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Working Group C: Security risks and challenges across the OSCE region

ENGLISH only

Statement (speaking notes) by ambassador Kirsten Malling Biering, Head of the Danish OSCE delegation, Chair of the Informal Open-ended Group of Friends of the Chair for the Development of an OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

**Developing an OSCE Strategy  
to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century:  
State of play**

Mr. Chairman, dear colleagues,

As chair of the informal, open-ended Group of Friends of the Chair for the development of an OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, I have been asked to brief you about the state of play in our common efforts to develop such a strategy.

We have progressed well since ministers requested the Permanent Council to develop a strategy for the OSCE at the Ministerial Council in Bucharest in 2001. During 2002 a number of substantial food-for-thought papers were worked out by participating states, i.a. by the US and Russia. Moreover, with the adoption at the Porto Ministerial Council in December 2002 of the decision to work out a comprehensive Strategy, we were able firstly to agree on a number of guidelines for further work, and secondly that the Strategy should be developed during the course of this year to be presented to ministers at Maastricht.

Subsequently, general agreement has been achieved on three food-for-thought papers: a) the general framework and structure of the Strategy, b) a typology or categorisation of threats, and c) an outline on OSCE's response.

The threat categories are in random order and starting at the most general:

- regional, interstate and intrastate conflict, with the understanding that conflict prevention lies at the heart of OSCE activities,
- discrimination and intolerance,
- terrorism and threats arising from criminal activity,
- threats related to the economy and the environment,
- and the so-called other threats of a politico-military nature by which is basically meant a number of the issues on the agenda of the Forum for Security Cooperation such as e.g. controlling the spread of small arms and light weapons.

It was argued that threats can and do emanate from a wide range of human activities and can have their origin both inside and outside the OSCE region. Developments of a political, military, human dimension, economic and environmental nature can all potentially present threats to security and stability. Many of these developments will be interconnected or cross-dimensional. The Strategy, however, should not attempt to provide an exhaustive list of threats. There are furthermore threats relevant to security and stability that may not fall within the purview of the OSCE or that the OSCE is not primarily suited to deal with. It was the general

opinion that the Strategy should focus on areas and issues where the OSCE can play a role, operational or otherwise.

Many categorisations of threats are of course possible and overlaps hard to avoid. Furthermore, it should be noted that in the outline four factors were seen as underlying the typology. One factor is that many new threats have their origin in actions of non-state actors. Another factor is the importance of democratic institutions in preventing threats from arising. Thirdly increasingly threats do not respect national borders, but are trans-boundary in character. The fourth factor is that systematic violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms may provide a cause for eruption of a wide range of potential threats. Respect for and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms remain important for preserving security and stability.

We are in basic agreement that the food-for-thought papers or outlines would constitute the basis for the actual drafting of a Strategy. One outline is still outstanding, namely on cooperation with other international organisations and institutions. This will be distributed shortly with a view to discussion in early July. That should enable us to live up to the timetable established by the OSCE Chair in the beginning of this year, with the first actual draft texts to be ready in early September for the most important and probably by no means easy phase of the work of the Group.

For the final product we are obviously dependent upon progress in other working groups of relevance for our endeavours. Substantial results in these groups are, however, not life or death for our Strategy. But they do constitute the difference between a better Strategy and a lesser one. As it will be known, the FSC has been tasked to make its own contribution to our work, within its competencies and mandate.

With your indulgence, let me stop with the narration and step outside the function of Chair of the Group of Friends of the Chair for a moment to give you an overview of some personal impressions that I have gathered while working on the Strategy.

The Group have had an opportunity to listen to representatives for other relevant international organisations active in the security field in order to learn about their threat perceptions and evolving strategies as well as gauge the scope for further cooperation in the spirit of the Platform for Cooperative Security. I have also personally maintained a close contact with several of these organisations in order to have a clear impression of the international context in which we are operating and the opportunities and challenges that it offers.

In this light the OSCE exercise appears extremely timely. It is exactly now that we should offer such a contribution to the evolving pattern of international cooperation. Otherwise we will miss the train and the profile of the OSCE may appear less clear in the overall international framework. And in offering such a contribution we will have to be equally aware of the world around us. The OSCE is not and should not be seen as a reserve or service organisation. The OSCE is an important organisation in its own right, but like any other it does not operate in a vacuum. And like any other, the more it can act with this in mind, the more focused and forceful can its contribution be and the better will its voice be heard.

This also has a bearing on the discussion of the scope of the Strategy, which has taken up much of the time of Group. How do we combine the wish for a succinct document of also operational value with the necessary strategic vision of our response?

The CSCE/OSCE developed through the 1990's a number of basic documents, institutions, instruments and mechanisms that are absolutely impressive when you revisit the process. It would be hard to do much better than e.g. the Platform for Co-Operative Security. We have not been tasked to do so either and there would seem little reason. The OSCE has the advantage that it has at an early hour equipped itself with a flexible framework that goes far in meeting the challenges of today. Its security concept itself is geared to modern-day complexity of threats. Other organisations do not have that head start as they grapple with a response to the challenges of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

If we therefore agree that this organisation is worthwhile, that it has played a very important role so far and that it continues to have something to offer, the strategic vision would not be a strategic change, with a multitude of new structures and new policy areas on top of what we have. The strategic vision would be the proud assertion of the OSCE, the confidence in the basic values of the organisation and its institutions and instruments and a bold and focused presentation of why and how exactly the OSCE has a valid response to threats to security and stability in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

If I am not much mistaken that will pretty much be the starting point also for other similar exercises in the international context. It does not exclude the necessary fine-tuning or innovation (adapt and supplement, Portodecision). It would not indicate timidity or fear of thinking outside of the box. It would be based on the basic assumption that this organisation has something to offer as it is, also in a changing environment, when we carefully rethink, focus and substantiate our response. Such self-confidence is perhaps not the worst point of departure either when you engage in interaction with other international institutions. (As Minister Rotfeld indicated yesterday at the heart of the matter lies also very much our ability to will the OSCE. We pose the question: What can the organisation do? It is perhaps even more acutely a question of the wish of Participating States to engage the Organisation to the full of its capabilities)

We have a unique possibility to relaunch the OSCE in the 21<sup>st</sup> century when the Ministerial Council meets in Maastricht. For that to be noticed it is my impression that we do not need fireworks. Some might even argue that that could be seen as a screen for poverty of substance. Rather, we need clarity and focus to consolidate our work internally. And we need clarity and focus to be able to send a strong, level-headed statement to the international community that we can and will play ball. We owe it to the organisation to make that possible. Having experienced the constructive and committed work of the Group of Friends during the first half of this year and the large degree of communality of views I am certain that we will.

(In-put from the ASRC to that process will be very valuable, as may the ASRC itself, as a possible future monitoring mechanism on threats and the eventual strategy on threats themselves.)

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