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SPEECH

By

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Mr Chairman, Mr Secretary General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Greetings from Strasbourg,
Greetings from the Council of Europe

And from our Secretary General Mr Terry Davis. Unfortunately he is unable to be with you today since this is one of the most important weeks in the annual agenda of the Council of Europe when the Parliamentary Assembly holds one of its four part sessions in Strasbourg. I would like to thank you for giving me this opportunity to address this meeting in his absence.

The Parliamentary Assembly has several aspects of security issues on its agenda. Debates on alleged secret detentions and unlawful inter-state transfers in Europe, as well as the balance between freedom of expression and respect for religious beliefs are among the highlights of the plenary session.

Other subjects for discussion include the Assembly's position with regard to the Council of Europe member and observer states which have not abolished the death penalty and the human rights of irregular migrants. The parliamentarians are also discussing domestic violence against women, ahead of the launch of a three-year Council of Europe campaign on this theme.

This list of items on the agenda of this week Parliamentary Assembly session is a confirmation how multifaceted the term security in the Council of Europe is and always has been.

Since its inception, the Council of Europe has based its role on the conviction that unless there is respect for fundamental rights and the rule of law, there can be no stability, no peace, no progress, **and no security**.

"The pursuit of peace based upon justice and international co-operation is vital for the preservation of human society and civilisation" to quote from the Council of Europe 1949 Statute.

The implementation of these concepts is, of course, based on collective and shared responsibility, on standards agreed by the Council of Europe and on the political, judicial, and other mechanisms which have been established to oversee respect for these standards.

With the ending of a divided Europe, the Heads of State and Government at the first Council of Europe summit in Vienna in October 1993 defined **Europe as a vast area of democratic security**, where all countries are committed to pluralist and parliamentary democracy, the indivisibility and universality of human rights, the rule of law and a common cultural heritage enriched by its diversity.

This definition of democratic security was confirmed in Strasbourg (1997) and Warsaw (2005) Summits.

The Council of Europe 2005 Warsaw Summit defined in more details the main areas of common security concerns as follows:

1. Terrorism
2. Corruption and organised crime
3. Trafficking in human beings
4. Violence against women
5. Cyber crime and violation of human rights in the information society
6. Ethics in biomedicine
7. Sustainable developments.

We have a clear mission in the domain of democratic security. But we cannot fulfil it in isolation. Modern threats and challenges are global, and we need to join our efforts with our partner organisations, such as the OSCE.

The Heads of State and Government encouraged the Council of Europe to step and rationalise co-operation with the OSCE, on the basis of their specific tasks and comparative advantages, whilst avoiding duplication of effort.

It is my pleasure to declare today that our two organisations have made the first but resolute steps in this direction, a little more than one year since the Warsaw Summit.

During the last 12 months we have developed and intensified co-operation in all the 7 areas of concern which I mentioned a moment ago, as well as in areas such as election observation.

This applies to co-operation between the headquarters - (Strasbourg and Vienna and Warsaw) as well as between our different missions, representatives and offices or ad hoc teams and delegations in the fields.

In the priority areas identified by the Coordinating Group- we are moving towards even closer co-operation in the fight against terrorism, protection of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, action against trafficking in human beings and the promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination.

The current Russian Chairmanship in the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe formulated its priority concerning relations between our two organisations as a *“necessity to accelerate the transition from information sharing to the joint discussion of issues and formulation of common approaches with a view to taking coordinated actions.”*

And indeed, this is where we are now.

- from Information to Invitation to events,
- from Invitation to Inclusion in organisation of Joint Events.

Mr Chairman

Before concluding, please allow me briefly to elaborate on two aspects considered by the Council of Europe as important elements for security in Europe of today.

- First is ensuring the continued effectiveness of the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights in formulating, promoting and implementing human rights standards. Work in this respect initiated a year ago by the Warsaw Summit continues. We expect to inform you about their long term results in the next meetings.
- The second is the Forum for the Future of Democracy. The first meeting of the Forum was held last year in Warsaw following the Declaration of the Warsaw Summit. The second meeting, devoted to the role of political parties, will be held in Moscow in October this year. Several member states have already announced plans to host the Forum in the years to come. This interest confirms, to quote again from the Warsaw Summit Declaration *how “effective democracy and good governance at all levels are essential for preventing conflicts, promoting stability, facilitating economic and social progress, and hence for creating sustainable communities where people want to live and work, now and in the future”*

These words also summarise the common goal of our two organisations and show an important and security oriented direction for joint action in the future.

Enhancing security and stability throughout Europe requires common stands and actions against challenges facing societies in the 21st century. Although both our institutions can be proud of our achievements, there is still a lot of work to be done. The Council of Europe and the OSCE have very different origins but today they stand side by side in promoting human rights and democracy, and in helping to rebuild societies still suffering from the legacy of too many years of neglect, injustice and oppression.

Let us join our efforts in working towards making Europe a safe and secure place for future generations.