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## Approaching Four Decades – What the Serbian Chairmanship Wishes to Achieve in the OSCE’s Jubilee Year

In December 2011, a unique Ministerial Council decision was adopted, paving the way for two countries, Switzerland and Serbia, to lead the OSCE in 2014 and 2015 in a concerted manner. It would be fair to say that this unprecedented bid aroused curiosity, or even concern, among many about how the two states, usually perceived as different in many regards, would function throughout consecutive Chairmanships. On the one hand, Switzerland, which has already held the Organization’s Chairmanship, is widely known as an influential country with abundant resources and expertise, and longstanding experience and an excellent reputation in international affairs. By contrast, Serbia is a country with a difficult and painful recent history that has implemented reform processes with substantial assistance from the OSCE. Nevertheless, a decision was taken to respond to the challenges involved and, through joint engagement and close co-operation, to invest the necessary effort for the benefit of the Organization. The solid partnership established by Switzerland and Serbia could serve as an example and perhaps a model for the future. In the spirit of constructive partnership, the two countries developed a two-year Joint Workplan, another novelty that will bring much-needed continuity to the OSCE activities.

For Serbia, the Chairmanship is probably the most demanding multilateral exercise it has ever undertaken. The Organization and its agenda are extremely complex. Throughout its four decades, the CSCE/OSCE has served as an arena where the interests of participating States have clashed in an effort to build a more secure and friendly environment in the vast area from Vancouver to Vladivostok. Solutions have always had to be found through painstaking negotiations aimed at reaching consensus. At this point in time, the complexities are enormous, and Serbia and its diplomatic abilities will be seriously tested.

During 2014 and 2015, important anniversaries will be marked of historic events whose origins lay in the heart of Europe, and which had unprecedented consequences for the destiny of humankind. This year is the centennial of the First World War, while 2015 marks the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. The past should never be forgotten, particularly the victims of the wars; we should draw lessons from it for the future so as to overcome misperceptions, dispel illusions, and avoid mistakes, while aiming to achieve greater stability, security, and prosperity, both within our societies and states, but also collectively among states and within international organizations, including the OSCE.

Next year will also mark 40 years since the adoption of the Helsinki Final Act – a document which, after the Charter of the United Nations, is perhaps the most significant in modern political history. This anniversary should be used as an opportunity to reform the Organization through the Helsinki +40 Process.

Switzerland and Serbia placed this process and its successful completion at the top of their priorities for their 2014/2015 consecutive Chairmanships. In the Helsinki +40 Road Map, which the two countries presented together with Ukraine during the Kyiv Ministerial Council in December 2013, the following overall goals of the process were detailed:

- To reaffirm and move closer to the vision of a free, democratic, common, and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok, rooted in agreed principles, shared commitments, and common goals, as expressed at the Astana Summit;
- To maximize the OSCE's role as the world's largest and most inclusive regional security organization under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter;
- To contribute to enhancing trust and confidence, to achieve progress in solving the protracted conflicts in the OSCE area, and to promote reconciliation among participating States, thereby seeking to achieve the goal of equal and indivisible security for all participating States;
- To enhance the visibility and effectiveness of the OSCE as a unique platform for co-operation, comprehensive dialogue, and transparency, as well as a framework for common action to effectively meet the challenges of the 21st century and increase the security of the OSCE area;
- To achieve tangible progress in the implementation of OSCE commitments in all three dimensions.

During its Chairmanship, Serbia will strive to promote an open and sincere dialogue on problems and challenges that we are facing, with a view to agreeing on common framework that could guide the Organization in the future. That, however, will be very difficult under the present circumstances.

The OSCE is currently confronted with one of the biggest crises in its history. The Ukrainian situation has opened up a number of vital questions for wider European security. It is necessary to invest all possible efforts in addressing it, with a view to reconsolidating relations within the entire OSCE region.

Comprehensive activities carried out by all OSCE executive structures and the Swiss Chairmanship in Ukraine proved the relevance of the OSCE. These steps could provide a starting point for discussions about the future role of the Organization. It is also obvious that the decision to establish and dispatch the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) to Ukraine is the most important step towards the de-escalation of this crisis. Despite many serious

problems, including the taking of SMM members hostage, the presence of international monitors on the ground is of paramount importance. The very fact that consensus was achieved on the deployment of the SMM is the best example of a constructive role the OSCE can play in crisis situations.

As the incoming Chairmanship, we will invest all our efforts in strengthening the OSCE's role in this regard. In view of its own experience, Serbia is a firm proponent of stronger OSCE presences on the ground. The OSCE field presences continue to provide exceptional added value, and have a significant potential to assist participating States in fulfilling their commitments.

Serbia will naturally pay particular attention to its own region, the Western Balkans, during its Chairmanship. This part of Europe faced serious problems for many years, including wars, ethnic conflict, sanctions, foreign intervention, human suffering, and serious violations of human rights. Today, the situation has fundamentally changed for the better, and Serbia and the other Western Balkans countries are dedicated to further accelerating their European integration processes and to substantive regional co-operation. Because of the painful legacy, additional efforts are required to improve stability and prosperity in the region. In a way, the entrusting of the OSCE Chairmanship to Serbia is also a tribute to the region and its future. Particular attention will be devoted to reconciliation as part of the conflict rehabilitation phase in terms defined by OSCE documents and as a concept advanced by the Swiss and Serbian Chairmanships.

Our Organization still has an important role to play in the Western Balkans. Despite the improved situation in the region, we are convinced that there are more opportunities for enhanced horizontal co-operation among OSCE missions on the ground. We also believe that lessons we have learned could be of assistance to other regions in the OSCE area, and we would be ready to establish region-to-region co-operation, including possible exchange of experience to improve practical performances on the ground.

Unfortunately, there are still a number of unresolved questions in the OSCE area. The Serbian Chairmanship will continue to support all agreed formats established to resolve the protracted conflicts. It is obvious that the current Ukrainian crisis has an impact on some of these. In this context, our intention is to make additional efforts to keep regular sessions of the various negotiating formats on track and to remove impediments to their functioning. In carrying out these tasks, we attach particular importance to the work of the Special Representatives of the Chairman-in-Office. It is obvious, however, that regardless of our Organization's efforts, ideas, or proposals, the main responsibility lies with the parties involved. From our own experience, we can amply confirm this. Given the prevailing circumstances, we believe that perhaps some smaller but concrete steps could improve trust and confidence among parties, thus opening the way to tackle substantive problems.

We will continue to work on strengthening the OSCE's capacities and mechanisms to actively respond in all phases of the conflict cycle, from early warning to post-conflict rehabilitation and reconciliation, and to achieve concrete results in terms of stabilizing situations on the ground. In view of the experiences of the Western Balkans, it is evident that concrete and sustainable solutions can only be reached through constructive political action and dialogue. Hence, the OSCE needs to renew and systematize its efforts to strengthen mediation activities. In this regard, the significance of political will as a factor in the success of mediation efforts cannot be emphasized enough.

The OSCE's comprehensive and co-operative approach to security is one of its major assets, and its cross-dimensionality is its key strength and comparative advantage. In that regard, far more attention should be devoted to our youth, their needs and desires. During 2015, therefore, Serbia will propose to work on an Action Plan on Youth and Security from a cross-dimensional perspective, thus putting the "youth dimension" high on the OSCE agenda in a more systematic and creative way.

Serbia's Chairmanship also intends to continue to promote policies aimed at combating trafficking in human beings and to pursue the development of an OSCE gender equality implementation strategy with the goal of further enhancing gender mainstreaming and the implementation of all relevant gender-related commitments, including UN Security Council Resolution 1325. The concept of good governance goes beyond the second dimension and needs to be extended and considered from the cross-dimensional perspective.

The Swiss-Serbian Joint Workplan places the Organization's relations with civil society high on the OSCE agenda for 2014 and 2015. The aim is to strengthen and improve co-operation with civil society and think-tanks in each of dimensions. The activities already carried out by the recently established OSCE Academic Network are commendable, and Serbia's Chairmanship will support their contribution to the work of the Organization as a whole.

In the Astana Commemorative Declaration, the participating States recalled their common vision that comprehensive and lasting security is not possible without respect for human rights and democratic standards. Recognizing that the inherent dignity of the individual is at the core of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security, Serbia and Switzerland agreed in the Joint Workplan to further update and strengthen the implementation of all OSCE human dimension commitments, enhancing links with civil society and promoting its active involvement, and following up the process of reviewing human dimension events and strengthening OSCE monitoring instruments in this area. At the same time, numerous challenges in implementation of our common commitments still exist.

Consequently, additional efforts should be invested in the implementation of human dimension commitments in many areas, such as the rule of law, freedom of expression, and freedom of the media. Specific issues include the protection of journalists, freedom of assembly, the protection of rights of persons belonging to national minorities, and tolerance and non-discrimination. We also see the value in strengthening national institutions for the protection of human rights, thus ensuring progress towards better implementation of our commitments.

In this context, it is important to emphasize the role that OSCE institutions play in assisting participating States to implement their commitments. The role of these institutions is indispensable, and the necessary conditions should therefore be created for them to carry out their functions. In these times of constant and rapid change in our societies, when many participating States are facing a range of new challenges, only strong, independent, and professional institutions with sound financial and human resources can help us properly address these issues. We must jointly work towards overcoming divisions and mistrust, despite the existence of divergent views on the work of some OSCE institutions. As the incoming Chairmanship, Serbia will continue the work of reviewing human dimension events, believing that these issues should be addressed within the Helsinki +40 Process, with the clear aim of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Organization, as well as strengthening the human dimension.

In pursuing these goals, the 2015 Chairmanship will co-operate with other international organizations. The Council of Europe (CoE) is one of the OSCE's main partners in the human dimension. We will therefore proceed with the practice introduced by our Swiss colleagues and establish close co-operation with Belgium and Bosnia and Herzegovina as the countries that will chair the CoE Committee of Ministers in 2015. We will also invest additional efforts in broadening co-operation with our Asian and Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation.

Traditional topics pertaining to the second dimension, such as transport and labour migration, will remain on the agenda and in the daily work of the relevant OSCE structures in 2015. The same applies to other issues, such as efforts to combat corruption and money laundering, which are priorities of the Serbian government as well. We also believe that advancing co-operation in water governance would contribute to addressing other environmental issues and represent an effective follow-up to the OSCE's efforts in the area of disaster risk reduction with respect to water management. This topic will have strategic importance for the Organization in the years to come, and deserves serious consideration from a range of perspectives.

The implementation of commitments undertaken within the framework of the politico-military dimension is a key means of ensuring stability, transparency, and confidence among the OSCE participating States.

Arms control and confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) remain vital means of improving security in the OSCE area. Compliance with the principles and obligations stemming from relevant documents and their consistent implementation remains essential.

Serbia is committed to continuing a comprehensive dialogue within the OSCE in order to maintain military stability, predictability, and transparency, by updating and modernizing the Vienna Document, strengthening and implementing the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security and the OSCE Documents on Small Arms and Light Weapons and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition.

Although the current situation is not conducive to moving forward on many of these issues, we believe that we have to continue with our deliberations, including by creating opportunities for the exchange of views on conventional arms control and CSBMs. Such discussions should be co-ordinated with related activities and possibly Helsinki +40 developments; they should seek to create added value and avoid duplication with other formats. As a platform for dialogue, the OSCE should be used as a framework for discussions on many different issues, including those where no agreement currently exists.

Serbia will also pursue discussions on Security Sector Governance/Reform (SSG/R). The establishment of the Group of Friends of SSG/R in the OSCE is a key first step towards more structured debate. In that regard, Serbia and other members of the Group will gradually develop a more systematic approach, taking into account lessons learned and sharing experiences and best practices.

The world today is characterized by new challenges, risks, and threats of a transnational character. These threats, which include terrorism, organized crime, and drug trafficking, require co-ordinated action from the participating States. In this regard, the Organization, realizing the importance of countering transnational threats, undertook significant steps in recent years through the adoption of relevant decisions, the exchange of experiences and best practices, and the establishment of co-operation between competent institutions of the participating States, as well as academic institutions.

Given the evolving nature of these threats and the need for constant monitoring and adjustment of responses, the Serbian Chairmanship is planning to carry out a number of activities in this field. We intend to deal with transnational challenges and threats from a cross-dimensional perspective. It is not possible to treat negative phenomena such as corruption and illegal migration in isolation. The best strategy for countering them also includes activities such as strengthening democratic institutions.

We will continue the practice of previous Chairmanships by organizing regular events in the field of transnational threats. This is an area where the cross-dimensional approach of the OSCE shows its full potential. Countering organized crime, terrorism, and drug trafficking is of paramount importance

for the entire OSCE region. With our focus on the youth of the OSCE area, we intend to address these issues in part from the perspective of prevention and the protection of our young population.

In the context of transnational threats, but also in many other areas, it is particularly important to co-operate with other relevant international organizations in a co-ordinated and complementary manner. The OSCE should find a niche in which it can act and continue to develop its capacities to respond to new challenges and threats. A good example in this regard is the OSCE's pioneering work on confidence-building measures in the field of cyber-security.

If we wish to achieve our goals and move closer to the vision of a free, democratic, common, and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Euro-Asian security community while also improving the role of the OSCE as the largest and most inclusive regional security organization under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, we have to work on rebuilding trust and confidence among participating States. This process is equally important on the ground, where devoted representatives of the OSCE implement their mandates with dedication and courage; in the Permanent Council in Vienna, where key decisions have to be adopted; and in the capitals of participating States, where the political will needs to be generated. That is the foundation on which Serbia wishes to carry out its Chairmanship activities and perhaps the recipe for success. It is also the essence of the Helsinki +40 Process, which depends on all 57 participating States. The incoming Serbian Chairmanship is ready to lead this process in order to strengthen the visibility and effectiveness of the OSCE and to increase security and stability from Vancouver to Vladivostok.