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MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

ADDRESS BY

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MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS OF THE
COUNCIL OF EUROPE**

AT THE

PERMANENT COUNCIL OF THE OSCE

Vienna, 10 June 2010

Excellences,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to address you at this 812 meeting of the Permanent Council in my capacity as a Chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. The oldest political pan-European Organization and the OSCE are both very active on the European continent and pursue the same values. Despite their differences in the mandate, membership, organizational structure and working methods they also share common aim. That is to contribute to the democratic stability in Europe and to strengthen the rule of law, democracy and protection of human rights.

The Council of Europe and the OSCE employ different means to achieve their political objectives. While the first draws its strength from the legally binding instruments and the monitoring mechanism established to observe and ensure compliance with the standards consisted in them, the second prizes its flexibility and field presence. Those are the comparative advantages of the Council of Europe and the OSCE.

To begin with the strengths of the Council of Europe I have to place an emphasis on its huge legal apparatus which over the years has constructed the European legal space. More than 200 legal instruments adopted by the Council of Europe are complementary to the European Convention on Human Rights. Our Chairmanship falls within the year marking the 60th anniversary of the adoption of the European Convention on Human Rights and warrants our special attention of safeguarding the human rights system. The first priority of our Chairmanship is focused on **strengthening human rights protection** which is linked to the reform process of the European Court of Human Rights. It is also connected with the need for a cooperative approach in safeguarding various rights and making the best use of the monitoring mechanisms of the Council of Europe at national level, but also by a greater coherence of activities within the Organization.

The Venice Commission is among the bodies of the Council of Europe which complements other monitoring mechanisms of the Organization and influences the European legal construction. I am mentioning it particularly in the light of its 20th anniversary I have attended recently, but more importantly because of its engagement in many member states of the Council of Europe where OSCE is also involved, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan. The Venice Commission plays significant role in crisis management and conflict prevention through advising and developing constitutional law of countries which have experienced or are experiencing the risk of ethnic and political conflicts. At the ceremony in Venice commemorating the 20th anniversary of the Commission I said "I have to pay tribute to the constitutional engineering the Venice Commission is carrying out as a means of accommodating conflicting interests in certain societies. It facilitates the transformation of the reached political agreements between opposing political actors into workable legal solutions. I have to stress that the success of those solutions is due to the accumulated expertise in the Venice Commission comprised in the professional wisdom of its members. The legal solutions offered by the Commission to complex political situations can be implemented in practice because they take into account the whole spectrum of social, historical and cultural factors in a given society. In fact, the ultimate aim is to adopt legislation that can

improve the society and combat discrimination and injustice, thus by providing democratic security for its citizens.”

But these examples of close cooperation with the OSCE are not the only ones. The Venice Commission cooperates closely with ODIHR in the field of electoral matters. In addition, last year the Venice Commission participated in the first meeting of the OSCE/ODIHR working group on the revision of the Guidelines for the review of legislation pertaining to religion or belief.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The cumulative effect in reaching the goals of the Council of Europe and the OSCE is through strengthening cooperation, creating synergies and avoiding overlapping.

In the Macedonian priorities for the Committee of Ministers Chairmanship we have stated that we will cooperate closely with Kazakhstan, the country holding the 2010 Chairmanship of the OSCE, as well as with Spain and Belgium, as the countries holding the EU Presidency in the same year. On the European level, I believe that cooperation between these three organizations is very important.

In this context I would like to mention that the theme of creating synergies and comparative advantages of the Council of Europe, the OSCE, EU and the United Nations was discussed few days ago in Skopje at the Conference organized by the Macedonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs within the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers. This conference was dedicated to the issue of integration of national minorities with a particular focus on the effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities in the decision-making process, as a way of achieving de facto integration. I am particularly pleased that the High Commissioner on National Minorities, Mr. Vollebaek was among the keynote speakers. Strengthening the cohesion of our societies while respecting diversity and improving the integration of minorities in the mainstream are aims shared by both- the Council of Europe and the OSCE. The basis and departing point for the discussion at the Conference was the Thematic Commentary produced in 2008 by the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention on the Effective Participation of persons belonging to minorities in Cultural, Social and Economic life and Public Affairs.

The Council of Europe and the OSCE are reinforcing each other in the field of minority protection. As one of the speakers at the Skopje Conference on National Minorities rightly mentioned that the states that have not ratified the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities “are also bound by political commitments on minority standards of the OSCE, notably the Copenhagen Document of 1990. It is important because the latter constituted the basis for drafting the Framework Convention”

The Conference on National Minorities held on 7-8 June in Skopje was part of the second thematic priority of our Chairmanship- **fostering integration while respecting diversity**. Within this priority our Chairmanship intends to place an emphasis on the need to integrate all sorts of diversities that exist in our societies, be they of ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious nature. Only through the integration of these diversities we can have cohesive and prosperous societies.

The issue of integration of national minorities will also be considered at the Third Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting in 2010, but through the prism of education as

a good mechanism of developing distinctive identities and ensuring full participation in all spheres of society.

When speaking about integrating the diversities the intercultural and the interreligious dialogue has a role to play. The dialogue is considered as a valuable instrument for mutual understanding since the European societies are becoming more and more multicultural. The Council of Europe 2010 Exchange on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue will be focused on the theme "The role of media in fostering multicultural dialogue, tolerance and mutual understanding: freedom of expression in the media and respect towards other cultural and religious diversity" The Exchange will take place in Ohrid on 13 and 14 September 2010.

As a good example of our complementarities I would like to mention that the High-Level OSCE Conference on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination to be held in Astana on 29 and 30 June will make additional contribution to the discussion of cooperation among different cultures and religions and the practical implementation of the adopted decision of the OSCE.

Excellencies,

The Macedonian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe has chosen the **promotion of the youth participation** as a third priority area. In focusing on this area, we had in mind the fact that there is a huge potential in young people who can influence democratic changes in our societies. They have to be instigated to participate more actively in the political and democratic reforms in the region of South Eastern Europe. We intend to launch a process to this effect aimed at providing young people in the region with an organized setting for the exchange of opinions on the organization of their respective societies and of experience gained from their participation in political processes. It is a good coincidence that 2010 is proclaimed as "International Year of Youth" by the United Nations General Assembly and our activities under this chapter could be considered as the regional contribution, coming from the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, to the global initiative led by the UN.

At the end let me stress that our Chairmanship supports the reform process of the Organization initiated by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe. We have to respond to the new challenges and adapt to the new political, economic and institutional realities in Europe. The Council of Europe can do that by reinforcing its place in the institutional architecture of Europe, *inter alia* through strengthening cooperation with the OSCE, which was initiated in 2004. We are devoted to further strengthening the four areas of enhanced cooperation. Namely, 1) the fight against terrorism, 2) the protection of rights of persons belonging to national minorities, 3) the fight against trafficking in human beings and 4) the promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination.

The Council of Europe and the OSCE complements each other almost ideally. They have both contributed to the creation of Europe, whole and at peace. All our member states and participating States deserve credit for the reconciliation and unity of Europe. Our engagement continues.

Thank you for the attention.