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Speech of Mr Jakub Kulhanek, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic at the Plenary Meeting of the 2021 OSCE Ministerial Council, 2 December 2021 in Stockholm

Dear Madam Chairperson-in-Office, dear colleagues. Let me begin on a sombre note: In the OSCE region, we are witnessing a deterioration of the security situation, be it the use of force, violation of the OSCE commitments and principles, lack of transparency, growing mistrust, or hostile activities – all of these are now part of our everyday reality. I would like to remind you that I am speaking here as a representative of a country, which has fallen victim to an unprovoked and daring hostile act on our soil, causing death and destruction, and carried out by the intelligence operatives from a fellow OSCE participating State.

We strongly condemn all hostile and aggressive acts in the OSCE region, of course, the most vivid example of which is the continued violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity and the illegal annexation of Crimea.

We are concerned by the recent build-up of Russian troops along the border with Ukraine. We call on Russia to be transparent, to reduce tensions, and to de-escalate. We reiterate that the situation has no military solution and can only be solved by diplomatic means.

Once again, we call on the swift implementation of the Minsk Agreements, including the permanent monitoring of the Ukrainian-Russian border and verification by the OSCE.

We call on the Belarus government to end the senseless crackdown on its own population, free all political prisoners, and to immediately start a dialogue with the democratic opposition. We deplore the weaponization of illegal migration by the Belarusian regime.

My country has been fully supporting the programme of the Swedish Chairpersonship-in-Office. The “Back to Basics” approach is indeed very timely and needed. This year we have been commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Lisbon Framework for Arms Control. Implementing OSCE conventional arms control as well as Confidence and

Security Building Measures is key to reduce military risks in the region. In this regards, modernising the Vienna Document to increase military transparency is an urgent priority.

Colleagues, we must bear in mind that only when human rights and fundamental freedoms are observed, societies can develop their potential. All our policies must reflect it.

We express our great disappointment that this year's Human Dimension Implementation Meeting has been blocked. It is a unique platform for dialogue between the civil society and governments, therefore we urge all participating States to enable its holding.

The COVID-19 pandemic has proven that no institution or state actor can take on the economic, environmental, or social challenges of today's complex world just on its own. The best way to succeed in reviving our economies and societies is a collective response.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson, dear Ann, for your steady leadership under extremely demanding conditions. We wish the upcoming Polish Chairpersonship all the best for 2022. We welcome Finland's Chairpersonship in 2025, which will mark the 50th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act. I hope it will serve as a powerful reminder of our collective commitments and responsibilities. Last but not least, we thank Estonia for showing their readiness to lead the OSCE in 2024, a decision which I sincerely hope, shall not be blocked by any participating State. Thank you.