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23 May 2007

EU Statement in response to H.E. the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Mr. Sergei Lavrov

The European Union warmly welcomes H.E. the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Mr. Sergei Lavrov, to this joint meeting of the Forum for Security Cooperation and the Permanent Council. We thank him for his address to which we have listened with great interest.

Over the past few years, the contacts between the European Union and the Russian Federation have intensified in all areas. The EU Troika meets with representatives of the Russian Federation at many levels, covering also all OSCE-related issues. Just a few days ago, on 18 May, the EU-Russia-Summit took place near Samara. In the course of very open, at times difficult discussions a variety of common interests, but also different perceptions were apparent. We value, and look forward to further developing, this dialogue. We also appreciate our consultations with the Russian Ambassadors and their teams here in Vienna.

Mr. Chairman, the visit of Foreign Minister Lavrov underlines the significant role the OSCE plays as a platform for comprehensive political and security cooperation. We are confident that this cooperation will lead to deeper mutual understanding and thus will continue to contribute to the achievement of our common security goals. The OSCE is working for security, stability and the rule of law in our region. It plays an important role in early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and conflict resolution. The OSCE participating States are

committed to shared norms, standards, values and decisions, adherence to which has brought most of Europe the longest period of peace in its history. The European Union regards the OSCE as an indispensable actor in the European security architecture. It strongly supports its institutions, its field operations, election observation missions and its work in all three dimensions. In order to fulfil its tasks, the OSCE must, however, be provided with the necessary resources.

We note the role Russia played in last year's work on "Strengthening the Effectiveness of the OSCE", a time- and resource-consuming process which was essentially brought to conclusion at the last Ministerial Council in Brussels. It resulted in an improvement of participation and transparency of the organisation. It is now time to make full use of the potential of the strengthened OSCE.

The network of treaties, commitments, decisions, norms and measures created within the politico-military dimension of the OSCE on conventional disarmament and arms control as well as on confidence and security building measures has promoted security and stability in Europe by increasing trust and transparency among participating States. It also makes a valuable contribution to addressing new risks and challenges. The European Union firmly believes that this outstanding achievement needs to be preserved, fully implemented and further strengthened. Maintaining a constructive dialogue with Russia on issues concerning security in Europe is essential.

We would like to emphasise the fundamental role of the CFE Treaty as a cornerstone of European security. Therefore we note with concern the recent statement by President Putin on 26 April during his speech to the Russian Federal Assembly. Entry into force of the Adapted CFE Treaty is of great importance. In this context the members of the European Union which are States Parties to the CFE Treaty reiterate their determination to ratify the Adapted CFE Treaty after fulfilment of Russia's remaining Istanbul commitments on the Republic of Georgia and the Republic of Moldova.

The EU is actively engaged in the Forum for Security Cooperation. Its security dialogue provides an important opportunity for substantial discussions and

initiatives. Key instruments such as the Vienna Document and the Code of Conduct on Political-Military aspects of Security are indispensable tools to effectively promote the concept of comprehensive cooperative security. The EU is committed to contribute constructively to the important work of the FSC. In this respect, we very much welcome the Spanish Chairmanship's focus on improving the synergy between the Forum for Security Cooperation and the Permanent Council.

OSCE participating States face challenges from terrorism, organised crime, cyber attacks and trafficking. Our organisation with its comprehensive mandate, its institutions, its field operations and its experience provides preconditions to tackle also the new threats effectively. The European Union contributes substantially to OSCE's activities in response to security challenges. At the same time we welcome the engagement of the Russian Federation in promoting in the OSCE among others counter terrorism activities and the fight against the trafficking of illicit drugs.

The EU supports continued efforts of the OSCE to achieve a peaceful settlement of the protracted conflicts in Moldova and Georgia based on the principles of territorial integrity of these countries and the complete fulfilment of the 1999 Istanbul Commitments. We highly value the work of the OSCE Minsk Group and its three Co-chairs directed towards a settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The resolution of the protracted conflicts is also an important element of the European Neighbourhood Policy and features prominently in the related Action Plans. We are ready to support all steps which contribute to a peaceful resolution of the conflicts. We call upon all concerned to engage in open dialogue, to show readiness for compromise and to refrain from all action that could further heighten tensions.

The EU believes that OSCE has an important role to play in the stabilisation of Kosovo and supports the activities of the OSCE Mission to Kosovo. We believe that the proposals of the UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari create the basis for Kosovo's sustainable economic and political development and for strengthening the stability of the entire region.

In the framework of its initiative on Central Asia, the EU is taking account of the structures and specific expertise that the OSCE can offer. The European Union has a vested interest in development and stability in Central Asia. We need the region as a partner in combating drug trafficking, organised crime, illegal migration, terrorism and violent extremism. The areas of good governance, human rights, democratisation and the rule of law, border management, education and environment are particularly important for close cooperation between the EU and the OSCE in Central Asia.

The OSCE's work in the human dimension, including close cooperation with civil society is an integral part of its efforts in conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation. The promotion of democracy, human rights, rule of law, good governance and freedom of expression as well as the fight against intolerance and discrimination is at the heart of the work of the OSCE. Like no other organisation, the OSCE is positioned to advance these objectives from Vancouver to Vladivostok. The EU values the frank and constructive dialogue we have with Russia on these issues, including through dedicated human rights consultations twice a year.

The EU highly appreciates ODIHR's valuable work and reaffirms its strong support for it. We should like to emphasise our particular appreciation for ODIHR's activities and its professional methodology in the field of elections. As recent parliamentary elections have shown, close cooperation with ODIHR can result in considerable improvement of the electoral process. We take this opportunity to express our expectation that OSCE/ODIHR will be invited to observe other forthcoming elections, including those in Russia, in accordance with the commitments undertaken by all OSCE participating States.

The European Union continues to attach importance to the strengthening of the economic and environmental dimension, both here in Vienna and in the field. We especially welcome the Spanish Chairmanship's focus on environmental security and sustainable development in the OSCE area. At the same time we consider energy security to be an important element of overall European security.

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion, we should like once again to thank H.E. Foreign Minister Lavrov for addressing this joint meeting of the Forum for Security Cooperation and the Permanent Council today, and to express our hope for further fruitful cooperation with the Russian Federation within the OSCE.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro, EFTA country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.