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**REPORT BY THE CHAIRPERSON
OF THE**

**CONTACT GROUP WITH THE
ASIAN PARTNERS FOR CO-OPERATION**

**TO THE
TWENTY-FOURTH MEETING OF THE
MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

REPORT BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE CONTACT GROUP WITH THE ASIAN PARTNERS FOR CO-OPERATION TO THE TWENTY-FOURTH MEETING OF THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

Germany is committed to strengthening and further developing the partnership of the OSCE with its Partners for Co-operation. During the Chairmanship of the Asian Contact Group in 2017, Germany supported the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship in its activities to promote an open and interactive dialogue between the OSCE participating States and the Asian Partners for Co-operation, following a demand-driven approach and responding to the interests and priorities of the Asian Partners.

Five meetings of the Asian Contact Group were held in Vienna during the course of the year, providing a valuable platform for information exchange, dialogue and sharing of best practices between the OSCE participating States and the Asian Partners for Co-operation.

The subjects of the five meetings were jointly selected by the German Asian Contact Group Chairmanship together with the Asian Partners in order to reflect the wide range of topics of interest to the individual Asian Partner countries and to support the priorities of the 2017 Austrian OSCE Chairmanship. Each meeting featured speakers from one of the Asian Partner countries as well as presentations on the chosen topics by experts from international organizations, academia and civil society.

At the first meeting of the Asian Contact Group, held on 26 April, Mr. Lee Jang-keun, Director-General for International Organizations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, made a presentation about the security situation on the Korean Peninsula in the light of recent developments and their implications for the OSCE region. He described North Korea as the imminent threat in East Asia, but also globally due to the complexity of challenges it poses to the international security system – such as nuclear threats, missile threats, as well as threats posed by chemical weapons, cyber-attacks, and human rights abuses. He pointed out that it takes the whole world to resolve the DPRK security threat, in which they expect full support of the international community, including the OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation by using the OSCE's comprehensive security approach and learning from the OSCE's experience of regional cooperation. Mr. Valere Mantels, Head of the UNSCR 1540 Support Team at the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) in New York, presented his report on the security threat posed by the DPRK. He noted how there has been a significant development in the missile program and chemical weapons program, and there is no insight as to how they adhere to the Biological Weapons Convention. He added that the real question is if some of these weapons might end up in the hands of non-state actors and terrorists. Ambassador Victoria Gonzalez-Roman, Permanent Representative of Spain to the OSCE and Co-chair of the OSCE Group of Friends of UN Security Council Resolution 1540, presented the perspective of the Group of Friends. She commended the work carried out by the OSCE to promote the implementation of UNSCR 1540 since 2009 by adopting relevant decisions at the Forum for Security Cooperation. Regional organizations have an important role to play, and OSCE participating States and Executive structures should join the Group and take part in its activities. Ambassador Brendon Hammer, Permanent Representative of Australia to the OSCE,

emphasized that there is a pressing need to stop further development of the DPRK nuclear programme, and noted how on 22 April the DPRK threatened to use nuclear weapons against Australia. He further stressed that DPRK is a global security threat setting a bad example at a global level. Finally, Ambassador Kiyoshi Koinuma of Japan noted that the situation on the Korean Peninsula is becoming increasingly tense. With regard to the development of the DPRK's missile program, he warned that if the DPRK managed to amount a warhead on a long range missile Europe would face an imminent security threat.

The main speaker at the second meeting of the Asian Contact Group, held on 9 June, Mr. Najibullah Alikhail, Director General of Security Co-operation and Border Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, delivered a presentation on empowering youth in countering violent extremism from the perspective of Afghanistan. He noted that violent extremism is no longer confined by borders, and that Islam was never used to provoke terrorism. The past four decades had been difficult for Afghanistan with the surge in terrorist activities. Afghanistan had a very youthful population and this topic was of great importance for the country as it poses a major challenge. He noted that among the reasons for the increase in youth involvement in violent extremism were poverty, frustration, and unemployment. He thanked the OSCE for their contribution to Afghanistan, and emphasized the importance of further cooperation and sharing of best practices in empowering youth in countering violent extremism. Ms. Rasa Ostrauskaite, OSCE Co-ordinator of Activities to address Transnational Threats, provided an update on the Department's activities. Dr. Nico Prucha of the University of Vienna offered a concise historical overview on the spread of historical Islamic writings, which have been used to exploit the peaceful nature of Islam. Finally, Mr. Hafizullah Saeedi, participant at a workshop on the role of youth in preventing violent extremism organized by the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship in Almaty, shared his experience with the participants.

The 2017 OSCE Asian Conference was held in Berlin, Germany, on 19 and 20 June. Co-organized by the Federal Foreign Office of Germany and the OSCE, the conference focused on confidence building in times of geopolitical changes, connectivity and regional economic co-operation, and the regional contribution to the sustainable development goals. The event provided a timely opportunity for OSCE participating States and Asian Partners for Co-operation to share ideas and experiences with a view to identifying avenues for specific co-operation. The three thematic sessions reflected the OSCE's three dimensions while incorporating discussions on current topics of particular concern. The first session focused on confidence building in times of geopolitical changes. Participants agreed that the current security environment presented risks but also opportunities and that work to recreate confidence in Europe and in Asia had to be a common priority. Furthermore, the world was facing a changing environment with many common challenges. In response to the challenges of our time, the OSCE, which itself served as a CBM, was active in various areas, such as countering violent extremism and terrorism, the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, engagement with non-State actors, involvement of civil society, especially women and youth, and strengthening regional co-operation. The second session addressed connectivity and regional economic co-operation. Economic co-operation could serve as a confidence-building measure contributing to peace and security in Europe and beyond, which is why connectivity has been a priority of the German OSCE Chairmanship 2016. Connectivity was also a concept developed in Southeast Asia, Eurasia and the European Union. Connectivity helped with economic integration and co-operation, while at the same time feeding into confidence-building measures. Connectivity could mean joint development of infrastructure, tapping into opportunities, enhancing digitalization and

the alignment of common standards. The third session, dedicated to the regional contribution to the sustainable development goals, highlighted the central role of the OSCE, the world's largest regional security organization, as an important platform for dialogue. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognized the close relationship and interdependence between peace and security and development, and the OSCE could make specific contributions to the attainment of the sustainable development goals.

The OSCE Secretariat organized a side event at the conference on “Engaging with Afghanistan and its neighbours - OSCE’s contribution to confidence building by empowering women”. The project is an example of the OSCE’s holistic approach to security. Gender equality is a cross-cutting priority and one of the cornerstones of the OSCE’s comprehensive approach to security. The project supports women in taking responsibility for matters directly affecting them and their communities. Through their engagement, women have the potential to strengthen good governance and environmental security, and thus contribute to sustainable development, conflict prevention and a more secure future for all.

The third meeting of the Contact Group was held on 7 July in Vienna, with a focus on the Indo-Pacific security dynamic. The first speaker, Mr. Robert McKinnon, Assistant Secretary for Strategic Issues and Intelligence Branch at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia, gave an overview of the Indo-Pacific region. He stated that it is a region with global significance, likely to drive the global economy well into the next decade and probably beyond. At the same time, he noted, the region is the locus of the most significant shifts in strategic and economic weight since the end of the Cold War. He encouraged European nations to continue to pursue constructive engagement with China – along with other Indo-Pacific countries, and part of this should be the reinforcement of global rules and norms. Dr. Tim Huxley, Executive Director at the International Institute for Strategic Studies IISS-Asia in Singapore, gave a presentation of IISS and its activities, the most prominent one being the Shangri-La Dialogue which is the most important annual gathering for defence and security establishments of the Indo-Pacific region. He noted that the Indo-Pacific regional security architecture is weak and it could benefit from an OSCE-type organization that could bring all stakeholders into a permanent framework for political and strategic dialogue. Ambassador Kiyoshi Koinuma of Japan described the situation in the Asia-Pacific from the Japanese perspective and added that the region has countries with rapidly growing economies and populations. Ambassador Veronique Roger-Lacan, Permanent Representative of France to the OSCE shared input from the French centre for policy and analysis on Asia. She pointed out that the reconfiguration of the security situation in Asia with the growing power of China, the current stalemate of the relationship between China and the US over North Korea, and the uncertainty as to the American security guarantees in Asia, calls for a reconfiguration of Europe’s cooperation with the Asia-Pacific region. Finally, Dr. Wilhelm Donko, Minister and Head of Unit for Eastern Asia, Australia/Oceania and ASEM in the Federal Ministry of Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of Austria, stated that there is an increased geostrategic and geopolitical competition in the region, causing volatility, adding that what is needed is effective multilateralism.

At the fourth meeting on 6 October, Mr. Masashi Nakagome, Deputy Assistant Minister and Deputy Director of the European Policy Division, European Affairs Bureau, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, stated that Japan attaches great importance to co-operation with the OSCE. He stressed that North Korea poses a grave and imminent threat to peace and stability of the international community. Ms. Laura Rockwood, Executive Director of the Vienna Centre for Disarmament and Non-proliferation, gave a presentation on the

situation in the Korean Peninsula. She said that when it comes to dealing with the regime in Pyongyang, military action should be avoided at all costs; the risk of cascading into a nuclear war would have catastrophic consequences. Mr. Frederic Grare, Head of Asia at the Centre for Analysis, Forecast and Strategy (CAPS) at the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France, pointed out that it is clear that the progress of North Korea changes the nature of the threat and the magnitude indicates a new situation. He added that the intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) capability poses not only a regional but also a global problem. David Slinn, former UK Ambassador to the DPRK, shared his insights with the participants. He stressed that traditional diplomacy is not applicable in the case of North Korea and that the acquisition of nuclear weapons is a long term objective for the regime and they are not prepared to negotiate.

The fifth Contact Group meeting, held on 24 November, was dedicated to the topic of migration and its impact on security and development with an exchange of views and experiences between the OSCE and the Asia-Pacific region. Dr. Sriprapha Petcharamesree, Senior Lecturer and Chair of the Ph.D. Program in Human Rights and Peace Studies at the Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies, Mahidol University, Thailand, presented insights into the current migration landscape in the Asia-Pacific, partly based on own research. With a view to challenges linked to irregular and mixed migration movements, genuine migration policies had to be put into place, in the sense of human rights based migration governance featuring participation, accountability and empowerment. Mr. Manfred Profazi, Senior Regional Advisor for Europe and Central Asia at the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Geneva, stressed that against the background of a polarized public debate, efforts have to be made to continue portraying success stories of migration and integration. The Permanent Representative of Italy to the OSCE and Chair 2017 of the OSCE Mediterranean Contact Group, Ambassador Alessandro Azzoni, commended the political dialogue with OSCE Partners, including on migration, given the growing interest in a debate on this topic within the OSCE. He affirmed that as incoming OSCE Chairmanship Italy will pay particular attention to the opportunities of migration, and that therefore it is important to learn about economic and environmental drivers of migration also in the Asia-Pacific. Ambassador Vuk Zugic, Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, presented various activities of his Office in the field of migration, and invited Asian Partners to participate in a project set up in order to update capacity-building tools for effective labour migration policies, including a focus on Asia-Pacific.

The German Chairmanship of the Asian Contact Group expresses its sincere gratitude to all the Asian Partners for Co-operation and the participating States for their commitment and constructive co-operation in the framework of the OSCE Partnership. By wishing the best of success to the incoming Austrian Chair of the Asian Contact Group, Germany encourages continuing and deepening the productive exchange with the Asian Partners for Co-operation in meetings in Vienna and the annual conference along the themes to which both the OSCE and the Partners have committed over the past years and which reflect all aspects of a comprehensive security approach.