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Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Germany
to the OSCE

**STATEMENT BY
AMBASSADOR BODEN AT THE MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

28 July 2005

Mr. Chairman,
Dear Colleagues,

If there were a list of “non-speakers” in the OSCE Permanent Council, Germany would certainly be among the first mentioned. For that reason I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak to you today, although the occasion is rather a sad one.

I am referring to the balance sheet that I am able to draw up after three years of work with the OSCE. This is a quite personal balance sheet, and I should like to note that it has not, as is usually the case, been agreed with our European Union partners.

During this period, the OSCE has been confronted with a number of challenges and it has also had to deal on occasion with those who believe it to be facing a crisis. This is true again today. In my view, however great the need for discussion, there are two points that we ought not to lose sight of:

1. The OSCE should always remain aware of its vision: its supreme objective is the task of ensuring certain ground rules of policy and of coexistence worthy of human beings in a community of States extending from Vancouver to Vladivostok. To that end, in over 30 years of efforts the OSCE has created a dense network of norms and principles. The implementation of these norms and principles remains an ever-changing task to be taken up collectively on a daily basis. One can hardly imagine a greater challenge.
2. As regards reform. Reform is certainly necessary, and what is more as a continuing process rather than a one-time action. The report of the Panel of Eminent Persons has now given the OSCE a compass, accepted by all the participating States, for the time ahead. One should not forget, however, that there are no structural solutions for substantive problems, or to put it the other way: structures can be reformed but not principles.

Looking back at my three years of work in Vienna, I see two factors that are a cause for concern:

- On the one hand, there is the charge that the OSCE is turning itself into a “two-class society” split between teachers and pupils, and countries to the east and to the west of Vienna. I believe that it is the duty of each and every one of us to counter that trend. Can we really allow ourselves to permit the emergence in this way of new dividing lines within the OSCE? I think not. Our common obligations should be stronger than anything dividing us.
- On the other hand, there are repeated tendencies in the direction of an erosion of the consensus principle. Consensus means an obligation on the part of both majorities and minorities to seek, and ultimately also to accept, a common approach to solutions. Only in this way can the OSCE remain able to do its job. It will no longer be able if it proves possible to impose particular interests by preventing consensus. This is something that we should all bear in mind.

Germany was one of the principal initiators of the old CSCE and of the Helsinki Final Act, whose thirtieth anniversary shall be celebrated in a few days time. Today, there has certainly been a fundamental change in the political context, but our engagement remains intact. The day-to-day work of the OSCE is primarily concerned with the attainment of consensus among the 55 participating States. It is this, the achievement of this consensus that my delegation and I personally have regarded as our most important task. In this endeavour we shall take second place to no one in the future as well. What is more, Germany has no national agenda within the OSCE.

This has been and continues to be a fascinating task. I shall always remember fondly the passion that marked the debates in all the bodies of the OSCE and whose aim it was to make this Organization better and even more relevant. Here too I see a sign of enduring vitality.

I should like to thank all of you for your partnership and co-operation and shall maintain my ties to this Organization as a committed observer very close to you and as someone who is convinced of the need for the OSCE.

These are the thoughts that occur to me on the subject of the OSCE as I bid farewell. If you were to ask me how I personally feel at this last meeting of the Permanent Council with my participation, I should like to answer in the language of poetry. And perhaps it would be a good thing if from time to time we were to provide an opportunity in this forum too for the voice of poetry to be heard, reminding us that there are things beyond such subjects as rules of procedure or scales of contribution.

In that spirit, I should like to end by quoting one of Europe’s great poets — not a German, although there would be several to choose from, but a Russian. It is the voice of Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin. And here are his words, which I quote in the original language. They are taken from the poem Eugene Onegin.