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Courtesy translation

Liechtenstein Delegation

The Twelfth Meeting of the Economic Forum; Prague 31. May – 4 June 2004

Statement to Agenda Point: Review of the Implementation of OSCE Commitments in the Economic and Environmental Dimension

Mr. Chairman,

Since the 11th Economic Forum of last year, the enlargement of the European Union of an additional 10 countries to now 25 Member States has been the undisputable most important event from a political and economic viewpoint. Our host, the Czech Foreign Minister Cyril Svoboda as well as the Bulgarian OSCE-Chairman Solomon Passy have made that clear in their opening statements. The wish of the 10 new member countries to belong to the European Union was primarily a question of political nature and arose out of the wish to belong to the same community of values. The preparations for enlargement and the enlargement process itself have had a clearly positive impact on the economic development. As a member state of the European Economic Area (EEA), Liechtenstein has always welcomed the enlargement and supported it, also with financial means in the framework of the so called “financial mechanism” – a form of economic support for these new member states.

Mr. Chairman,

At the start of these new European developments stood the Fall of the Berlin Wall and the velvet revolutions in the new Member States in 1989. The first meeting of the then called Conference of Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), after the fateful developments for the European Continent, was the CSCE Conference on Economic Co-operation in Europe convened in Bonn in April 1990. With the “Bonn Document”, a new foundation for a new cooperation of the CSCE participating States in the economic dimension was laid. Yesterday in his statement to the plenary, ODIHR-Director Christian Strohal has reiterated the timeless importance of this very document. The content of what was then agreed on and later developed is part of today’s OSCE-

acquis. Its content is valued to this day. Therefore, it is important that we lead a debate about all agreed commitments, also this year.

I would like to begin this with a quote from the renown Wall Street Journal, issued on 23 April 2004, in order to let this statement by an international newspaper speak for itself: “when issues of property restitution – a corner stone of committed democratic principles – are still subject to discrimination on the basis of putative ethnicity and Communist-era laws (on the books of countries that are about to gain billions and enjoy the fruits of Western “membership”), something is very wrong.”

As in other years before, the Liechtenstein delegation wants to point to the fact that the Czech Republic still does not comply with at least two commitments of the Bonn Document. The Bonn Document contains the commitments of the “full recognition and protection of all types of property including private property, and the right of citizens to own and use them, as well as intellectual property rights” and second “the right to prompt, just and effective compensation in the event private property is taken for public use” as commitments, unreserved for all OSZE-participating states.

In this connection, one needs to be remembered that 1945 and in the following years, properties of Liechtenstein nationals were expropriated by Czechoslovakia. These properties have been neither restituted nor were any compensations paid, as laid down in the Bonn Document. This fact stands in contradiction with the agreed commitments of the CSCE and OSCE as well as with the spirit of the European Economic Area. These seizures violated the laws in force at the time and the international law of today.

Mr. Chairman,

The expropriation without compensation of property from Liechtenstein nationals was the consequence of a policy of non-recognition vis-à-vis Liechtenstein. The expropriation of property of Liechtenstein nationals has been mainly based upon the assumption that these properties belonged to the German people.

Liechtenstein hopes that it will be possible in the future that a solution to these open issues between the Principality of Liechtenstein and the Czech Republic will be found.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for your attention.

1 June 2004