

MC.DEL/21/06
4 December 2006

Original: Russian

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

As prepared for delivery

**Address of Mr. Sergey V. Lavrov
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation
Before the 14th Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council
(Brussels, December 4, 2006)**

Mr. Chairman,

Let me also join others in expressing gratitude to the Belgian Chairmanship in Office team headed by the Minister Karel De Gucht for the kind hospitality and excellent organization of our meeting.

I would like to use this opportunity to congratulate our colleagues on the occasion of the 175th Anniversary of the Kingdom of Belgium.

We note the active work of the Belgian Chairmanship in Office, which despite some difficulties has been able to approach the current CFM session with impressive results, especially regarding the volume and the number of prepared draft documents.

Such deliberations over draft documents provide some additional food for thought regarding the essence of the OSCE in its present form. Our conclusion is that efforts to revive the original inherent function of the Organization, as one of the main forums for dialogue and decision-making on truly relevant issues of Pan European security in all their dimensions have, unfortunately, failed so far.

“The First Basket” has been virtually empty for a long time. There were times when the military-political dimension represented the *raison d`être* of the CSCE/OSCE. The OSCE Forum for Security Cooperation has developed several useful draft decisions of our Ministerial Meeting pertaining to small arms and light weapons and promoting implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1540 on Non-Proliferation. Overall, however, work programs in the military-political area are becoming weaker year by year, and are being reduced to irrelevant topics.

Recently Russia presented to the Forum several new confidence-building and security related initiatives with a view to adapting this framework to new trends in the development of military capability. We hope that our partners would pay due attention to these proposals.

Currently there is a critical situation with the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe. Year after year our partners have failed to implement the key Istanbul Commitment,

i.e. the early ratification of the CFE Treaty Adaptation Agreement. The political stance of NATO member-states is aimed at preventing entry into force of this Agreement, brings into question the viability of the Treaty itself.

We have managed to somewhat revitalize the OSCE's second – economic – dimension. That has been a major achievement of the Belgian Chairmanship; in a larger context, however, a difficult search for a niche appropriate for the OSCE in the system of European, and universal economic interaction mechanisms is also underway.

Against the backdrop of the situation in the First and Second Baskets, the imbalance in the OSCE's activities is ever more contrasting. In these activities the absolute “center of gravity” has been shifted to the humanitarian and human rights area. Here the OSCE tries to tackle it all at once: from monitoring of elections to countering trafficking, and sexual exploitation of children. The importance of these issues and the general relevance of human rights and humanitarian issues for our countries are indisputable. However, given the multidimensional and comprehensive approach of this Organization to security, the OSCE cannot and must not be involved exclusively in the “human dimension”. In such a case, it will not be the kind of OSCE that had brought us all together in its time.

There are two options available to us. Either we indeed come to grips with correcting imbalances in OSCE functioning, and Russia has insistently urged to do so for a long time; or we legitimize the *status-quo* and, accordingly, rename the OSCE into, for example, the “Organization on Humanitarian Issues”. And our countries would then make their own decisions on either to join such an organization or not.

We want to see the OSCE being an effective Organization relevant to all the participating countries. We will support the OSCE's work in countering new threats and challenges in every possible way. In general, this work is proceeding reasonably well. We have managed to prepare several relevant decisions for the Ministerial. I would like to single out the Russian-US initiative on convening an OSCE conference on Partnership of States, Civil Society and the Business Community in Combating Terrorism in 2007. We welcome the intention of Spain to make countering terrorism a priority of its OSCE Chairmanship in 2007.

The OSCE might also become more prominent in countering the drug trafficking threat. CSTO member-countries have submitted the relevant draft decision. We propose to organize in 2007 a joint OSCE and UNODC conference at the level of experts on countering trafficking of drugs.

In sum, the work is cut out for our Organization. The question is, to what extent our participating countries are inclined to make it really efficient.

We are all 'owners' of the OSCE; and it would look strange some of us were satisfied with certain OSCE structures being “independent” from member-states. Especially when such structures try not so much at being helpers to states in resolving problems in the spirit of cooperation, but rather strive to play a role of some kind of “a supranational comptroller.”

The principles of democratic development and fundamental human rights are universal, while national ways of implementing them are always different. Only subject to the unconditional respect of the principle of equality of states without any attempts to “discipline” anyone or to “raise” anyone to some models not approved by consensus the OSCE could continue to be relevant. There has never been an agreement between us to divide OSCE participants into different categories. There are no resolutions based on which one could “grade” candidates for the OSCE Chairmanship. We reiterate our support for the candidacy of Kazakhstan for the OSCE Chairmanship in Office.

A culture of cooperation on the basis of mutual respect and the search for generally acceptable solutions must be revived in the OSCE. And very little could be achieved without a continued OSCE reform. Although some results have been achieved in the implementation of the Ljubljana Reform Road Map, there are still strata of issues that remain untouched. This includes streamlining of the OSCE institutes and field missions activities, development of its Statute and imposing improvement in the budget planning, and project implementation, including extra-budgetary projects. By and large, the OSCE reform is only in its initial phase. Failing its continuation, the Organization is doomed to decay and to being displaced to the periphery of the European affairs.

All too often the OSCE takes decisions of a declarative nature or acts as if it “accedes” to something that is implemented in a more efficient and systematic manner by other international organizations.

Such duplication and parallelism is a luxury we cannot afford, especially given our limited resources.

Reforming of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) activities especially in the area of election monitoring would of course have to continue. What we suggest is a simple and seemingly obvious thing – to adopt an ODIHR regulatory framework based on the principles of equal treatment of all member-states, transparency and professionalism in performing monitoring, as well as of depolitization of final assessments.

Unfortunately, we have to state that the relevant paragraphs of the voluminous ODIHR Report submitted to our Ministerial Meeting fail to provide adequate answers to numerous concerns repeatedly brought to the Office's attention. And the overall tonality of the report is rather surprising – we are informed that everything is fine as far as the Office's work is

concerned, and nothing, or almost nothing, should be changed, and if anybody is underperforming, then the member-states are to blame because they should provide more reports.

Of course, the laws of quite a few countries represented here do not provide for inviting international observers to monitor elections and in a number of instances international monitoring is directly prohibited. It is necessary to bridge this gap, but most importantly, it is high time to finally to put the ODIHR activities on a collectively agreed basis.

We propose to establish a task force of member-states' representatives, which would engage in developing proposals on the ODIHR reform.

The OSCE is still used as a vehicle for advancing one-sided politicized approaches to resolving certain "frozen" conflicts, which have nothing to do with real efforts aimed at their lasting settlement. The experience shows that such actions could only lead to escalation of tensions and distrust, and set back the settlement. One should not substitute some simplistic ideas for the need to seek implementation the of parties' commitments.

We should all be guided by the fundamental principles of the settlement of regional conflicts, and fundamental approaches. These include: respect for the Helsinki Final Act; achieving agreements by parties conflicts themselves; unconditional consideration each party's positions; the inadmissibility of power-based options; bona fide consideration of existing negotiating and peace-building arrangements; phased settlement, implying a priority to measures aimed at confidence-building and establishment of a dialogue between the sides; taking care of civilians in the conflict area, so that they do not feel isolated.

There can only be one conclusion: the reform of all key aspects of the Organization's activities is needed. A condensed version of our Program is presented in the recent Appeal of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. We are prepared for constructive interaction with all our partners in the interests of bringing the OSCE out of its protracted crisis, which is increasingly dangerous for the Organization itself.