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Open Skies Consultative Commission

Chairmanship of the Russian Federation

**LETTER FROM THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE
OPEN SKIES CONSULTATIVE COMMISSION TO THE
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF SLOVENIA,
CHAIRPERSON OF THE THIRTEENTH MEETING
OF THE OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Your Excellency,

In my capacity as Chairperson of the Open Skies Consultative Commission (OSCC), I have the honour to inform you of the activities of the OSCC in 2005.

During the reporting period, following the Ministerial Council meeting in Sofia, the OSCC focused, on the one hand, on current issues essential to the effective implementation of the Treaty on Open Skies, and, on the other hand, on the preparation for the second phase of its implementation, which will start on 1 January 2006.

An important event in the life of the OSCC was the first Review Conference on the Implementation of the Treaty on Open Skies, held in Vienna from 14 to 16 February 2005, which took stock of both the provisional and the first phases of the operation of the Treaty. The participants in the Conference gave a positive assessment of the first phase of operation of the Treaty since its entry into force on 1 January 2002, noting that it significantly enhanced openness and transparency among the States Parties and thus contributed to maintaining a climate of co-operation on their territories, from Vancouver to Vladivostok. Moreover, the Treaty is making a substantial contribution to achieving the goals and objectives of the OSCE, in particular, the promotion of confidence, stability and security in Europe.

The accession to the Treaty of the Republic of Lithuania and the Republic of Estonia was seen as demonstrating the attractiveness of the Treaty's goals and objectives to OSCE participating States and the positive dynamic of the Treaty's evolution. Thus, the overall number of States Parties to the Treaty has reached 34. The OSCC has carried out all the necessary procedures related to the accession of these States. The application of Cyprus remains on the agenda of the OSCC.

Since the previous reporting period, the States Parties have conducted about 100 observation flights that by and large have been judged to be successful and conducted in an atmosphere of mutual co-operation between the observing and the observed parties. In the

course of these observation flights, the States Parties made wide use of such forms of co-operation as shared observation flights, whereby two or more observing parties participated in a single observation mission over the observed party. Furthermore, the States Parties continued the practice of conducting training observation flights on a bilateral basis. The OSCC is continuing to address issues related to the day-to-day implementation of the Treaty through the Informal Working Group on Rules and Procedures (IWGRP). In particular, the Commission took an important decision on transit flights and flights to the point of entry and from the point of exit.

The Informal Working Group on Sensors (IWGS) resumed its work in 2005. This was necessitated, above all, by the fact that the second phase of the Treaty's operation allows for employing the entire set of sensors specified by the Treaty and that three OSCC decisions regulating the use of several categories of sensors expire in 2005. The OSCC is working on the adoption of revision one of Decision Number Seventeen on recording formats and the exchange of data recorded on media other than photographic film. The IWGS has been able to reach agreement on the draft OSCC decision on logical formats for the exchange of digital data among States Parties. The effort to revise the two other expiring decisions will continue.

Since the second phase of the Treaty's implementation is to begin next year, the OSCC was for the first time tasked with full distribution of the States Parties' active quotas for 2006. This task has been successfully completed. The preparatory work for the transition toward the second phase of the Treaty's implementation makes us hopeful that this vital instrument of co-operation will continue to function effectively.

Your Excellency, you may deem it useful to reflect this information in the relevant documents of the Ministerial Council meeting.