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PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
TO THE INTERNATIONAL
ORGANIZATIONS
VIENNA

Statement of the Delegation of Albania,
In response to the OSCE Chairperson in Office, President of the Swiss
Confederation, H.E. Mr. Didier Burkhalter

As delivered by the Permanent Representative, Ambassador Spiro Koçi,
at the 980th meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council
16 January 2014

Thank you Mr. Chairperson

Albania joins others in warmly welcoming President Burkhalter in his first appearance before the Permanent Council in his new capacity as Chairperson in Office of the OSCE, and thanks him for his thorough address. We congratulate him upon the assumption of the Chairmanship and wish him well and every success in this highly responsible task.

We commend your close cooperation with Serbia in the framework of the consecutive OSCE Chairmanships. We are confident that this will be a successful model, which we hope to be replicated in the years to come. On this occasion let me also wish Serbia every success as Troika member and thank the outgoing Ukrainian Chairmanship for its outstanding work last year.

While aligning ourselves to the EU Statement, let me reiterate our position on some topics of particular importance to us.

We share the Chair's view that the OSCE is uniquely placed to connect the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian area and represents the best safeguard against new divisions. We therefore need to make full use of its potential, including by taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the "Helsinki +40" process.

In this framework, Albania is fully committed to capitalize on the discussions held last year under the able Ukrainian stewardship. As we emphasized in our national statement in Kyiv, time has come to move forward with a roadmap of small and realistic deliverables that can be achieved under the consecutive Swiss and Serbian Chairs. We strongly believe that the "Helsinki +40" Process is about calibrating the role of the OSCE to the challenges of our time, without altering its current structures, flexibility and decision making processes.

The focus of the incoming Swiss Chairmanship on the improvement of people's lives is timely, particularly in light of the additional hardship that the current economic crises has placed on some social categories, including the youth, depriving them from socio-economic opportunities. Improving the conditions for people to prosper

and live a life in dignity is a noble objective which will bring the OSCE closer to the needs of our citizens and societies. We therefore see merit in the initiative to draw up an OSCE Youth Action Plan.

Broadening the scope of the OSCE's engagement with civil society organizations is crucial to its efforts to help participating States honor their commitments in the field of human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy and rule of law. As recognized in landmark OSCE documents, NGOs play an essential role in holding our Governments accountable to the people and in monitoring the implementation of our Human Dimension commitments. Hence, Albania welcomes the intention of the Swiss Chairmanship to organize regional conferences for civil society as well as a major conference in Basel prior to the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting.

Mr. Chairperson,

Reconciliation and regional cooperation are of vital importance to the Western Balkans and its ongoing Euro-Atlantic integration process. Albania commends the intention of Switzerland to include these topics in the list of priorities of its OSCE Chairmanship. In this connection, we stand ready to closely cooperate with Ambassador Stoudmann, Personal Representative of the Chairperson in Office for the Western Balkans, in the implementation of its mandate.

We agree that the OSCE, through its Mission to Kosovo, should continue to play a supporting role in the implementation of the agreements reached in the framework of the EU facilitated dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia. In this context, we strongly believe that the participation of the Kosovo's institutions in various OSCE's meetings, either formal or informal, would serve, *inter alia*, to the efficient implementation of the OMiK's mandate. As we see it, the Swiss Chairmanship is well-placed to facilitate this process and to take concrete steps enabling Kosovo to become soon the 58th OSCE participating State.

The OSCE provides a suitable platform for the exchange of experiences and best practices with our Mediterranean partners, where important transitions are underway. Albania has used various OSCE fora to share our experience on transition to democracy and will continue to step up its engagement in this framework. With this in mind, I wish to express our strong support for Libya's request to become an OSCE Partner for Cooperation. Let me also express our willingness to host the OSCE Mediterranean Conference in the near future.

As a country which boasts an excellent and productive cooperation with an OSCE field mission, Albania voices its full support for the establishment of an OSCE mission in Ulan Bator, in line with the request and the needs of the Government of Mongolia.

We expect the Swiss CiO to closely work with participating States to build consensus on these two issues.

Finally Mr. Chairperson, let me thank again President Burkhalter for his presentation and express our readiness to closely cooperate with the Swiss Chairmanship in the implementation of their priorities and to continue to contribute proactively to the work of the OSCE.

Thank you Mr. Chairperson.