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Preface

Romania has the privilege and the responsibility of chairing the OSCE at a crossroad in its evolution. Central to our efforts is the need to promote a reflection process on ways to consolidate our Organization, strengthen its efficiency and core tasks, and provide new ways and areas for co-operation and for the improvement of working methods. The OSCE is a work in progress. The reflection process initiated by our Chairmanship needs to be continued and supported by the tradition of research and analytical insight offered by publications like the OSCE Yearbook, edited since 1995 by the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg (IFSH). The objective overview offered by academic analysis contributes to increasing the visibility of the OSCE as an integral part of the European security system.

Emerging in the 1970s as a comprehensive diplomatic process, the OSCE today has a unique role within the highly complex security framework that has evolved since the end of the Cold War. The OSCE is as instrumental as ever. It has successfully met new security challenges by carrying out its traditional tasks including early warning, conflict prevention, post-conflict rehabilitation, the human dimension, arms control and confidence- and security-building measures. Its security doctrine has a broad thrust offering concrete and lasting solutions by holding equally important the political, military, economic and human dimensions. OSCE values are anchored in the belief that each participating State should function according to a system of common democratic values. Sound stability and security can only be achieved through the wide practice of democracy. Thus, the ultimate goal of our Organization is to improve the life of each and every citizen of the OSCE community.

It is often said that the vulnerability of the Organization comes from its rather broad operational area, encompassing both a transatlantic and a Euro-Asian dimension. We believe this quality makes the OSCE unique and creates the opportunity to build a common and broad European space based on the principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

The current position of the OSCE essentially stems from its active search for a model of co-operation between different organizations in order to create the necessary conditions for achieving sound security and stability. This co-operation is based on the principles of synergy and complementarity. The OSCE can be particularly helpful in sounding early warnings and in defusing conflicts, while pushing hard for democratization and respect for human rights.

There is a strong focus within the OSCE on the promotion of human rights. However, political stability cannot take root in economically impoverished

countries. The economic divide is our greatest threat to security and stability. More imagination and flexibility is necessary on our part to promote economic growth.

As Chair-in-Office we have tried to get over general statements and take concrete steps in making the OSCE an effective European security organization.

I use this occasion to praise the efforts of the IFSH and of all others who have brought their contributions to this volume, thus making the OSCE more visible. This is a worthy and a much-needed endeavour.