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Vienna, 6 November 2009

**The role of the CSCE/OSCE in strengthening security in Europe –
reflections on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the fall of the
Berlin Wall and the opening of the Iron Curtain**

Mr. Genscher,
Mr. Spindelegger,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Distinguished guests,

It is a particular privilege for me to be here today and to commemorate with you a historic occasion – the fall of the Berlin Wall, one of the most significant events in our recent and common history.

For me personally, it is even more important to commemorate this historic occasion here in Vienna, not only because I associate with Vienna many happy years of my youth, my student days and the start of my professional career, among other places at the Austrian Foreign Ministry, but also because I experienced this important moment, the evening of 9 November 1989, here in Vienna as a young student not far from this place in a student bar.

I still remember very clearly the enthusiasm and overwhelming feelings that we all felt on that evening. Although, I must admit that as a young person and especially as a witness to history I was not immediately aware of the actual significance and the consequences of these events. I apologize for looking back at the past in this overly personal way. I merely wanted, even in this way, to pay tribute to the city of Vienna and to express my admiration and sincere gratitude for the valuable years that I was able to spend here.

Walls divide cities, societies and ideas. Unfortunately, this is still the case today, even in Europe. They constitute obstacles to human prosperity and freedom. They threaten the dignity inherent in every single human being.

The fall of the Berlin Wall impressively demonstrated that physical borders cannot withstand the will of the people for peace and unity. Likewise they cannot withstand their determination to create a future that is based on common objectives and common values.

The date of 9 November 1989 marked the end of an era of mistrust and divisions and opened the way for co-operation aimed at a peaceful and stable Europe.

In this connection, we must not forget the significant contribution by many people in preparing the political ground for the necessary courageous and determined steps towards this better future.

Hans-Dietrich Genscher undoubtedly made an exceptional contribution during the events that have had such a lasting effect on the history of this continent. Mr. Genscher, it is an honour and a great privilege to be here with you today. Your courage and the tenacity that you demonstrated in the face of uncertainty and challenges remain a source of eternal inspiration for us all.

Distinguished guests,

Europe has undergone a positive transformation since 1989. The Charter of Paris for a New Europe signed in 1990 called for a Europe that was to be based on democratic principles, the rule of law, and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We must, however, even on the occasion of this celebration to commemorate the fall of the Berlin Wall, intensify our efforts to realize this vision: our own vision for a united continent of Europe based on indivisible, co-operative and comprehensive security.

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, which I have the honour of representing here today, is playing a central role in the efforts to realize that goal. At the heart of the OSCE is the idea that European security begins with the dignity inherent in each individual.

Developed as an instrument for promoting détente, the OSCE created the basis for dialogue, undermined the dogmas of confrontation and weakened the inflexibility of the status quo in order to ultimately make a fundamental and positive change possible.

Thanks to the extraordinary unity among the participating States after the end of the Cold War, the OSCE adopted an ambitious set of commitments and established institutions and field operations to support the States and their societies in the difficult process of transition.

Furthermore, the OSCE showed that real security is only comprehensive if it incorporates all aspects of security, such as politico-military co-operation, sound economic governance, and respect for the rule of law and basic rights and fundamental freedoms.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We have come a long way together to answer the questions of 1989. Today, like then, the OSCE remains the forum in which difficult questions can be raised and possibly answered. The OSCE has always spoken of a Europe as we would imagine it, how it could be in a perfect world. At the same time, the OSCE has never hesitated to hold a mirror up to Europe so it can see what it really looks like.

In this spirit, the Greek Chairmanship of the OSCE introduced a new dialogue on security in Europe, a dialogue that is known in our circles today as the “Corfu Process” – named after the last meeting on the Greek island of Corfu where this dialogue was initiated. This dialogue is intended to take an impartial view of all aspects of security in Europe. The goal of this dialogue is to renew our common commitment to indivisible, co-operative and comprehensive security. It is also intended to create a new political will for joint action, to strengthen the institutions that we have created and to ensure comprehensive security on the entire continent.

The ambitious concept of a greater Europe, which the OSCE encompasses and which extends from Vancouver to Vladivostok, represents a unique resource in which the 56 States and their people can work together on the basis of common values to develop common security.

I firmly believe that we need this instrument today more than ever.

Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,

Twenty years later we are still grateful for the courage of the generation of 1989, and those men and women who rose up to overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Where there was once a dark wall, a door suddenly opened up. Everyone who was involved at that time went through that door out into the streets, into the churches and across the borders. Everyone had the chance to build something new, shape what was happening and break free from the past.

Twenty years have elapsed, ladies and gentlemen, since this stunning gift of freedom. But there is still nothing that fills us with such enthusiasm, nothing that spurs us on more, nothing that fills us with such a positive feeling as the power of freedom.

Today we, our generation, are aware of our own responsibility. It is our responsibility to ensure that no more walls are built.

Thank you for your attention.