the safety and security of people on the ground. We express our great concern over the suspension of the Gali and Ergneti IPRMs and call upon the participants to resume the meetings without further delay or preconditions, and in full respect of the ground rules of

the IPRMs. We welcome and echo the statement on 6 November of the Geneva International Discussions Co-Chairs calling for the immediate resumption of the IPRMs without preconditions. Technical and ad hoc meetings of the IPRMs serve a purpose, but are no substitute for regular IPRMs.

We welcome Georgia's compliance with the EU-mediated 12 August 2008 ceasefire agreement and Georgia's unilateral commitment not to use force, and call on the Russian Federation, as a party to the conflict, to reciprocate, affirm and implement the commitment not to use force against Georgia.

We note the Georgian government's policy of dialogue with the Russian Federation in order to de-escalate tensions with full respect for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. We note the meeting between the Georgian and Russian Foreign Ministers held on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly 74th Session at the initiative and through the mediation of the Swiss Confederation.

We reiterate our strong support for the peace initiative of the government of Georgia – "A Step to a Better Future" – aimed at improving the humanitarian and socio-economic conditions of people residing in Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions and fostering confidence-building among divided communities to the benefit of all people. In the interests of peace-building and economic prosperity, we urge all parties to engage to give it a chance.

We encourage the OSCE to work further with Georgia and other multilateral organizations to promote confidence-building measures on the ground. We also encourage Georgia to keep the Permanent Council informed of its progress in addressing developments on the ground and in further strengthening its democratic institutions and processes.

We encourage the OSCE's engagement in the process of finding a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Georgia. We regret the closure of the OSCE Mission to Georgia in 2009 and encourage the OSCE participating States to agree on the re-opening of the OSCE cross-dimensional mission in Georgia, with a monitoring capacity and the ability to operate unhindered across the administrative boundary lines. The re-opening of the mission would strengthen considerably the OSCE's engagement in the Geneva International Discussions and IPRMs, and in implementation of confidence-building measures.

The Group of Friends of Georgia will continue to raise awareness of the conflict and of developments on the ground, hold Russia accountable for its obligations, and advocate for the conflict's peaceful resolution.

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF FINLAND  
(ALSO ON BEHALF OF ALBANIA, BELGIUM, BULGARIA, CANADA,  
CROATIA, THE CZECH REPUBLIC, DENMARK, ESTONIA,  
FRANCE, GEORGIA, GERMANY, GREECE, HUNGARY, ICELAND,  
ITALY, LATVIA, LITHUANIA, LUXEMBOURG, MONTENEGRO,  
THE NETHERLANDS, NORTH MACEDONIA, NORWAY, POLAND,  
PORTUGAL, ROMANIA, SLOVAKIA, SLOVENIA, SPAIN, SWEDEN,  
TURKEY, THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA)**

(Annex 4 to MC(26) Journal of 5 and 6 December 2019)

Mr. Chairperson,

This statement is delivered on behalf of the following participating States: Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, North Macedonia, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States of America as well as my own country, Finland.

We are mindful that our security environment in Europe has deteriorated in recent years. In an effort to reverse this negative trend, we are determined to contribute to rebuild trust and increase confidence among participating States, and enhance military transparency and predictability, the full implementation and modernization of the Vienna Document being in our view the most effective step to achieve this.

In this regard, we recall OSCE documents and commitments relevant to the Vienna Document implementation and modernization, notably FSC Decision No. 1/10 from 2010, the Astana Commemorative Declaration from 2010, and the Hamburg Declaration on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the OSCE framework for arms control in 2016.

We also recall initiatives on the modernization of the Vienna Document and, in particular the joint proposal FSC.DEL/213/19/Rev.1 dated 24 October 2019, supported by 33 participating States, an unprecedented, substantial and comprehensive contribution to the Vienna Document modernization process, and in this regard we welcome consideration of this joint proposal at the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation with the aim of reaching consensus at 57.

Having this proposal in mind, we recognize the strong support of OSCE participating States for modernization of the Vienna Document, in particular of its key elements which are focused on enhancing transparency and predictability, and reducing risk.

We reaffirm our strong commitment to the Vienna Document and its full implementation, and are determined to support constructively the process of its modernization with a view to achieving substantial progress towards updating the Vienna Document by the OSCE Ministerial Council in 2020 in Tirana.

Mr. Chairperson,

The participating States subscribing to this statement request its inclusion in the journal of this ministerial meeting.

Thank you.

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF BULGARIA (ALSO ON BEHALF OF ALBANIA, BELGIUM, CANADA, CROATIA, THE CZECH REPUBLIC, DENMARK, ESTONIA, FRANCE, GERMANY, GREECE, HUNGARY, ICELAND, ITALY, LATVIA, LITHUANIA, LUXEMBOURG, MONTENEGRO, THE NETHERLANDS, NORTH MACEDONIA, NORWAY, POLAND, PORTUGAL, ROMANIA, SLOVAKIA, SLOVENIA, SPAIN, TURKEY, THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA)**

(Annex 5 to MC(26) Journal of 5 and 6 December 2019)

Mr. Chairperson,

This statement is delivered on behalf of the following participating States: Albania, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, North Macedonia, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America as well as my own country, Bulgaria.

The Euro-Atlantic security environment has become less stable and predictable as a result of Russia's illegal and illegitimate attempted annexation of Crimea, which we do not and will not recognize, as well as by Russia's ongoing acts of aggression in eastern Ukraine and its unjustified use of military force near the Kerch Strait and the Sea of Azov, in the Black Sea, in late 2018. We reiterate our full support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders and territorial waters. We reiterate our call on Russia to cease all financial and military support to the illegal armed formations operating on Ukrainian territory, withdraw all Russian military equipment and personnel as well as to comply with its international commitments by ensuring unhindered access to Ukrainian ports in the Sea of Azov and allowing freedom of navigation in accordance with international law. We call on Russia to immediately release all remaining Ukrainian citizens who continue to be illegally detained. We welcome the completion of disengagement in Stanytsia Luhanska, Zolote, and Petrivske and we encourage further steps in the right direction. We hope to see substantial progress towards resolution of the conflict in the Trilateral Contact Group and Normandy format discussions particularly at the occasion of the upcoming Normandy Four Summit on 9 December, in Paris. In this regard, we commend Ukraine's leadership for its commitment to the peaceful resolution of this conflict and call on Russia to act likewise.

Arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation have made and should continue to make an essential contribution to achieving our security objectives and to ensuring strategic stability and our collective security. We are determined to preserve, strengthen, and modernize conventional arms control in Europe, based on key principles and commitments, including respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, refraining from the threat or use of force, reciprocity, transparency, and host nation consent.

Russia's ongoing selective implementation of the Vienna Document and the Treaty on Open Skies, and its long-standing non-implementation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, combined with its aggressive military posture, have undermined our security. We call on Russia to return to full implementation of and compliance with the letter

and spirit of all of its international obligations and commitments, which is essential to rebuild military transparency and increase predictability in the Euro-Atlantic region.

Mr. Chairperson,

We welcome the broad support for modernizing the Vienna Document and regret the fact that the ministerial draft declaration on the implementation and modernization of the Vienna Document 2011 was not adopted. We welcome adoption of the Commemorative Declaration on the Occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security as well as the Commemorative Declaration of the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the OSCE's Principles Governing Non-Proliferation and Fifteenth Anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540. We reiterate our call for the full implementation of these important documents in the current security environment.

Enhancing military transparency and confidence in the entire OSCE area is, and will remain, a top priority. OSCE participating States should continue to address effective risk reduction and incident prevention and increase military transparency. We also underline that the OSCE remains an important and inclusive platform for rebuilding trust and confidence through multilateral military dialogue amongst the 57 participating States. We consider that full implementation and modernization of the Vienna Document is the most critical step that OSCE participating States can take in that regard.

We, therefore, call on all the participating States to constructively engage in negotiations in the OSCE to modernize the Vienna Document. We welcome and endorse the unitary Vienna Document modernization proposal tabled by 32 countries on 23 October as a sound basis for such an ambitious negotiation. Achieving consensus on an updated Vienna Document would be a key step towards rebuilding transparency and increasing predictability in the Euro-Atlantic region. We hope that all participating States will join together to achieve substantial progress on an updated Vienna Document by the end of 2020.

As a legally binding instrument, the Treaty on Open Skies has contributed to increasing confidence and advanced co-operative security. We regret Russia's continued non-compliance with the Treaty and condemn Russia's denial of a flight segment under an agreed mission plan to overfly exercise "Tsentr 2019", which was in clear violation of the Treaty on Open Skies. We call on Russia to be open and transparent and act in a manner consistent with their Treaty obligations. We welcome the decision on the distribution of active quotas that enables flights to continue in 2020.

At the same time, we value the Structured Dialogue on the current and future challenges and risks to security in the OSCE area as an opportunity to renew a meaningful exchange of ideas among all of the stakeholders to rebuild trust. We commend the Chairperson of the Informal Working Group, Ambassador Boender, and his team for the significant and valuable work done this year in the Structured Dialogue addressing risk reduction and threat perceptions. We actively support the continuation of the Structured Dialogue as a transparent, inclusive process owned and driven by the participating States, and without a predetermined outcome. We acknowledge that this is a long-term process, which will take more time. We encourage all participating States to engage constructively in these efforts in Vienna.

Mr. Chairperson, the participating States subscribing to this statement request its inclusion in the journal of this ministerial meeting.

Thank you.



**STATEMENT BY  
THE DELEGATION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

(Annex 6 to MC(26) Journal of 5 and 6 December 2019)

Mr. Chairperson,  
Distinguished colleagues,

First of all, I should like to express our gratitude to the Slovak Chairmanship for the comfortable environment created for the participants in the ministerial meeting. In view of the discussions on the entire OSCE agenda that took place during the preparatory work, the plenary meeting and on the margins of the 26th OSCE Ministerial Council, we may state that the event was productive to a certain extent.

The Russian delegation showed that it was completely ready for constructive co-operation based on a positive, unifying agenda. Our experts worked hard on all the drafts proposed by the Chairmanship and carefully reviewed other documents.

We brought eight Russian proposals to Bratislava. The attitude towards them was not in a spirit of collaboration. Most of them were brushed aside under contrived pretexts, although it is obvious that they had been blocked first and foremost because of their Russian origin, despite the attempts to convince us otherwise. We consider this approach short-sighted: substantive work within the OSCE is being sacrificed for the sake of ideology.

We regret that the attempt by several countries to impose a distorted vision of current political and legal realities and statements from bloc-based positions prevented the adoption of a general political declaration and a declaration on the OSCE's efforts to facilitate a settlement of the internal Ukrainian crisis.

They did not have enough political will to agree on the approval of a declaration by the 57 States on the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, even though the document was based on wording that had been agreed on in previous years. Some States have not only a short historical memory but also a selective one. This is regrettable and dangerous. By forgetting history and distorting it in favour of opportunistic interests of the moment, there is a risk of repeating the mistakes and tragedies of the past. Our position is reflected in detail in the joint statement by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of 11 States, which was read out by the representative of Belarus.

We welcome the statement in support of the Transdniestrian settlement in the "5+2" format. We trust that the implementation of the agreed confidence-building measures and the outlining of new reciprocal steps will facilitate a steady rapprochement between the banks of the Dniester. A joint statement by the heads of delegation of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair countries in support of the process of a Nagorno-Karabakh settlement was adopted. We note the intention of the sides to continue negotiations and to take further steps to prepare the population for peace.

Two Ministerial Council Declarations on the anniversaries of the adoption of the OSCE Principles Governing Non-Proliferation and United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 as well as of the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security

have been agreed upon. While commending their content in general, we note that this seems to be the current limit of what can be achieved on the politico-military track.

The discussion about ways to restore trust and de-escalate tension is valuable in itself. We support the continuation of the Structured Dialogue with the involvement of military experts and without politicization of the process. We consider this an important confidence-building measure.

Stepping up co-operation in countering transnational challenges has lost none of its relevance, especially in view of the continuing terrorist threat in the world in general and in the OSCE area in particular. We need to raise the profile of the Organization in combating the spread of terrorist ideology, notably via the media, and make more effective use of the Security Committee of the OSCE Permanent Council in priority areas of counter-terrorism with the regular participation of experts from capitals. The Russian proposal on combating drug trafficking remains relevant.

We should also like to note that the inexplicable obsession of a couple of delegations with the “gender” topic has hampered the work to reach agreement on decisions that are not directly related to this issue.

The sabotage on the part of some delegations of the instruction issued at the 2014 Basel Ministerial Council regarding the adoption of declarations to protect Christians and Muslims is completely counter-productive. Against this background, their rhetoric about the need to strictly adhere to commitments that we have all signed up to appears hypocritical.

The balanced draft decisions on linguistic and educational rights of national minorities and free public access to information were roundly rejected. The same commitments that the Western countries once advocated so actively have now become inconvenient for them.

We supported the Bratislava Appeal of the Chairperson-in-Office. We agree with its key provisions: to focus on what unites us rather than what divides us, to show increased flexibility and willingness to compromise, and to strengthen interactive dialogue on the basis of equal rights. We shall continue to be guided by these principles in our work in the OSCE.

Next year will mark the 45th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act and the 10th anniversary of the Astana Declaration. This is a good opportunity to reaffirm our adherence to the OSCE’s basic principles set out in those documents and to the task of strengthening comprehensive and indivisible security. It is alarming, however, that this year several partners have not demonstrated the willingness to do so in connection with the 20th anniversary of the Charter for European Security and the Platform for Co-operative Security.

We wish Albania every success as the future Chairmanship.

Thank you for your attention.

I request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

**STATEMENT BY  
THE DELEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

(Annex 7 to MC(26) Journal of 5 and 6 December 2019)

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

I ask that you extend to Foreign Minister Lajčák our gratitude – I know I speak for many – in hosting this event. I appreciate Slovakia's hospitality as host of this Ministerial Council and your delegation's efforts to ensure that this meeting was a success. We also recognize the tireless work over the past year of Rado Boháč – Slovakia's Permanent Representative to the OSCE. We fully support Albania as our next Chairmanship and welcome Sweden's and Poland's commitments to take on this serious responsibility in the future.

President Trump asked me to make clear the strong US commitment to defending and promoting the values and principles of the Helsinki Final Act and the OSCE Paris Charter. The United States understands the importance of the OSCE and the role that it plays in strengthening regional stability, advancing economic and environmental development, championing human rights, and promoting tolerance. That is why we have chosen to be the largest contributor both in budgets and personnel. We regret that a consensus could not be reached on a decision to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings despite all of our best efforts. We appreciate the strong support of our co-sponsors, Belarus and the Slovak Chairmanship.

We continue to have serious concerns about several participating States' failure to implement their OSCE commitments. But let's be clear: participating States do not share equal responsibility for the lack of progress in fulfilling the promise of the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter. Rather, one State – Russia – bears primary responsibility. We see this in Russia's ongoing aggression in Ukraine, the occupation of parts of Georgia, its continued military presence in both Georgia and Moldova, its human rights violations and abuses at home and abroad, and its increasingly sophisticated use of hybrid methods to undermine security and democratic systems in all three dimensions.

My colleagues and I had productive meetings at this Ministerial Council with civil society activists and NGO representatives. Their expertise strengthens the work that we do, and we must resist efforts that unduly restrict civil society participation in OSCE events.

My government welcomes agreement of all 57 on a Ministerial Council statement regarding the 5+2 talks on settlement of the Transnistrian conflict. We recall as well the need for fulfilment of OSCE Summit commitments regarding the withdrawal of Russian military forces from Moldova.

The United States was pleased to join the Friends of Georgia in expressing unwavering support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. Unfortunately, it was not possible to reach consensus on a statement on the Russia-Georgia conflict. We would welcome discussion of opportunities for an increased OSCE role in bringing about a peaceful solution within the proper rules.

We also regret Russia blocking efforts to modernize the Vienna Document, as was previously stated in this meeting. For many years after the Helsinki Final Act was adopted, Russia was a staunch supporter of military transparency measures. The regrettable change in Russia's direction goes beyond what could be justified by any legitimate security concerns. Even this very night, when a consensus document had been negotiated to declare our solidarity with our Asian partners, Russia offered last minute changes that they knew would block adoption of that consensus declaration.

I look forward to the day that Russia ceases its obstructionism and allows this Organization to achieve its full potential, and joins the overwhelming number of participating States in efforts to ensure that our shared security and a peaceful future for the OSCE area becomes a reality.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

## **STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF UKRAINE**

(Annex 8 to MC(26) Journal of 5 and 6 December 2019)

Mr. Chairperson,  
Excellencies,

As the Russian delegation requested to attach to the journal of the 26th OSCE Ministerial Council in Bratislava its statement delivered today to the closing session, I would like to make the following statement with the purpose of clarification and correction.

The representative of the Russian delegation, while referring to the title of one of the draft documents under consideration of the participating States, used the term of so-called “internal Ukrainian crisis”. In fact, this document was entitled “Draft declaration on the OSCE’s efforts towards peace in and around Ukraine”, as distributed under the reference number MC.DD/11/19/Rev.2 of 2 December 2019.

We thank the Slovak Chairmanship for preparing this draft, and we regret that its adoption was blocked by one single delegation, that is the Russian Federation. I request that this statement be attached to the journal of this Council’s meeting.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF DENMARK (ALSO ON  
BEHALF OF ALBANIA, ANDORRA, ARMENIA, AUSTRIA,  
AZERBAIJAN, BELGIUM, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA,  
BULGARIA, CANADA, CROATIA, CYPRUS, THE CZECH REPUBLIC,  
ESTONIA, FINLAND, FRANCE, GEORGIA, GERMANY, GREECE,  
HUNGARY, ICELAND, IRELAND, ITALY, LATVIA,  
LIECHTENSTEIN, LITHUANIA, LUXEMBOURG, MALTA,  
MOLDOVA, MONACO, MONTENEGRO, THE NETHERLANDS,  
NORTH MACEDONIA, NORWAY, POLAND, PORTUGAL, ROMANIA,  
SERBIA, SLOVAKIA, SLOVENIA, SPAIN, SWEDEN, SWITZERLAND,  
UKRAINE, THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA)**

(Annex 9 to MC(26) Journal of 5 and 6 December 2019)

Mr. Chairperson,

I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the following 46 participating States: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Republic of Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and my own country Denmark.

In 1989, a number of historic events – including the Baltic Way, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Velvet Revolution – contributed to shaping the OSCE area as we know it today. These events did not only bring democracy to millions. They also proved that a strong, pluralistic and vibrant civil society exercising their individual human rights and fundamental freedoms can be a catalyst for peaceful change, sometimes against incredible odds.

We have made great strides in advancing human rights and fundamental freedoms over the past 30 years. And yet, still today, we see that the fight is not over. Discrimination excludes too many from our societies. The space for civil society and independent media is rapidly shrinking. And threats and violence against human rights defenders are on the rise. At the same time, the world has never been more interconnected, including through digital technologies. The impact of human rights violations and abuses in one part of our area can have serious repercussions in another. Human rights violations and abuses as well as restrictions on civil society can affect us all, no matter where we live. Respect for human rights within States is essential to lasting security among States.

Mr. Chairperson,

We will continue to speak out when human rights and fundamental freedoms are violated or abused. Whether it is human rights defenders facing reprisals for their selfless work, or persons being targeted for who they are, for whom they love or for what they believe or say. We will challenge stereotypes and prejudice, combat myths with facts, and speak out against discrimination and intolerance whenever and against whomever they occur.

Civil society is the conscience of our societies, a source of ideas, and a key component for an open and inclusive dialogue. This is a cornerstone of democracy. We are therefore committed to a world where people are free to associate and assemble, speak their minds, believe or not to believe and hold their governments to account without reprisals. We pay tribute to the individuals and civil society organizations who work tirelessly to defend our human rights commitments. They deserve our recognition, protection and support.

We commend the work of the OSCE autonomous institutions, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the Representative on Freedom of the Media and the High Commissioner on National Minorities, for their efforts to promote and protect human rights, as essential contributors to comprehensive security and strong democracies. Their work, mandates and institutional independence are essential to the protection and advancement of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We will continue to fight to ensure that the implementation of OSCE principles and commitments is at the forefront of our work in this Organization.

In closing, we also would like to express our sincere appreciation and thanks to the Slovak Chairmanship for its tireless efforts to strengthen the human dimension throughout the past year.

I would be grateful if you could attach this statement to the journal of today's meeting.

Thank you.

**STATEMENT BY  
THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

(Annex 11 to MC(26) Journal of 5 and 6 December 2019)

The delegation of Finland, in its capacity as EU Presidency, passed the floor to the representative of the European Union, who delivered the following statement:

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the European Union and its Member States as well as North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Norway, Ukraine, Georgia, Andorra, Switzerland and Kazakhstan.

We bear in mind the ongoing discussions held in the framework of the Economic and Environmental and Security Committees under the Austrian, Italian and Slovak OSCE Chairmanships on the potential impact on security of environmental challenges.

We take note of the existing international legal and policy framework in support of combating transnational organized crime which damages the environment and we are convinced that the OSCE can be a useful platform for dialogue, sharing of best practices and experiences, and fostering co-operation among the OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation.

We also recall the OSCE Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension, adopted at the Eleventh Meeting of the Ministerial Council, in Maastricht in 2003, and reiterating the determination of all the participating States to further strengthen co-operation aiming at reducing environment-related security risks, amongst each other and with other international and regional institutions and organizations working in the area of environment.

In this regard, we encourage the 2020 Albanian OSCE Chairmanship and the subsequent OSCE Chairmanships, assisted by the OSCE Secretariat, including through consultations with participating States and relevant international and regional organizations, to continue strengthening dialogue on the potential impact on security of environmental challenges, and to assess the OSCE's complementary role and future contributions in this field.

I would appreciate it if you could attach this statement to the journal of today's meeting.



**STATEMENT BY  
THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

(Annex 12 to MC(26) Journal of 5 and 6 December 2019)

The delegation of Finland, in its capacity as EU Presidency, passed the floor to the representative of the European Union, who delivered the following statement:

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the European Union and its Member States as well as North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Ukraine, Armenia, Georgia, Andorra and Switzerland.

Considering the importance of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals as a global and comprehensive agenda, we express our determination to strengthen our joint efforts for the benefit of our planet and people, including for the OSCE area.

We underline the importance of the call for accelerated action contained in the political declaration of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development that took place on 24 and 25 September 2019 and as adopted by the Heads of State or Government and reiterate the commitment of leaving no one behind which is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda.

We recall the cross-cutting nature of the Sustainable Development Goals with a set of interlinked and indivisible goals and targets balancing the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

We recognize the role of the United Nations in facilitating durable partnerships between governments at all levels, and with all relevant stakeholders to fulfil the vision and goals of the 2030 Agenda where applicable.

We also recognize the complementary role that the regional organizations can play for the effective and sound implementation of Sustainable Development Goals by creating synergies and stronger co-operation.

We underline the role of the OSCE, as the largest regional security organization, with its concept of comprehensive and co-operative security, toolbox, relevant expertise and knowledge on the ground, in assisting the 57 participating States in implementing the relevant Sustainable Development Goals.

We underline the importance of Goal 16, as we are convinced that promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels are crucial conditions for regional security and co-operation. We underline the OSCE's valuable contribution – across its three dimensions – to the realization of Goal 16.

In conclusion, we recognize that time is running short, and renew our commitment to multilateralism and for the successful and effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

I would appreciate it if you could attach this statement to the journal of today's meeting.

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF SLOVENIA  
(ALSO ON BEHALF OF ALBANIA, AUSTRIA, BOSNIA AND  
HERZEGOVINA, CYPRUS, HUNGARY, IRELAND, ITALY,  
KAZAKHSTAN, MALTA, MONACO, MONGOLIA, PORTUGAL,  
SAN MARINO, SLOVAKIA, SPAIN AND SWITZERLAND)**

(Annex 13 to MC(26) Journal of 5 and 6 December 2019)

Mr. Chairperson,

This statement is delivered also on behalf of the following participating States: Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Malta, Monaco, Mongolia, Portugal, San Marino, Slovakia, Spain and Switzerland.

At the 2013 Ministerial Council in Kyiv, we all recognized the evolving nature of transnational threats in the OSCE region and beyond, as well as the need to provide collective responses, including by strengthening the co-operation with our OSCE Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation Groups. Since then, further transnational challenges have emerged, underscoring once again the interdependence between the security of the OSCE area and that of our Partners for Co-operation Groups.

We believe that, in order to frame a common response to such challenges, we need to deepen the political dialogue between OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation Groups in all possible venues, starting from the Ministerial Council, in line with the spirit of the Declaration on the OSCE Partners for Co-operation adopted in Madrid in 2007 (MC.DOC/1/07), the Basel Ministerial Council Declarations on Co-operation with the Asian and Mediterranean Partners (MC.DOC/9/14 and MC.DOC/10/14) and the recent Ministerial Declaration on Security and Co-operation in the Mediterranean adopted in Milan in 2018 (MC.DOC/4/18).

We therefore see merit in amending the OSCE Rules of Procedure in a way that will allow heads of delegations from Partners for Co-operation Groups to address the Ministerial Council following the heads of delegations of equal rank from participating States, as follows:

- Ministers or heads of delegations of equal rank from the participating States;
- Ministers or heads of delegations of equal rank from the Partners for Co-operation Groups;
- Deputy ministers or representatives of equal rank from the participating States;
- Deputy ministers or representatives of equal rank from the Partners for Co-operation Groups;
- All other heads of delegations from the participating States;
- All other heads of delegations from the Partners for Co-operation Groups.

We see this as a concrete signal of the political will to further engage with the Partners within the framework of the OSCE and enhance our political dialogue.

Such an amendment will also codify the current practice, introduced under the Swiss Chairmanship in 2014 and followed by all subsequent Chairmanships, of inviting participating States to address the Ministerial Council according to the rank of their head of delegation, with ministers or heads of delegations of equal rank taking precedence over other representatives.

We encourage other participating States to further consider such a proposal, with a view to reaching the necessary consensus for its adoption in the future.

Mr. Chairperson,

We remain committed to further strengthening our relationship with the Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation Groups to increase our ability to frame a collective response to the challenges of our time.

The participating States subscribing to this statement request that it be attached to the journal of this ministerial meeting.

Thank you.



## **IV. REPORTS TO THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**



**REPORT BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL TO THE  
TWENTY-SIXTH MEETING OF THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

(MC.GAL/6/19 of 6 December 2019)

Mr. Chairperson, dear Miroslav,

Thank you for your warm welcome today, and thank you for your outstanding leadership of the OSCE throughout the year. I would also like to thank your teams in Vienna and here in Bratislava, led by Ambassadors Bohac and Kirnag, for their hard work and for their dedication to our Organization.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

We gather here today on the eve of a number of historic OSCE anniversaries.

In 1975, the Helsinki Final Act created a concept of comprehensive and co-operative security built on shared principles that helped to build trust and reduce Cold War tensions.

In 1990, the Paris Charter set out a hopeful vision of a Europe whole and free, united by a commitment to democracy and peace.

And in 2010, the Astana Declaration reaffirmed our fundamental principles and our vision of a free, democratic, common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community.

So next year offers an opportune moment to recommit to our core principles, reflect on our achievements, identify where we can do better, and renew our common vision for the OSCE's future.

But we should also think bigger.

Today we face daunting new challenges that affect our common security: Climate change. Migration. And a technological revolution driven by digitalization and artificial intelligence.

The only way to tackle such immense challenges is by working together, supporting each other, and holding each other to account. Scepticism towards international co-operation in times like ours is paradoxical. How can we find common solutions to shared problems if we are unwilling to engage with each other?

Let us take inspiration from our Cold War predecessors, who pushed for more dialogue, for more co-operation, as a way to reduce tensions and rebuild trust.

In today's polarized environment, the OSCE offers a rare platform for inclusive security dialogue where everyone in our region has an equal voice. One of our flagship initiatives, the Structured Dialogue, can help to de-escalate politico-military tensions. But its effectiveness depends on the willingness of participating States to engage in good faith, and to give it new impetus in 2020.

Dear ministers,

We should all be proud of the OSCE's long track record of preventing conflict, strengthening security, and promoting peace.

Our network of 16 field presences makes a real difference in people's lives by defusing tensions, by promoting the rule of law and respect for human rights, and by supporting national reform processes.

Our institutions and the Parliamentary Assembly help participating States to strengthen democratic institutions and protect human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rights of national minorities.

And the Secretariat's specialized departments strengthen the resilience of participating States to challenges that undermine stability – including corruption, competition over natural resources, cyberthreats, terrorism and violent extremism, and trafficking in drugs, arms and people.

The most visible example of the OSCE's impact is in Ukraine, where we have been able to deliver because you gave us the people, the funds, and the technology we need. With your support, the OSCE has played a crucial role since the crisis erupted in 2014, when we were the only international organization accepted by all sides.

The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine – the SMM – keeps the international community informed about developments on the ground, including by the pioneering use of technology to supplement its patrols.

The SMM also facilitates dialogue, de-escalates tensions, and works hard to improve conditions for civilians in the conflict area. This year alone, SMM monitors have brokered some 1,350 local ceasefires to enable repairs to electric, water and gas lines serving populations on both sides of the contact line. They have also been supporting and monitoring disengagement in the three pilot areas.

All of these efforts should help rebuild trust. But for the Mission to fully implement its mandate, the sides must respect and protect SMM monitors and assets, and remove restrictions on their freedom of movement.

The OSCE also supports the Trilateral Contact Group's efforts to push for full implementation of the Minsk agreements and a peaceful settlement. Although the situation in eastern Ukraine remains fragile, right now there is a huge window of opportunity to make progress towards sustainable peace.

We must all do our utmost to support this new dynamic. The entire OSCE region will benefit. Peace in eastern Ukraine would help rebuild trust. So I hope that next week's Normandy Summit will give the sides a strong political signal to undertake courageous steps towards bringing peace to the people of Donbas. Such a signal could also offer inspiration for progress in other conflicts in our region. The OSCE is ready to support all steps towards peace.



We are also ready to respond to participating States that want greater OSCE engagement. We see this now in Central Asia, where a new spirit of openness has created new opportunities for co-operation. Our field offices, institutions, Secretariat and Parliamentary Assembly are all eager to respond to requests to help strengthen security in the area and support national reform processes.

Our Asian and Mediterranean Partners also want to increase co-operation. I hope you will support our efforts to strengthen OSCE collaboration as we mark the 25th anniversary of the Mediterranean Partnership this year, and the 25th anniversary of the Asian Partnership next year.

The synergies that partnerships create enable us to promote peace and security more efficiently and effectively. Efforts to leverage partnerships with other international organizations are firmly grounded on the Platform for Co-operative Security, agreed at the Istanbul Summit 20 years ago.

We have already strengthened our relationship with the United Nations – our most important partner – resulting in more effective co-operation, significant cost savings for all of you, and closer alignment with the Sustainable Development Agenda.

Ministers,

Your presence today signals that you believe in co-operation, and that you support the OSCE.

It is clear that you recognize the OSCE's immense potential. Each year you demonstrate this by tasking us to do more.

While we are inspired by your high expectations for our Organization, frankly, they also create a burden for us.

I am well aware that resources are tight for everyone, and I continue to look for efficiencies. But the OSCE needs you to demonstrate your support.

Our unique Organization – with its comprehensive approach to security, 18 executive structures, and 4,000 staff – promotes security for the 2 billion people in our area on a budget of less than 240 million euros (including the entire SMM budget).

I was pleased that at the informal ministerial meeting in the High Tatras, many of you called for more engagement and more investment in the OSCE.

I am encouraged to see that some international organizations are moving away from declining budgets. The Council of Europe, for instance, just approved a zero real growth budget. Dear ministers, I hope this inspires you to reconsider your OSCE budget policy. This is urgently needed to safeguard our Organization's ability to implement its mandates.

I also hope the spirit of next year's anniversaries and renewed commitments inspires you to resolve institutional issues that are holding our Organization back – issues like, for instance, the scales of contributions, and the lack of legal personality – so that we can move forward together to build our common future.

For my own part, I have taken numerous steps to ensure that the OSCE remains agile and responsive in the face of new challenges and opportunities. I have modernized Secretariat business processes and identified areas where technology can make the OSCE more efficient, secure, and effective – both in the field and in our own offices.

But more profound improvements to how the OSCE operates require your support. I am eager to work with you to transition to a biennial budget cycle, to improve staff contract and secondment policies, and to align our internal justice system with international best practices.

The OSCE's many contributions to security would not be possible without the women and men working in our field operations, institutions and Secretariat. We owe it to them to provide a safe, inclusive and respectful working environment where everyone is treated fairly. That is why I am committed to zero tolerance for any form of harassment, including sexual harassment; achieving gender parity; and ensuring that our Organization provides timely and effective internal governance and accountability.

I would like to thank the entire OSCE staff for their hard work and dedication. I am also grateful for continued excellent co-operation among the Secretariat, field operations, institutions, and Parliamentary Assembly.

I look forward to working with the incoming Albanian Chairmanship, and to supporting all of you in marking the OSCE's key anniversaries with real contributions that will inspire future generations of leaders.

Thank you.

**LETTER FROM THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE  
FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION TO THE  
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS OF SLOVAKIA,  
CHAIRPERSON OF THE TWENTY-SIXTH MEETING OF THE  
MINISTERIAL COUNCIL OF THE OSCE**

(Annex 14 to MC(26) Journal of 5 and 6 December 2019)

As the Chairperson of the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC), it is my pleasure to inform you about the activities of the Forum in 2019.

In preparing this letter, I have consulted with the previous 2019 FSC Chairmanships, namely, Switzerland and Tajikistan. During 2019, the FSC Chairmanships worked in close co-operation with each other to ensure continuity and efficiency in the implementation of the Forum's annual work programme.

Several initiatives undertaken by participating States led to the adoption of five decisions, all designed to support the implementation of existing commitments.

The strategic discussions during the Security Dialogues indicated the FSC's importance as a platform for dialogue, addressing security issues of common interest and concern. Even though the situation in and around Ukraine remained the dominant topic of the discussions in the FSC, active discussions also took place on matters related to the following: subregional military and defence co-operation; normative and project-related aspects in the field of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and stockpiles of conventional ammunition (SCA); implementation of the women, peace and security agenda; the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security and the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1540; the Vienna Document 2011 and Confidence- and Security-Building Measures (CSBMs); private military and security companies; and aspects of modern warfare. The three 2019 FSC Chairmanships actively stimulated discussions by organizing a total of 21 Security Dialogues.

With a view to promoting regional stability and comprehensive and co-operative security, the three 2019 FSC Chairmanships dedicated a total of five Security Dialogues to subregional military defence co-operation, which in geographical terms spanned the Visegrad Group, regional organizations in Central Asia, and the Collective Security Treaty Organization. In particular, under the FSC Chairmanship of Switzerland, the Security Dialogues focused on regional co-operation aimed at promoting the "transparency and confidence" approach. Tajikistan's FSC Chairmanship saw discussion of politico-military aspects of border management and the challenges and opportunities of the regional approach in Central Asia, the role of the CSBMs in Central Asia, and synergies between regional organizations and the OSCE. The Security Dialogue on military co-operation of the Visegrad Group was organized by the FSC Chairmanship of the Czech Republic.

In accordance with the tasking stemming from OSCE documents as well as various FSC and Ministerial Council decisions on SALW and SCA, all three FSC Chairmanships conducted a range of related activities. Given the impressive implementation results of many project activities, the topic of SALW and SCA remained one of the most enduring and promising items on the FSC agenda, with five Security Dialogues and many informal

meetings being dedicated to the subject during the year. The OSCE's efforts were in particular focused on the review and updating of the OSCE Best Practice Guides on SALW and on Conventional Ammunition, with a clear roadmap for this process being agreed before the end of 2019. Regrettably, the OSCE meeting to review the implementation of the OSCE assistance projects in the field of SALW and SCA – a firm commitment of all OSCE participating States, as decided at the 2017 Ministerial Council – was not implemented in 2019 on account of a lack of consensus on the agenda.

Another topic highlighted during the year was the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and, on its 15th anniversary, United Nations Security Council resolution 1540, to which one Security Dialogue was devoted under the FSC Chairmanship of Tajikistan and one under the FSC Chairmanship of the Czech Republic.

All three FSC Chairmanships co-operated closely with the Slovak OSCE Chairmanship and the OSCE Permanent Council on cross-dimensional issues of relevance to both bodies in line with the OSCE's concept of comprehensive and indivisible security. To this end, four joint meetings of the Forum for Security Co-operation and Permanent Council were held: two on the Structured Dialogue, one on security sector governance and reform, and one on lessons learned in the field of conflict resolution.

The 29th Annual Implementation Assessment Meeting (AIAM) took place in March 2019 during the FSC Chairmanship of Switzerland. Led by Lithuania and Liechtenstein, it provided an opportunity to raise and discuss various issues related to the present and future implementation of agreed CSBMs. The discussions at the AIAM resulted in a number of suggestions on how the current CSBMs could be implemented more effectively and improved in the future. Special attention was devoted to further revitalizing discussions on CSBMs in Working Group A. To this end, several suggestions were put forward to enhance the implementation of existing commitments, including ones related to points of contact in case of hazardous incidents of a military nature and to major weapons and equipment systems. Furthermore, in May 2019 the FSC Co-ordinator on the Vienna Document organized the "Expert-level workshop on the exchange of the major weapon and equipment systems data". Additionally, in an effort to keep the Vienna Document adjusted to the current politico-military realities and technological developments, a Vienna Document Plus proposal, building on suggestions tabled earlier, was put forward by a group of 32 participating States.

The 8th Annual Discussion on the Implementation of the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security was held in June 2019 under the Tajik FSC Chairmanship. The meeting provided a valuable opportunity for participating States to review the enforcement of the Code and to exchange views on ways of further improving its implementation. In May 2019, the Tajik FSC Chairperson participated in a seminar on the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security held in Cyprus and organized by the Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC) and Cyprus in accordance with FSC Decision No. 1/08, which saw the participating States engage in dialogue on the Code's most important principles and commitments. In October, the Czech FSC Chairperson participated in the commemorative symposium "From Budapest to Budapest (1994–2019)", which was organized jointly by the CPC and Hungary to exchange lessons learned from the past 25 years' work on the Code of Conduct.

The FSC also contributed to the 2019 Annual Security Review Conference within its mandate, providing inputs to relevant sessions and focusing on politico-military elements, including conventional arms control and CSBMs.

The year 2019 saw three Security Dialogues devoted to gender equality, on the following subjects: integrating gender perspectives in the politico-military dimension; the role of the military in implementing United Nations Security Council resolution 1325; and enhancing the role of women in both conflict-related and peacetime operations, paving the way to the 20th anniversary of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325, which will be commemorated in 2020.

To conclude, the Forum for Security and Co-operation has continued to serve as an important platform for dialogue and decisions in 2019, while at the same time providing participating States with a forum to discuss matters related to arms control and CSBMs, in particular the Vienna Document 2011. A joint Vienna Document Plus proposal indicates that many participating States recognize the need for the modernization of the Vienna Document, indicating the importance of continuing the valuable efforts being made in Working Group A.

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

(MC.GAL/4/19 of 2 December 2019)

During its Chairmanship of the Contact Group with the Asian Partners for Co-operation (hereafter “the Asian Contact Group”) in 2019, Italy focused on further promoting an open and interactive dialogue between the OSCE participating States and the Asian Partners for Co-operation. When drawing up the Asian Contact Group’s agenda, Italy worked together with the Slovak OSCE Chairmanship and, in particular, with the Asian Partners to ensure that the agenda reflected those countries’ priorities and was based on a demand-driven approach. That collaboration had ensured that the agenda could both take account of the Asian Partners’ interests and concerns and help the OSCE Chairmanship to achieve its priorities.

In 2019, five meetings of the Asian Contact Group were held in Vienna, enabling the OSCE participating States and the Asian Partners to engage in timely discussions of key security issues of interest to all sides and share best practices and experiences in accordance with the Ministerial Council decisions adopted in Milan in December 2018. Each meeting featured keynote addresses by speakers from the Asian Partner countries as well as presentations on the chosen topics by experts from international organizations, diplomats, academics and representatives of civil society.

The first meeting of the Asian Contact Group, held on 5 April 2019, dealt with the topic of “The OSCE’s commitment to women, peace and security” and was organized in collaboration with Japan. H.E. Mr. A. Azzoni, Permanent Representative of Italy to the OSCE and Chairperson of the Contact Group, indicated that, in organizing the meeting, Italy had sought to reaffirm its commitment to gender mainstreaming across the OSCE’s three dimensions. His country had already made that commitment clear during its OSCE Chairmanship in 2018, which had ended with the successful adoption of Ministerial Council Decision No. 4/18 (MC.DEC/4/18) on preventing and combating violence against women. H.E. Ms. K. Žáková, Deputy Permanent Representative of Slovakia, presented the Slovak OSCE Chairmanship’s priorities for 2019. She emphasized the importance of the women, peace and security agenda for the OSCE in general, as well as for the Chairmanship, and the Asian Contact Group’s role in advancing that agenda. H.E. Mr. K. Koinuma, Permanent Representative of Japan to the OSCE, stated that it was through empowering women that communities as a whole could be empowered. He also mentioned the fifth World Assembly for Women, which had taken place in Tokyo in March and had resulted in various useful recommendations. Ms. M. Kubota, Senior Gender Adviser on Gender and Development at the Japan International Cooperation Agency, shared experiences from the field and explained how Japan helped to promote the women, peace and security agenda. She presented various projects and initiatives designed to support women’s access to health, improve their livelihoods and strengthen their participation and leadership in State-building, and also to combat sexual and gender-based violence. Ms. G. Alieva from Kyrgyzstan, a retired police colonel and expert on gender issues in law enforcement, presented the Kyrgyz Association of Women Police, an initiative supported by her country’s former President, R. Otunbayeva. Moreover, she described the concrete actions carried out in Kyrgyzstan towards the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325, notably regarding the

work of women in her country's parliament (the Jogorku Kenesh) and at the local level to prevent violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism, and to prevent and counter terrorism itself. Mr. E. M. Le Fevre Cervini, Secretary General of the Italian branch of Women in International Security (WIIS), presented the work of his organization. He explained that WIIS was a global network dedicated to promoting the leadership and professional empowerment of women in the field of international peace and security. The delegations intervening in the meeting provided information about their national efforts related to the women, peace and security agenda. Many delegations also emphasized the role of young people in preventing and combating xenophobia and radicalization.

The second meeting of the Asian Contact Group – organized in collaboration with Thailand – was held on 17 May 2019, and was dedicated to the topic of “Advancing partnerships for sustainable security”. H.E. Mr. A. Azzoni, Permanent Representative of Italy to the OSCE and Chairperson of the Contact Group, opened the meeting by stating that Thailand's Chairmanship of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2019 provided a timely opportunity to look into the current status of interaction between the OSCE and ASEAN. He stressed that Thailand could act as a bridge to enhance dialogue and foster synergies between the two organizations. H.E. Ms. M. Sriswasdi, Permanent Representative of Thailand to the OSCE, presented her country's priorities for its ASEAN Chairmanship, which was guided by the motto of “Advancing Partnership for Sustainable Development”. She presented the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, which envisaged the Association as an outward-looking, people-centred community, within which all Member States shared a collective responsibility for maintaining peace and security not only in the region but also beyond. H.E. Mr. P. Bekkers, Director of the Office of the OSCE Secretary General, underscored the role of both regional organizations in the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and recalled the recent proposal to reinvigorate the OSCE Asian Partnership for Co-operation. In that respect, it was important to identify opportunities and trends affecting security and stability in Europe and Asia, and to define longer-term objectives. Mr. D. Sukontasap, Chairperson of the Governing Council of the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation, gave a comprehensive presentation on how to re-energize the OSCE Asian Partnership, notably through the designation of points of contact for various peace and security issues, the identification of priority areas and annual planning. Ms. O. Zurovac-Kuzman, National Environmental Affairs Officer at the OSCE Mission to Serbia, focused on the Mission's efforts to implement the SDGs. Mr. S. Calvani, Senior Adviser on Strategic Planning at the Mae Fah Luang Foundation (a non-profit organization in Thailand dedicated to the promotion of community, social, environmental and cultural development), spoke on the Foundation's experience in implementing sustainable security in a post-conflict area. The delegations intervening in the meeting generally agreed on the importance of exploring further co-operation between the OSCE and ASEAN; they also emphasized the need to create synergies. H.E. Mr. V. Žugić, Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, wrapped up the meeting by pointing out that there were clear similarities and complementarities between the priorities of the 2019 Thai ASEAN Chairmanship and those of the OSCE.

H.E. Mr. T. Greminger, OSCE Secretary General, personally addressed the third meeting of the Asian Contact Group, held on 28 June 2019 and organized in partnership with Australia; the meeting's theme was “Countering trafficking in human beings and modern slavery”. He stressed how the OSCE's multidimensional (or cross-dimensional) approach to combating trafficking in human beings was closely linked to the SDGs, in particular to SDG targets 5.2 and 8.7. He further noted that increased co-ordination was crucial and announced

the OSCE's readiness to assume a leading role in the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons – a platform that the OSCE was co-chairing in 2019 together with UN-Women. Mr. S. McGlynn, Minister-Counsellor for Home Affairs at the Permanent Mission of Australia to the UN and other international organizations in Geneva, presented legislation developed in co-operation with representatives of the private sector and introduced Australia's "National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and Slavery 2015–19". He also mentioned the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime, stressing that it was the first major policy document to deal with the subject of modern slavery. The next speaker, Ms. E. Ilyuchok, a survivor of human trafficking, shared her traumatic experience of forced prostitution in Thailand. Mr. V. Richey, Acting OSCE Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, focused on the OSCE's efforts in countering the trafficking of human beings. He also identified opportunities for partnership and co-ordination in that work and in the related efforts to prevent the use of goods and services provided by trafficked persons, noting that a holistic response was essential. The representatives of the Asian Partners for Co-operation shared information on their relevant national action plans, including commitments to the Bali Process. A representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), whom the Slovak OSCE Chairmanship had invited to the meeting, shared recommendations on relevant measures, such as identifying victims of human trafficking who might be eligible for refugee status and reducing the rate of statelessness among victims. He recalled, moreover, that partnerships were crucial to bring about "a future without trafficking". As part of the final remarks, H.E. Ms. M. Assunta Accili, Permanent Representative of Italy to the UN in Vienna, emphasized that although the end of human exploitation might be considered by some to be a utopia, it was important to have "dreams that promote action". In that respect, she mentioned the important role of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Convention), and, in particular, of one of its three Protocols, namely the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, to which 175 UN Member States were party. According to the "Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2018", issued by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 168 UN Member States had national legislation in place that complied with the aforementioned Protocol.

The fourth meeting of the Asian Contact Group took place on 19 July 2019 and focused on the "Current situation and ways forward on the Korean Peninsula". The meeting was organized in collaboration with the Republic of Korea. H.E. Mr. C. Shin, who was attending his first OSCE event as Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea, said that the Organization's work and activities were a source of inspiration not just for the Korean peninsula but for the wider region, and that his country wished to deepen its co-operation with the OSCE by sharing lessons learned and best practices. He stressed that the threat of imminent war had loomed over the Korean peninsula since the 1950s, and that it was essential to avoid at any cost a new military conflict. He briefly mentioned recent developments, including the rapprochement during the 2018 Winter Olympics in PyeongChang, the Inter-Korean Summits and the trilateral meeting of the Heads of State of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Republic of Korea and the United States of America that had taken place at Panmunjom on 30 June. Denuclearization was the first important step: no meaningful economic development would be possible without it. He highlighted the strong commitment of the Heads of State of both Koreas, the United States of America, China and the Russian Federation to peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue and called for patience towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, since restoring trust took time. H.E. Mr. M. Pesko, Director of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre, shared best



practices and lessons learned from the Organization's history, focusing on confidence- and security-building measures. Establishing mutual trust was a lengthy process and regular military-to-military contacts – at both the leadership and expert level – were essential. He further stressed that political will was key to making any progress. Mr. Dong-yeol Rhee, Director-General of the Korean peninsula Peace Regime Bureau at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, shed light on the current situation on the peninsula including developments in the peace process, past summits and new proposals.

Ms. Elena Sokova, Executive Director of the Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, stressed that resolving the nuclear issue was an integral part of reaching and securing a lasting peace on the Korean peninsula, and called for a systematic approach. Ms. M.-M. Jaarva, OSCE Mediation Support Officer, presented various OSCE institutions and mechanisms for conflict management and resolution, including the Chairperson-in-Office, the Secretary General, the Special Representatives and the Conflict Prevention Centre. In their interventions, most delegations welcomed the recent developments on the Korean peninsula, stressed the importance of complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization, and called for the continued implementation of sanctions.

The 2019 OSCE Asian Conference – which had as its theme: “How to achieve comprehensive security in the digital era: The perspectives of the OSCE and its Asian Partners” – was held in Tokyo on 2 and 3 September 2019. All five Asian Partners for Co-operation (Afghanistan, Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Thailand) and 36 OSCE participating States were represented at the conference. More than 130 political representatives and policy experts, practitioners from international, regional and subregional organizations, and representatives of academia, business and civil society from across the OSCE area and from the Asian Partners came together to explore ways of tackling common security challenges arising from the use of digital technology. The opening session was chaired by H.E. Ms. Toshiko Abe, State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan. The closing session was moderated by Mr. H. Uyama, Deputy Director-General of the European Affairs Bureau at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. During the opening session, keynote speeches were delivered by H.E. Mr. M. Lajčák, OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of Slovakia; H.E. Mr. A. Azzoni, Permanent Representative of Italy to the OSCE and Chairperson of the Contact Group with the Asian Partners for Co-operation; and H.E. Mr. P. Bekkers, Director of the Office of the OSCE Secretary General. All the speakers agreed that strengthening co-operation between the OSCE participating States and the Asian Partners was key to achieving comprehensive security in the digital era. The opening speakers' remarks were followed by three thematic sessions, which covered all three security dimensions and focused on specific topical areas, namely tackling ICT security risks in the digital era; the digital economy as a driver for promoting co-operation, security and growth; and the risks to the safety of journalists in the digital era. During the conference a side event took place on “Enhancing security, building partnerships: Co-operation between OSCE field operations in Central Asia and Afghanistan on border management”, at which it was noted how, since 2009, the OSCE had supported the professionalization of border guards and mid- and senior-level border officials in Afghanistan, mainly through extrabudgetary contributions. In the closing remarks, H.E. Mr. A. Azzoni, Permanent Representative of Italy to the OSCE and Chairperson of the Contact Group with the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation, reiterated his country's commitment to the Asian Partnership and to exploring further the close link between the security situation in the OSCE area and that in the Asia-Pacific regions. Speaking on behalf of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Mr. M. Končal, Minister-Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of Slovakia to the OSCE, concluded by reiterating the need for multilateral

co-operation on cybersecurity, the safety of journalists and the protection of critical infrastructure. Slovakia, as the incoming Chair of the Asian Contact Group, would work towards a more strategic partnership in 2020.

The fifth meeting of the Asian Contact Group was held on 22 November 2019 and focused on “Democratic institutions and the safety of journalists in Afghanistan” as a follow-up to the discussions at the OSCE Asian Conference held in Tokyo in September, at which one session had been dedicated to the topic of risks to the safety of journalists in the digital era. The meeting was co-hosted by Afghanistan. H.E. Mr. A. Azzoni, Permanent Representative of Italy to the OSCE and Chairperson of the Contact Group, opened the meeting by stating that tangible progress had been made in Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban in 2001. He also emphasized the importance of Ministerial Council Decision No. 3/18 (MC.DEC/3/18) on the safety of journalists, and noted the clear link between democratic institutions and the safety of journalists. H.E. Mr. T. Greminger, OSCE Secretary General, commented on the impressive programme of the Asian Contact Group’s meetings in 2019. He stressed the importance of treating the 25th anniversary of the OSCE Asian Partnership for Co-operation in 2020 as an opportunity to work towards a more strategic partnership, and expressed his support for the draft Ministerial Council declaration on the OSCE Asian Partnership. H.E. Ms. K. Ebrahimkhel, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the OSCE, discussed the democratic changes that had taken place in her country over the past years. She noted in particular the change in the role of women, who were now seen as “agents of change and democracy” with an important part to play in the socio-economic development of Afghanistan. Referring to the 2019 presidential election, she noted how the Afghan people had gone to cast their vote in order to reinforce the strength of their belief in democracy. She also noted the positive changes in the media sector: many private radio and TV companies had sprung up and were broadcasting across the country. H.E. Ms. Ebrahimkhel concluded by exhorting the international community to support the people of Afghanistan in their quest for democracy and the rule of law. Mr. S. Mahdi, a journalist and bureau chief of Radio Azadi in Kabul, gave a presentation on peace and freedom of expression in Afghanistan. Ms. K. Olson, Principal Adviser to the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, called for support for initiatives – both State-led and independent – that reflected Ministerial Council Decision No. 3/18 on the safety of journalists. She stressed the value of multi-stakeholder initiatives and the importance of implementing regulations that were in accordance with international human rights law in order to ensure freedom of expression online. It was also important to promote specific safety and security measures for female journalists. Following the thematic discussion, H.E. Mr. A. Azzoni presented a draft declaration on the OSCE Asian Partnership and encouraged participating States to adopt its text at the Ministerial Council meeting in Bratislava in December. He also urged participating States to support a draft decision on amending the OSCE Rules of Procedure – specifically the rule on establishing the order of statements at the Ministerial Council by the drawing of lots – so as to allow the heads of delegations from Partner Countries to address the Ministerial Council immediately after the heads of delegations of equal rank from participating States. Ms. M. König, Senior External Co-operation Officer at the Office of the OSCE Secretary General, announced that the project “Placement of experts from OSCE Partners for Co-operation” would be relaunched in 2020. The revised five-year project would enable up to five young diplomats per year to observe the activities of a department, section or unit of the OSCE Secretariat for a week and subsequently, during a two-week summer academy, to gain thorough knowledge of the Organization’s history, functioning and current work.

The Italian Chairmanship of the Asian Contact Group expresses its sincere gratitude to all the Asian Partners for Co-operation and the participating States for their engagement and commitment within the framework of the OSCE Asian Partnership. Italy wishes every possible success to the incoming Slovak Chairmanship of the Asian Contact Group, and very much recommends continuing and strengthening the broad, fruitful and productive dialogue with the Asian Partners – through both regular meetings in Vienna and high-level annual events such as the OSCE Asian Conference.

**REPORT BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE  
CONTACT GROUP WITH THE OSCE MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERS  
FOR CO-OPERATION TO THE TWENTY-SIXTH MEETING OF THE  
MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**  
(MC.GAL/5/19 of 3 December 2019)

Albania is committed to strengthening and further developing the OSCE's relations with its Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation. During its Chairmanship of the Contact Group with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation (hereafter "the Mediterranean Contact Group") in 2019, Albania fostered an inclusive political dialogue, following a demand-driven approach and responding to the interests and priorities of the Mediterranean Partners. The celebration in 2019 of the 25th anniversary of the Mediterranean Contact Group served as an opportunity to reflect on the future of the Mediterranean Partnership and on the relevant mechanisms and tools. In co-ordination with the 2019 Slovak OSCE Chairmanship and in line with the efforts of previous Chairmanships of the Mediterranean Contact Group, Albania strove to lift the Partnership to an even higher level by building on the progress made in recent years.

Six meetings of the Mediterranean Contact Group were held in Vienna during the course of the year, providing a valuable platform for information exchange, dialogue and the exchange of best practices between the OSCE participating States and the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation. The themes for the six meetings were selected jointly with the Mediterranean Partners in order to reflect the wide range of topics of interest to individual partner countries and to support the priorities of the 2019 Slovak OSCE Chairmanship.

In addition to the Contact Group meetings, a special ambassadorial retreat took place in Valletta on 7 and 8 June 2019, the purpose of which was to take stock of the Partnership on the occasion of its 25th anniversary. The discussions at the retreat fed into the annual OSCE Mediterranean Conference, which was held in Tirana on 24 and 25 October 2019. In accordance with its official theme – "The 25th anniversary of the Mediterranean Contact Group: Achievements, challenges and future opportunities for the Partnership" – the conference celebrated that notable anniversary and looked ahead to the Partnership's next 25 years, fostering a dialogue among OSCE participating States and the Mediterranean Partners on what has been achieved so far and what can be improved in the OSCE's approach to Mediterranean co-operation.

At the first meeting of the Mediterranean Contact Group, held on 19 March 2019, H.E. Ms. A. Malo, Deputy Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania, presented the Chairmanship's balanced package of priorities, which contained elements relevant to all three dimensions of the OSCE's work, and stressed the importance of continuity with previous Chairmanships. She also emphasized how the Mediterranean Contact Group's 25th anniversary was a unique opportunity to reflect on the Mediterranean Partnership's achievements. H.E. Mr. T. Greminger, OSCE Secretary General, noted that the Mediterranean Partners had increased their engagement in recent years; it was important to keep up that momentum. In addition to reiterating the importance of continuity, he called for a more strategic approach to the Partnership. H.E. Mr. R. Boháč, speaking on behalf of the Slovak OSCE Chairmanship, also referred to the need to ensure long-term continuity and elaborated on Slovakia's specific commitment to the subject of youth. All the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation, as well as the OSCE participating States, expressed their

wholehearted support for the priorities identified by Albania at the helm of the Mediterranean Contact Group and welcomed the Group's expanding political profile.

Referring explicitly to the meeting's theme – “The role of youth in fostering dialogue, co-operation and security in the Mediterranean region” – Ms. Laurence Païs, Deputy Secretary General for Social and Civil Affairs at the Union for the Mediterranean, noted that 60 per cent of the Mediterranean region's population were under the age of 30, which was a matter of concern in some respects, but should also be seen as an opportunity. She concluded by reiterating that the Union for the Mediterranean was keen to co-operate with the OSCE and other regional organizations. H.E. Mr. H. Boukrif, Director General for Policy Forecasting, Programming and Planning at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Algeria, focused his presentation on contemporary youth, who, in his view, were well educated and highly interconnected. He emphasized the need to address the root sources of youth migration. Ms. S. Toumi from Tunisia, founder of Acacias for All (a private enterprise dedicated to fighting desertification, poverty and gender inequality), focused on ways of creating employment opportunities for young people. Mr. E. Shoshan from Israel, Executive Director of Zikaron Ba Salon (“Memories in the living room”), talked about how the events organized under that initiative had helped to keep alive the memory of the Holocaust among young people. Ms. D. ElHarouni from Egypt, a sportswoman and researcher in bioinformatics, spoke about her country's Presidential Leadership Programme, which was directed specifically at young people. In the follow-up discussion, many delegations raised the issues of unemployment, education, political participation and the role of young people in combating xenophobia and radicalization.

The second meeting of the Mediterranean Contact Group took place on 13 May 2019 and focused on tackling challenges related to the return of foreign terrorist fighters and their families to their home countries. In his opening remarks, H.E. Mr. I. Hasani, Permanent Representative of Albania to the OSCE and Chairperson of the Mediterranean Contact Group, stated that further efforts were necessary to deal with foreign terrorist fighters in prison and post prison environments, and to provide support for any accompanying family members who had not been directly involved in terrorist activities. He also stressed the need for effective programmes aimed at the rehabilitation of such individuals and their reintegration into society. Ms. R. Ostrauskaite, OSCE Co-ordinator of Activities to Address Transnational Threats, described the OSCE's efforts in relation to the meeting's topic, explaining how the problem of foreign terrorist fighters had to be dealt with in two phases: before and after such individuals crossed the borders of their home countries. Ms. T. Rakkad, Director of the Legal Department at Jordan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, pointed out that the problem of foreign terrorist fighters was not new. Sharing Jordan's experience as the country that was hosting the largest proportion of refugees in the world, she explained how her government had developed an advanced border control system and a special “Peace Centre” under the Ministry of the Interior that provided psychological, medical and social support for the families of foreign terrorist fighters. The Centre sought to reintegrate such individuals into productive society and promoted non-radical form of Islam. Mr. A. Sojati, Director of Albania's Coordination Center for Countering Violent Extremism (created in 2018 to co-ordinate the work of seven ministries), placed particular emphasis on women and children, and explained how his country's government was working closely with teachers, social workers and local authorities. Mr. T. Wuchte, Executive Secretary of the Malta-based International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law, described the Institute's initiatives, which included the development of a guidebook on how to deal with foreign terrorist fighters and the organization of training courses for parliamentarians and legal

practitioners. The delegations of both the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation and the OSCE participating States that intervened in the subsequent discussion stressed their commitment to working together to combat the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters.

On 7 and 8 June 2019, Malta, in collaboration with the Albanian Chairmanship, hosted an ambassadorial retreat in Valletta to review the Mediterranean Partnership's achievements on the occasion of its 25th anniversary. H.E. Mr. I. Hasani, Permanent Representative of Albania to the OSCE and Chairperson of the Mediterranean Contact Group, opened the retreat by stressing how the Partnership had become all the more important given that Europe and the Mediterranean were going through turbulent times, with non-State actors posing an increasing threat to security. Speaking on behalf of the host country, H.E. Mr. C. Abela, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion of Malta, argued that current engagement on topics such as migration, human trafficking and smuggling should be action-oriented. As one of the keynote speakers, H.E. Mr. O. A. Youssef, Permanent Representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the OSCE, highlighted the interdependence between Mediterranean and OSCE security issues, in particular the joint fight against transnational terrorist networks. During a different working session, H.E. Ms. T. L. Fresher, Permanent Representative of Israel to the OSCE, noted how there were numerous opportunities to strengthen relations between the Mediterranean countries. H.E. Mr. P. Bekkers, Director of the Office of the Secretary General at the OSCE Secretariat, recalled how the Mediterranean Partnership had changed since its inception and pointed out possible new ways of deepening co-operation between the OSCE and the partner countries. All the participants in the retreat agreed on the importance of the Mediterranean Partnership and on the need for it to adapt in response to new threats and challenges. There were calls for, *inter alia*, stronger engagement, more regular information exchanges, improved opportunities for participation, removing the so-called out-of-area restrictions on OSCE activities, the development of multi-annual strategies, expanding the number of activities and increasing the budget of the Partnership Fund. A proposal to change the name from "Mediterranean Contact Group" to "Mediterranean Partnership Group", so as to underline the Partnership's importance, was also discussed.

The third meeting of the Mediterranean Contact Group, held on 18 June 2019, was dedicated to the theme of "Strengthening economic connectivity in the Mediterranean". H.E. Mr. I. Hasani, Permanent Representative of Albania to the OSCE and Chairperson of the Mediterranean Contact Group, opened the meeting by highlighting the direct link between enabling regular, predictable and transparent trade relations, on the one hand, and peace and security, on the other. H.E. Mr. E. Xhafaj, Deputy Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania, pointed out that the lack of economic opportunities and bleak future prospects were powerful drivers of insecurity and destabilization. Procedural "red tape" at border crossings hindered international trade, discouraged foreign investment, created high costs for trade transactions and led to delays in the cross-border movement of goods. He welcomed the OSCE's efforts to promote the dissemination and implementation of best practices and standards. Mr. M.M Mhammed, Director of Trade Remedies and Legal Affairs at the Agadir Agreement Technical Unit, introduced the Arab Mediterranean Free Trade Agreement (Agadir Agreement), which had been developed within the framework of the Barcelona Declaration of 1995 and was supported by the European Union. The speakers' presentations sparked a lively and fruitful discussion among the participating delegations. While agreeing that regional and subregional integration processes and agreements could serve as an important impulse for trade and economic development in the wider OSCE area, both the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation and the OSCE participating States recognized the

need to enhance their collaboration and engagement and to continue the exchange of best practices. The meeting included a presentation on the proposed new project “Climate and Environment Security Threats in the Mediterranean” – a joint initiative of the Union for the Mediterranean and the OSCE. H.E. Mr. V. Žugić, Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, explained that the project’s main goal was to facilitate the exchange of experiences and best practices with the Mediterranean Partners. Mr. J. Borrego, Deputy Secretary General for Energy and Climate Action at the Union for the Mediterranean, emphasized that the Union was keen to collaborate with the OSCE on specific projects and to help enhance regional co-operation and dialogue.

The fourth meeting of the Mediterranean Contact Group, held on 23 July 2019, was dedicated to “Enhancing common security in the OSCE and Mediterranean region: The role of interfaith and intercultural dialogue”. H.E. Mr. R. Bimo, Ambassador of Albania to Austria, emphasized his country’s commitment to religious diversity, freedom and tolerance. Albania had launched a number of initiatives to dispel misconceptions about religious beliefs and promote interreligious exchange and dialogue. After describing some pilot projects in the field of education, he noted how Albania was determined to combat violent radicalization that claimed to be inspired by religious motives. The misuse and misinterpretation of religion were to be blamed for such radicalization. H.E. Mr. M. Kazem, Deputy Assistant Minister for Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Egypt, focused on the challenges posed by misperceptions and miscommunication regarding religious principles and beliefs. Education played a crucial role in tackling those challenges. He called for a more bias-free media coverage, and stressed that those who incited others to violence or committed acts of violence themselves could never count on tolerance in the name of religious freedom. The Very Reverend Father N. Haddad, founder and director of the Jordanian Interfaith Coexistence Research Centre, described the Jordanian model of religious coexistence. It was important to raise the profile of interreligious dialogue among the wider population, which could be achieved, in particular, by running projects at the community level. Ms. K. Gardapkhadze, First Deputy Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), highlighted the OSCE’s commitments and mandates related to freedom of religion and belief. Several delegations asked to take the floor after the speakers’ presentations. They stressed the continuing importance of interreligious dialogue as a force for peace and cautioned against the fallacy of associating any particular religion with terrorism. It was widely agreed among the delegations that religion was part of the solution to many of the challenges faced by countries in the Mediterranean region, including the challenges of combating terrorism and preventing international conflict.

The fifth meeting of the Mediterranean Contact Group, held on 7 October 2019, was concerned with the topic of “Digitalization and the future of energy”. The meeting was opened by Mr. Gj. Simaku, General Director of Energy and Industry Development Policies at the Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy of Albania, and H.E. Mr. O. A. Youssef, Permanent Representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the OSCE. They both stressed the role of energy innovation and development in ensuring energy security. Concrete examples from their respective countries’ national energy policies served to illustrate that energy could be a catalyst for co-operation. Mr. M. Mekerba, IT Development Coordinator at the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), drew attention to OPEC’s pioneering role in the energy industry and emphasized the importance of digitalization in energy production. Effective technology transfer and collaboration among countries in the Mediterranean region were essential. It was worth noting that digitalization in the energy industry had not only positive but also negative implications. Mr. E. Greco, Executive Vice President of the

Institute of International Affairs in Rome, stressed the need to promote political dialogue and regional co-operation in the energy sector and to protect energy infrastructure. The South Mediterranean region would become an energy hub in the near future. Because of the dramatic increase in energy consumption projected to occur in the region as a result of demographic growth and urbanization, there was the risk of a growing mismatch between energy supply and demand. Much like the previous speaker, Mr. Greco pointed out both advantages and disadvantages of digitalization in the energy sector. The intervening delegations described the opportunities that their countries were trying to seize in the fast evolving field of energy digitalization, discussed the possibility of transitioning to sustainable energy sources and shared information on their best practices regarding alternative energy resources.

The 2019 OSCE Mediterranean Conference, organized by the Albanian Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group, was held in Tirana on 24 and 25 October and had as its theme: “The 25th anniversary of the Mediterranean Contact Group: Achievements, challenges and future opportunities for the Partnership”. The conference was attended by several foreign ministers and deputy foreign ministers and by over 250 representatives of the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation, OSCE participating States, OSCE institutions, international organizations, civil society, academia and the media. It was opened by H.E. Mr. G. Cakaj, Acting Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania; Mr. L. Parížek, State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of Slovakia; H.E. Ms. M. Sereni, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy; and H.E. Mr. N. Kamel, Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean. The conference explored ways of strengthening Mediterranean co-operation and promoting common security in the Mediterranean region. It began with a high-level political segment focusing on what had been achieved so far and what was still missing in the relationship between the OSCE participating States and the Mediterranean Partners. H.E. Mr. Cakaj stressed that co-operation with the OSCE Mediterranean Partners was essential to ensure a safe environment for the citizens of all Mediterranean countries and to generate prosperity across the entire region. The political segment was followed by three working sessions covering all three dimensions of the OSCE’s work. The first session dealt with “Joint efforts in countering terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization that leads to terrorism: Good practices, challenges and the way forward”. The second session focused on “Promoting youth participation and engagement to enhance dialogue and co-operation in the Mediterranean”. The third session was dedicated to “Building bridges between the two shores of the Mediterranean: The role of connectivity, digitalization, sustainable development and economic growth in advancing common security in the Mediterranean”. During the concluding remarks, H.E. Mr. Cakaj pledged that Albania would encourage closer consultation with the Mediterranean Partners in 2020, while H.E. Mr. T. Greminger, OSCE Secretary General, stressed that the Mediterranean Partners had a key role to play in determining the future pace and path of their co-operation with the OSCE.

The last and sixth meeting of the Mediterranean Contact Group, held on 25 November 2019, focused on cyber security incidents that could have a negative impact on relations between States. In his introductory remarks, Mr. A. Stastoli, Charge d’Affairs of Albania to the OSCE and Chairperson of the Mediterranean Contact Group, pledged that Mediterranean co-operation would remain a priority during the Albanian OSCE Chairmanship in 2020. He also mentioned the importance of continuity in discussions on cybersecurity, which was a topic of common concern, and the possibility of involving the Mediterranean Partners in the OSCE network of points of contact designated in line with



confidence-building measure (CBM) no. 8 in Permanent Council Decision No. 1106 (PC.DEC/1106). The first keynote speaker was H.E. Mr. M. Rodgold, the newly appointed Permanent Representative of Israel to the OSCE, who presented his country's cybersecurity policy and strategy. H.E. Mr. K. Dán, Permanent Representative of Hungary to the OSCE and Chairperson of the Informal Working Group established pursuant to Permanent Council Decision No. 1039, spoke about the Group's work, including the development of CBMs. He intended to establish regular consultations with the Mediterranean Contact Group, and would personally visit the capitals of the Mediterranean Partners in order to present the newly developed CBMs. Ms. S. Tóth, Cyber Security Officer in the OSCE Transnational Threats Department, presented the conclusions and lessons learned from the training course on enhancing cyber stability and co-operation in the Mediterranean region held in Athens in February. The main conclusion was that there was currently a window of opportunity for strengthening co-operation between the OSCE participating States and the Mediterranean Partners. The Transnational Threats Department intended to continue involving the Mediterranean Partners in its activities and would organize a number of workshops in the near future to deepen co-operation and raise awareness of cybersecurity-related CBMs. Ms. Tóth further mentioned the possibility of extending the above-mentioned OSCE network of points of contact to the Mediterranean Partners. Mr. J. Przewoźniak, Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of Poland to the OSCE, provided an update on the meeting of the Warsaw Process Working Group on Cybersecurity convened in Seoul in October. The meeting had explored ways of responding to major cyber incidents; one such way was the nomination of cybersecurity contact points. The Working Group had acknowledged the importance of interregional co-operation. In their interventions, the delegations of most of the Mediterranean Partners welcomed the proposals for stronger co-operation and shared their cybersecurity activities and strategies.

The Albanian Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group expresses its sincere gratitude to all the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation and the OSCE participating States for their commitment and constructive co-operation within the framework of the Mediterranean Partnership. Albania wishes the incoming Chairperson of the Mediterranean Contact Group every possible success. In Albania's view, it is important to continue the fruitful exchange with the Mediterranean Partners – both at meetings in Vienna and during the annual OSCE Mediterranean Conference – focusing on the topics in which both the OSCE and the Partners have expressed a strong interest over the past years, and which reflect all aspects of a comprehensive security approach.