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

Basel, 4 December 2014

Mr. Chairperson,
Secretary General,
President of the Parliamentary Assembly,
Ladies and gentlemen,

We should like to thank the Swiss Chairmanship for the choice of topic for today's discussion. The Euro-Atlantic region is experiencing a serious crisis, and it is vital to find a way out of it. A way forward can only be found together, and only if we draw the right conclusions from the lessons of the past. All of our experience in recent years demonstrates that unilateral approaches and the failure to recognize mistakes will not get us anywhere.

When we met in Kyiv a year ago, the Ukrainian drama could have been prevented and a balance found between the legitimate interests of Ukraine both in the east and in the west. At the time, however, Brussels flatly rejected a trilateral process involving Ukraine, the European Union and Russia, in essence demanding that Kyiv disregard its commitments under the Free Trade Agreement of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Our Western colleagues even went on to support the anti-constitutional *coup d'état* and undermine the sovereignty of Ukraine, closing their eyes to the division of society, to the violent actions of ultra-nationalists intent on imposing their ideology on the entire Ukrainian people. The agreement of 21 February proclaiming the goal of national unity was trampled upon literally the following day. An offensive began against the rights of minorities, primarily ethnic Russians, their language, religion and heroes, and against European values and culture.

Another attempt was made to overcome the internal Ukrainian crisis and achieve national unity with the adoption of the Geneva Joint Statement by the European Union, Russia, Ukraine and the United States of America on 17 April, in which Kyiv committed to immediately begin "inclusive, transparent and accountable" constitutional reform with the participation of all of the country's regions and political constituencies. This has still not happened. Incidentally, the Swiss Chairmanship proposed translating the Geneva Joint Statement into the language of the OSCE road map, but the United States of America, the European Union and Ukraine refused.

Today, all hopes are pinned on the realization of the Minsk agreements reached between the Kyiv authorities and the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk with the active

assistance of the OSCE and Russia. Now our military experts, invited by President Poroshenko, are helping the parties to the conflict to finalize agreement on the line of separation and practical measures for the withdrawal of heavy armaments. This will make it possible to deploy monitors from the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) between the positions of the parties.

The next steps must be to re-establish socio-economic infrastructural ties, relieve the terrible humanitarian situation, complete the exchange of hostages and begin a truly political process in the context of the long-promised nationwide dialogue – this goal is also stated in the Minsk agreements.

Russia has consistently supported the Minsk process and advocates its continuation. Attempts to shift negotiations to different formats without the participation of representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk are counter-productive and unacceptable. Only direct dialogue between the Ukrainian parties can produce a result. The Minsk agreements cannot be allowed to suffer the same fate as the agreement of 21 February and the Geneva Joint Statement.

Of particular importance for the re-building of trust and for national reconciliation will be an honest and open investigation into all crimes, including the tragedies on the Maidan, in Odessa and Mariupol and the Malaysia Airlines disaster.

The OSCE, which has assumed the important function of providing external support in finding a settlement to the Ukrainian crisis through the deployment of the SMM and participation in the Contact Group, must intensify its efforts in all these areas.

The way events are developing gives the OSCE a unique opportunity to take even more initiative in overcoming negative trends in the Euro-Atlantic region and to work out a positive agenda that rests on the Helsinki principles in their entirety.

What is happening in Ukraine is the result of a systemic crisis in the OSCE region that has been brewing for a long time. Its roots lie in an inability to ensure true unity in the Euro-Atlantic area on the basis of recognition of the equal rights of all participating States, respect for the legitimate interests of each of them, and non-intervention in internal affairs.

The construction of this “European House” has been consistently undermined by unilateral actions: NATO expansion, the creation of United States anti-missile defence facilities in Europe, the aggressive promotion of the concept of Eastern Partnership while refusing to even recognize Eurasian integration, and the erection of artificial barriers to contacts between people.

We believe that attempts to show that only NATO and the European Union have a monopoly on the truth and that it is only possible to achieve security and prosperity within their ranks are harmful. According to this logic, the OSCE should be closed down. Russia does not agree with this.

We support the use of the Helsinki+40 process not only to reaffirm the 1975 consensus, but also to make it a reality.

For this, we need to focus our efforts on removing dividing lines in all three of the OSCE dimensions.

In the first basket, we must ensure in practice the indivisibility of politico-military security. Nobody should ensure their own security at the expense of the security of others. This principle has been proclaimed in solemn declarations but it remains a dead letter.

In the second basket, we must seriously work on “integrating integration”, the creation of a single economic space from the Atlantic to the Pacific, which would encompass not only the members of the European Union, the Eurasian Economic Union and the European Free Trade Association, but also all the other OSCE participating States on a shared platform of World Trade Organization norms and principles.

In the third basket, we must finally fulfil the commitments to ensure freedom of movement, protect the rights of ethnic minorities and end all intolerance.

The OSCE should become a tool for finding collective responses to the challenges we all face, including the “fires” burning to the south of our region. The worsening threats include the situation of Christians in the Middle East and North Africa. The OSCE already addresses the problems of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. We are convinced that anti-Christian sentiment is no less worthy of our attention.

To be effective the OSCE must become a fully fledged international organization with clear rules that stimulate collective action through consensus building.

It is extremely important to base our actions on an objective and professional analysis of the challenges we face. We welcome the Swiss Chairmanship’s proposal to establish a Panel of Eminent Persons to develop recommendations on responses to security challenges in all dimensions. We trust that this proposal will be approved in the Declaration on Further Steps in the Helsinki+40 Process, which should express our determination to move forward.

I should like to highlight one more priority – the Declaration on the Seventieth Anniversary of the End of the Second World War, the aim of which is to pay tribute to the memory of the heroic deeds of those who defeated fascism and Nazism and to prevent a revival of hateful ideologies.

In conclusion, I should like once again to pay tribute to the Swiss Chairmanship, which has fulfilled its function in a laudable manner in very difficult circumstances, and wish our Serbian colleagues every success in 2015.

Thank you.