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**STATEMENT BY
MR. SERGEY LAVROV, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE TWENTY-SIXTH MEETING
OF THE OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Bratislava, 5 and 6 December 2019

Mr. Chairperson-in-Office,
Mr. Secretary General,
Ladies and gentlemen,

We are grateful to the Slovak Chairmanship for its hospitality. Here in Bratislava, where Western and Eastern Europe meet, it is appropriate to recall that our Organization is called upon to contribute to the building of common co-operative security, the removal of dividing lines, and the maintenance and strengthening of mutual trust. In that connection, achieving the goal set at the Astana Summit of forming an equal, comprehensive and indivisible security community should remain our indisputable priority.

Unfortunately, the opposite is true today. The strategic stability architecture is falling apart. The fragmentation of the security space continues. There are attempts to replace the system of international law with a “rules-based order” – a set of foreign policy guidelines by a narrow group of Western countries. Several waves of expansion of the North Atlantic Alliance, which they are stubbornly trying to turn into a “source of legitimacy”, the movement of its military infrastructure closer to Russia’s borders, the rapid build-up of military capabilities in Eastern Europe and an unjustified increase in defence spending coupled with the cultivation of an “enemy image” – all this has led to tension reminiscent of the days of the Cold War.

It is important today to reverse this dangerous trend and not to allow a further slide towards confrontation. There is a need for a positive pan-European agenda on all pressing matters – from countering the numerous challenges and threats to the alignment of integration processes in Eurasia. We are convinced that by virtue of its broad geographical scope, comprehensive approach to security, consensus principle and culture of dialogue, the OSCE can and should play an important role in resolving these issues. This is exactly what the Bratislava Appeal of the Chairperson-in-Office is all about. We of course support this idea.

We were guided by precisely that philosophy when we were preparing our initiatives for today’s meeting. The adoption of the Declaration on the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the End of the Second World War, designed to give a clear signal regarding the inadmissibility of revising its outcomes in international law, would be of fundamental importance. And our proposed Commemorative Declaration on the Twentieth Anniversary of the Charter for European Security was aimed at reaffirming the principle of its indivisibility.

We support the continuation of the Structured Dialogue with the involvement of military experts. We consider it an important confidence-building measure, especially at a time when military-to-military contacts between Russia and the North Atlantic Alliance have been broken off. Unfortunately, the Russian proposals

regarding a reduction of tension at the Russia-NATO line of contact remain unanswered. Nor has there been any response to the open address of the Foreign Ministers of the countries of the Collective Security Treaty Organization to their NATO counterparts. In a situation in which instead of dialogue we are facing the aggressive “containment” of our country, we see no possibility for discussing the modernization of the Vienna Document 2011.

We take the position that the OSCE should play a more significant role in combating terrorism and the drug threat. We have prepared several draft documents on these topics.

We note the balanced nature of the draft decisions submitted by the Chairmanship on energy co-operation and digital innovation. This is the right approach – more attention needs to be paid to the second “basket”.

The OSCE’s potential is especially called for in resolving urgent humanitarian problems. The shameful phenomenon of “non-citizens” persists in Latvia and Estonia. In Ukraine, the Russian language, which is spoken by a significant proportion of the population, is subjected to double discrimination. Persecution of the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church also continues.

A number of countries are flagrantly violating their commitments to ensuring freedom of the media and equal access to information. They demonstrate intolerance towards alternative points of view. Not to mince words, we are talking about attempts to introduce political censorship in the OSCE area with regard to unwelcome information resources.

Carrying out the relevant instructions of the Basel Ministerial Council regarding the adoption of declarations for the protection of Christians and Muslims remains on the agenda. The political correctness of a number of States on this matter seems contrived.

The Organization’s crisis response efforts are still relevant. The signing of the “Steinmeier formula” in the Trilateral Contact Group on Ukraine and the disengagement in the three pilot areas show that progress depends, first and foremost, on the political will of the authorities in Kyiv and their readiness to fulfil their international commitments. We support the work of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. We look forward to the publication of the Mission’s reports on the casualties and destruction of civilian infrastructure in Donbas. We trust that the forthcoming “Normandy format” summit in Paris will give impetus to the implementation of the Minsk Package of Measures. In that connection, direct dialogue between the Ukrainian Government and the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk remains a key element of a settlement.

The difficult situation in the Balkans requires increased attention. The OSCE’s field operations should not be used to solve the problems of the Euro-Atlantic integration of the countries of the region. The invitation of representatives of the authorities in Priština to the Organization’s events is also inadmissible.

It is important to remember that the activities of the OSCE executive structures, including the Organization’s institutions, should benefit all participating States. It is only on the basis of the principles of mutual respect and consideration of interests that it is possible to fully unlock the OSCE’s vast creative potential.

In conclusion, I should like to wish Albania every success as it prepares to assume the OSCE Chairmanship.

Thank you for your attention.