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

Kyiv, 5 December 2013

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

First of all, I should like to thank our Ukrainian partners for the excellent organization of the Ministerial Council and for their cordial welcome and hospitality. I am glad to see in this hall ministerial colleagues who understand the particular importance of our joint work at this level in the OSCE format. It is already the second time that a participating State of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) has chaired our Organization, and, in our view, the work of our Ukrainian colleagues, just like the work of our colleagues from Kazakhstan before them, deserves the highest appreciation.

I recall that during Kazakhstan's Chairmanship in 2010 the OSCE Summit in Astana adopted a decision on the formation of a "security community" free of dividing lines, the significance of which it is difficult to overestimate. Today, as I understand, we are gathered here to discuss what we have managed to achieve in the three years that have elapsed since then.

Unfortunately, there is no significant progress to report.

Dividing lines in the OSCE area have not diminished. In the trade and economic sphere, attempts are being made to create an artificial watershed between integration processes in the European Union (EU) and Eurasia following the logic "with us or against us". In the politico-military field, NATO is refusing to co-operate with the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). As for human contacts, visa barriers remain intact in violation of the commitments to ensure freedom of movement.

Nevertheless, we are convinced that the OSCE can play a substantial role in harmonizing integration processes, strengthening trust in the politico-military sphere, building a pan-European system of equal and indivisible security, and levelling out the humanitarian space. After all, the Organization was in fact originally created among other things to remove dividing lines of any kind.

The 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act is two years away. Under the Ukrainian Chairmanship, a fairly successful start has been made, in my view, to the Helsinki+40 process, and it is essential to make every effort to ensure that it culminates in the agreement by 2015 of a conceptual strategic document identifying on a system-wide basis a course for the harmonious development of co-operation in all three dimensions of security and for eliminating the obvious imbalances in the OSCE's activities that hinder this.

The difficult situation as regards "hard security" has been triggered by a regression into bloc-based thinking and attempts, in violation of existing commitments, to ensure individual security at the expense of the security of others. We have for a long time been firmly advocating the meticulous observance of the principle of the indivisibility of security, which has been proclaimed by all of us at the highest level and without which it is impossible to resolve the tasks facing the OSCE. A priority step to that end is strengthening confidence in the politico-military sphere. We also regard as extremely useful the initiative to update the Principles Governing Non-Proliferation, a new version of which we are going to approve in the course of this ministerial meeting.

Naturally, we are all alarmed by the challenges emanating from the OSCE's neighbouring regions, first and foremost Afghanistan and the southern Mediterranean. These challenges include terrorism, the drug trade, transborder crime, uncontrolled migration, the danger posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, illegal arms deliveries to conflict zones, cybercrime, piracy, natural and man-made disasters, extremism and interreligious tensions.

The declaration on Afghanistan that has been submitted to our meeting and the actual course of its discussion remind us of the urgent need to find common approaches to external threats. In view of the possibilities and place of the OSCE in the efforts to help normalize the situation in Afghanistan, we will be willing to support the resumption of the project to train law enforcement officers from that country and the countries of Central Asia at the training centre of the Russian Ministry of the Interior in Domodedovo.

Strategic documents were adopted in the OSCE last year on combating the drug trade, on counter-terrorism and on police-related activities. Now we have reached an agreement on confidence-building measures in the use of information and communication technologies, which, I might add, was further evidence of the usefulness of pooling the efforts of Russia and the United States of America. The practical implementation of all these documents needs to be ensured. We are in favour of the OSCE conferences on combating drug trafficking and on counter-terrorism being held on an annual basis.

There are still a number of regional problems in the OSCE area. Thank God, none of them are in a hot phase, but there are any number of long-standing conflict situations. The oldest – in Northern Ireland and Cyprus – have been going on for decades. The situation in Kosovo remains tense, as was confirmed by the recent local elections, which have finally been completed successfully. We hope now that any reasons for opposing the formation of an association of Serb municipalities will cease to exist. We support the dialogue on the Transdniestrian settlement within the "5+2" negotiation format, and it seems to me that it has proven possible to agree on a very useful document, which will be adopted in the course of this meeting. Together with the other Co-Chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group – France and the United States – we continue to work towards a rapprochement in the positions of the parties as regards the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict on the basis of the principles proposed by

the Presidents of the three States. The Geneva Discussions on stability and security in the Trans-Caucasus remain an important stabilizing factor.

I should like once again to draw attention to the initiative that we proposed back in 2009 of developing basic principles of conflict prevention and crisis management in the OSCE. For all the nuances, particular features and specifics of each conflict, there are basic elements that cannot be ignored in the approach to any specific crisis. These arguments, which are based both on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and on OSCE documents, were set out in the draft that we distributed four years ago. That document remains on the negotiating table, and we are confident that its adoption would send a very important signal.

A single economic space from the Atlantic to the Pacific is a prerequisite for the foundation of the “security community” architecture. The Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin, has proposed that a strategic task of this kind be undertaken. The President of the European Commission, Mr. José Manuel Barroso, has made similar remarks. In our view, the OSCE has the capacity to help develop a common vision for moving towards this goal (establishing a single economic space from the Atlantic to the Pacific). This common vision should include collective action in the area of socio-economic rights and fighting unemployment, poverty and corruption. We are willing to share the experience of the Russian G20 Presidency and the expertise reflected in the agreements of the St. Petersburg summit on the co-ordination of steps aimed at ensuring economic growth, increasing employment, financing investments in the real sector of the economy and introducing advanced technologies.

Challenges associated with natural and man-made disasters and the removal of obstacles that hamper the delivery of international aid to disaster zones are something we all face. We are pleased that this topic, which we already advocated several years ago, is back on the OSCE’s agenda today.

We are willing to continue substantive discussion on energy security problems based on balanced consideration of the interests of exporters, importers and transit countries, with unconditional respect for existing commitments to protect investments and prevent any deterioration in the conditions for conducting business.

On 10 December it will be 65 years since the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Russia adheres to all the universal commitments agreed upon in the United Nations and the OSCE in this area and calls on all countries to implement them in full measure.

In order to build a “security community”, it is essential that the OSCE also observe the principle of the indivisibility of freedom in addition to the principle of the indivisibility of security. This means that States should not strengthen the rights of their citizens while limiting the freedoms and rights of citizens of other countries. Let me give you some examples.

We have been talking for a long time about freedom of movement and how the “Schengen barriers” are not in keeping with the commitments of the Helsinki Final Act on simplifying visa regimes. The EU regulation requiring candidate countries to introduce visas with respect to third countries runs contrary to the entire sense of the agreements underlying

our Organization. A recent study on freedom of movement prepared by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights pointed to the restrictive policy by Brussels, pressure on neighbouring countries with the aim of creating obstacles to entering the European Union, the application of an ethnic criterion in immigration control and the generally selective nature of visa requirements. Once again, we propose conducting an analysis within the framework of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) regarding the conformity of the visa laws of all participating States and EU legislation with OSCE commitments.

We cannot but mention the problem of Internet abuse. Last year, the OSCE rejected the Russian draft decision on non-interference in private life. A year has gone by, and we are already lagging behind because the United Nations General Assembly recently adopted a resolution on this very same subject. I believe our Organization should give some thought to its role in ensuring the rights of citizens in cyberspace.

I might add that this applies to the problem of the Internet on the whole. It is no secret that Russia advocates international regulation of the Internet. We have explained our position to those who oppose this. We fail to understand why radio frequencies are distributed by an intergovernmental organization, the International Telecommunication Union, while global Internet domains are assigned by a Californian corporation controlled by the United States Department of Commerce. In fact, the Internet is not a mass media outlet, like the press, radio or television, in which an editorial office serves as a mediator between a journalist and the audience and thus takes responsibility for its information product and in which everyone knows where this editorial office can be found. The Internet is a global business project and a means of communication by which the author and consumer of the content communicate directly.

The new realities of the media environment make it necessary to update the mandate of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, which was adopted back in 1997, when everything was completely different. Russia has submitted specific proposals on its amendment. We would ask that this proposal be examined. Among other things, this will help provide a better understanding of the role of journalists and the media in contemporary society.

Particular attention should be paid to ensuring the security of journalists in the performance of their professional duties and improving the relevant legal basis. The Russian Parliament is currently examining additional legislative acts in this area. We are primarily concerned about the increasing instances of violation of the rights of journalists working abroad, especially mass abductions of journalists, including citizens of many OSCE participating States, by extremist opposition groups in Syria. I am convinced that it is not in the interests of our Organization to remain indifferent to their fate.

We are in favour of greater attention being paid by the OSCE to the shameful phenomenon of trafficking in human beings. We advocate a comprehensive approach to this problem, including the trade in human organs and tissues. Trafficking in children is particularly perturbing. Recently, the operations of an online adoption exchange were exposed in one OSCE country that helped to illegally transfer adopted children to other families, frequently for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Is there anyone who could think that such criminal use of the Internet should be permissible under the banner of freedom of speech? Among other egregious facts are attempts to legalize child euthanasia in one

European country and the overt functioning of a paedophile club in another. All of these examples are challenges to moral foundations and the foundations of Christianity and other world religions. Humans will cease to be human if they stop respecting them.

The countries making up the OSCE have much in common in terms of history, traditions and culture. However, each of them also has its unique features, which reflect the richness and diversity of the world. It would be unforgivable to lose this priceless heritage. Attempts to adapt the OSCE area to the interests of a single group of countries through the aggressive imposition of neoliberal interpretations of human rights will ruin European civilization. An arrogant disregard for traditional values and moral norms – common to all of us and characteristic of every nation – is unacceptable.

We need to be more active and persistent in dealing with the task of improving the situation of national minorities, primarily the problem of mass statelessness in the European Union, where hundreds of thousands of people are deprived of the right to vote and to receive an education in their mother tongue. We call on the new OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Ms. Astrid Thors, to make sure that the recommendations adopted by her predecessors on eliminating this anomaly of statelessness on the territory of an enlightened Europe are implemented.

The condoning of attempts to rewrite history, glorify the Nazis and their henchmen and spread neo-Nazi and extremist ideas is incompatible with European culture. In marking its 40th anniversary in 2015 and the 70th anniversary of the victory in the Second World War, the OSCE should express its position clearly and concisely so as to be worthy of the memory of those who gave their lives for that most valuable asset – freedom and independence.

If the OSCE wants to strengthen its role and enhance its authority and relevance, it needs a firm foundation. The adoption of an OSCE Charter would make a key contribution to a package of Helsinki+40 agreements. It would be useful to make other aspects of OSCE reform an organic part of this package, including the implementation of commitments with respect to the principles governing the work of the field missions, an agreement on comprehensible and generally acceptable rules regarding ODIHR activities, especially election observation, and bringing order to extrabudgetary projects and methods of co-operation with non-governmental organizations. We cannot keep pretending forever that problems do not exist in these spheres.

We believe it important that the OSCE's activities are effectively situated, with account taken of the Organization's real potential, within the efforts of the entire international community, with the central co-ordinating role being played by the United Nations. We welcome the strengthening of the OSCE's links with the Council of Europe, the CSTO, the CIS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

Russia is open to constructive dialogue and joint work in all these areas in the interest of achieving consensus on the outcome of Helsinki+40 process. Once again we thank the Ukrainian Chairmanship for its contribution to our common cause and wish the incoming OSCE Chairmanships – Switzerland and Serbia – every success on this path.