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**Statement by H.E. Mr. Vladimir Makei,
Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Republic of Belarus
at the OSCE 26th Ministerial Council
(Bratislava, 5 December 2019)**

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Colleagues,

First of all, let me sincerely thank the Slovak OSCE Chairmanship for hospitality and spirit of friendship in Bratislava as well as for professional steering of the Organization this year.

30 years ago, the Charter of Paris for a New Europe proclaimed the principle of indivisible security. It set the goal of ‘melting the ice’ of mistrust and building a united Europe.

Have our common hopes come true?

Have the conditions been met for sustainable development and nation-building of newly independent states like Belarus born after the end of the ‘Cold War’?

Unfortunately, not, I have to say.

A brief European spring in the beginning of 90s was followed by a chilly summer and protracted cold autumn in the first two decades of the XXI century.

A chronic and deepening crisis of confidence, dwindling arms control regimes, rapid military build-up, widening political and ideological divide – these are authentic ingredients for disaster.

Unless we act swiftly, the situation has all chances to turn into another ‘freezing winter’.

Belarus is well aware what unpredictable consequences this may have for our turbulent region situated in a geopolitically dangerous seismic zone.

What do we propose?

First. In 2017 the President of Belarus called to relaunch strategic dialogue aimed at bridging contradictions and “reviving the spirit” of the Helsinki process. He suggested convening a summit to discuss frankly and openly at the highest level the state of play and way forward to fix and reboot the security architecture in Europe.

This offer remains on the table. We are ready to invest, alongside other like-minded states, in search for solutions to translate the prevailing paradigm of conflict into a paradigm of cooperative security based on engagement.

The role of small and medium-sized countries cannot be underestimated. They need to be full participants in a security dialogue to avoid new partition of Europe into spheres of influence.

Second. The recent termination of the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles continues an extremely dangerous trend on escalation of military tensions in Europe.

The President of Belarus declared that we do not intend to produce or deploy these missiles provided that there will not be respective external threats to our security.

He proposed to elaborate a multilateral declaration with clear and firm commitment of countries not to deploy the intermediate- and shorter-range missiles in their territory and to refuse to manufacture them. We are aware that implementing this initiative will require political will and hard efforts. We hope that others will be able to embrace this approach as it serves the best interests of all participating States and that of our collective security.

We need to preserve the integrity of other arms control instruments, including the Treaty on Open Skies.

Third. As the cyberspace is becoming more and more an arena of confrontation, Belarus proposed to form a “belt of digital good neighbourliness” by concluding international agreements on cyber security, similar to the agreements on additional Confidence and Security Building Measures in the military and political field.

The OSCE should be fully ‘fit for the purpose’, adapt to changing security environment and play a more prominent role it deserves in the global security.

We need also to strengthen the mutually reinforcing nature of the relationship between security organizations, like the Collective Security Treaty Organization and NATO, in the OSCE area as foreseen by the Charter of European Security and the Platform for Co-operative Security.

Next year we are to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the end of the World War II. Its bitter lessons remind us of the value of peace and dangers of nationalism, xenophobia and neo-Nazism.

Peace is difficult to achieve but it can be broken too easily.

We need a new ‘Marshall Plan’ for European security – a plan where all participating States would invest in building reliable security mechanisms to ensure a new European ‘spring’, not ‘winter’ for future generations.

Thank you for your attention.