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STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE ADDRESS BY THE CIO, H.E. Dr
SOLOMON PASSY, delivered by Dr Branislav MILINKOVIĆ, Ambassador of
Serbia and Montenegro, at the 490th Meeting of the Permanent Council, 15
January 2004

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the Delegation of Serbia and Montenegro I am delighted to join others in warmly welcoming our new Chairman-in-Office His Excellency Dr. Solomon Passy, Foreign Minister of Bulgaria. We are grateful for his well structured, comprehensive and realistic program of Bulgarian Chairmanship, with carefully selected priorities, which was presented with clarity and precision. If I am allowed to add, one could expect that from a university professor in mathematic logics. This knowledge and skills are important in ongoing efforts of balancing OSCE dimensions and activities. As a matter of fact, we feel that the program of the Bulgarian Chairmanship projects very good potentials for the most appropriate balance between our three dimensions, as well as between follow-up of decisions adopted during very successful Dutch Chairmanship on one side and some new possibilities on another.

We would like to highlight one of these possibilities presented by Minister Passy. It is a comprehensive approach to education in general, especially education for the tolerance and human rights. This is certainly not a topic easy to handle. It cannot bring achievable and measurable results in a short term. It is arguably an expensive and complex exercise. But, on the other hand, it is difficult to imagine better investment on the long run in conflict prevention and democracy building than education for tolerance and human rights. As Minister Passy underlined himself, education is an excellent tool in “empowering individuals and groups” in order to help them to solve problems they are facing. In addition, this issue clearly concerns all our societies. It was also highlighted as a crucial aspect in the follow-up activities after several conferences we had last year on various aspects of combating discrimination. Therefore, we congratulate our Bulgarian colleagues for their brave decision to select this topic and we stand ready to work together in exploring possibilities how this approach could be successful and effective.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, we would like to underline how pleased we are to see our friendly neighbor Bulgaria, in the driving seat of the OSCE. The success of the Bulgarian transition in the last decade is, in our view, an excellent guarantee for the successful conducting of the OSCE machine. We also warmly welcome Slovenia as a new Troika member. We are confident that during the Bulgarian chairmanship and beyond the OSCE would know very well how to recognize real needs of the region of the South East Europe. Mr. Minister, we wish You and Your dedicated team in Vienna, which is so skillfully led by Ambassador Petrov, all good luck in 2004.