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Permanent Delegation of the Republic of Belarus to the OSCE

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REPUBLIC OF BELARUS, AT THE OSCE ANNUAL SECURITY
REVIEW CONFERENCE**

Vienna, 24 June 2004

Mr. Co-ordinator,
Distinguished Conference Participants,

Allow me to express my satisfaction at having this opportunity to participate in the second OSCE Annual Security Review Conference. Last year's experience and discussions surely demonstrate the importance of holding this conference to discuss a wide range of security issues along with the role and place of the OSCE in the new European security architecture.

I should also like to thank today's speakers for their informative and stimulating statements.

This year's Annual Security Review Conference is taking place on the eve of the Istanbul Summit meeting of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) and NATO. Recently, however, because of the enlargement of NATO and the European Union, the role of our Organization in European security has become a secondary one.

We take the view that to date the OSCE remains the only comprehensive security organization in the Euro-Atlantic region, representing a unique forum for equitable co-operation and dialogue among 55 States, especially those which will not become members of other security associations in the foreseeable future.

In recent years, a number of important steps have been taken within the OSCE aimed at countering modern-day threats to security and stability, among other things through the adoption of a number of politico-military documents: the Charter for European Security, the OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century and the OSCE Documents on Small Arms and Light Weapons and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition.

In that context, it seems to us that there is no need at present for any new additional documents to be drafted. Today, we need to give thought to how we can improve existing

agreements, adapt them to new geopolitical realities and improve the practical approach to their implementation.

The foundation of today's European security system is arms control, key instruments of which are the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty), the Treaty on Open Skies and the Vienna Document 1999 of the Negotiations on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures.

Despite considerable progress in the implementation of many OSCE politico-military documents, the delay in ratification of the Agreement on Adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe continues to be a matter of serious concern. In our view, there are no objective reasons for this delay. This being so, our delegation once again calls on the States Parties to the CFE Treaty to ratify without delay the Agreement on Adaptation of the CFE Treaty. We hope that common sense will prevail over political ambitions, and that we will witness real progress in this area by the time we celebrate the OSCE's thirtieth anniversary.

Furthermore, there is a need to further develop confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) if we want to create fourth generation CSBMs that match the new level of relations between the OSCE participating States. These CSBMs could be developed both on the basis of the provisions of the Vienna Document 1999, which does not yet take into account the dynamic development of the participating States' armed forces, and also outside the scope of that document.

Obvious progress has been made in the implementation of the OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW). A year ago the Republic of Belarus was the first OSCE country to make use of the mechanism for the implementation of Section V and requested assistance from the OSCE with the disposal of SALW and better security for their storage. We are certain that successful co-operation in and elaboration and implementation of specific projects is in the interests of both Belarus and the OSCE. This first experience should confirm the ability of the OSCE to respond effectively and find solutions to specific problems regarding SALW security. We believe that not only the countries interested in receiving help but also potential donor countries need this confirmation today. In that connection, we are counting on more joint work and, for our part, are ready to do as much as we can to achieve this.

The OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons has been functioning fairly effectively for almost for four years now. During this time a large number of decisions were taken by the FSC, including the Best Practice Guide on various aspects of implementation; these decisions, in one degree or another, further developed the Guide and contributed to the fulfilment of a number of provisions. At the same time, a number of deficiencies and uncertainties have appeared in the implementation process. We feel that the time has come to give thought to taking an "inventory" of all existing decisions in this area and reviewing the implementation of the OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons, with a view, among other things, to its possible improvement. In that regard, we are bound to take into account the procedure and results of the review of the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects.

As you are no doubt aware, it is intended to hold a second meeting in New York in 2005 to review the implementation of the Programme, and a review conference is to be held in 2006. We believe that the result that could be achieved from an “inventory” of decisions and a review of the OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons will make it possible to preserve the leading position of our Organization in the fight against the illicit trafficking in SALW and will be a real contribution to the United Nations efforts at the global level.

Mr. Co-ordinator,

We are of the opinion that the problems of conventional ammunition, which affect every dimension of security, must remain a priority for the OSCE. Surplus ammunition presents a clear and direct threat not only to the countries with surpluses but also to their neighbours. We are pleased to note that three States have already requested assistance with the disposal of ammunition. Belarus requested assistance from the OSCE with the disposal of 99,000 tons of ammunition in March of this year, and we hope to receive a positive answer. A priority for us in this area is the disposal of more than 7,000 tons of ammunition containing hexogen, which presents the greatest danger in the context of the threat of international terrorism.

In order to impart additional momentum to this process, we propose that a meeting should be held within the framework of the Forum for Security Co-operation involving experts, donor countries and partner organizations to consider the entire range of issues connected with the requests by Belarus, Russia and Ukraine for assistance with the disposal of ammunition.

The new European security architecture would be unthinkable without its regional and subregional dimensions. In that context, I should like to mention the progress made in the area of regional and subregional confidence- and security-building measures. The development of CSBMs will objectively help to reduce the risk of misunderstandings or incorrect assessments of military activity and will also prevent military confrontation. The Republic of Belarus has reached agreements on additional CSBMs with Lithuania, Ukraine and Latvia. Negotiations with Poland are also in the final stage. We believe that Belarus's agreements with all its neighbours will make it possible to considerably strengthen security and increase transparency and predictability in Central and Eastern Europe.

In conclusion, I should like to note that the politico-military dimension is one of the most important components of pan-European security and the OSCE, something which calls for an increased role for the Forum for Security Co-operation within the Organization. In that connection, the Republic of Belarus is also ready to do all that it can to further develop the arms control system and confidence- and security-building measures on the European continent.

Thank you for your attention.