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Statement by Ambassador Mr. Andrej Benedejčič, Director-General for Multilateral and Global Affairs of the Slovenian Foreign Ministry, at the Opening Session of the Annual Security Review Conference, Vienna, 23 June 2009

Madam Chair, Excellencies,

It is a pleasure to be here in Vienna, at the Hofburg. In fact, this imperial palace serves to remind me of an event that took place almost two centuries ago, back in 1821. That year a young prince visited my hometown of Ljubljana, at that time part of the Habsburg Empire, on the occasion of the second congress of the Holy Alliance. His name was Alexander Gorchakov and he went on to become one of the main architects of Russian foreign policy of all times, famous for his phrase about Russia "refocusing herself".

I am mentioning this because it seems that the current Russian approach to European security dialogue is developing in the Gorchakov spirit. It is engaged and becoming more focused, with concrete proposals. This is certainly true of the materials published on the Russian President's website at the beginning of this month, which are quite explicit regarding the status of the OSCE. It is also the case with the address by the Russian Foreign Minister, which we have just heard today. I would therefore like to share with you a couple of brief reactions on behalf of Slovenia, also in its current role as the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

First of all, I would like to emphasize how much we agree with the idea that multilateral institutions should not have "duplicating or, especially, competing agendas". This is one of the reasons why four years ago, during our OSCE Chairmanship, we took part in the Third Council of Europe Summit in Warsaw and signed a joint declaration between our two organizations. The goal was to pool the available resources and enhance synergy, with a view to avoid the possibility of substitution and forum shopping. Let me therefore assure you that we keep advancing this goal in our current role in the Council of Europe as well.

Secondly, I would like to point out that despite all of its shortcomings, real or imagined, we still view the OSCE as the organization of choice for an open discussion about security in today's Europe. After all, it remains the only regional security organization that brings together all the participating States on the basis of equality. Also, if activated by its members, it still has the capacity to react flexibly to new threats and challenges, including the more recent ones. And, last but not least, in the Istanbul Charter for European Security, the OSCE specifically undertook to strengthen relations with organizations that promote comprehensive security in the OSCE region.

And this brings me to the final point. In our opinion, the comprehensive concept of security is one of the most significant achievements in international relations since the end of the Second World War. In other words, respect for the principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law are an inseparable aspect of our collective security. We therefore agree with the Director of OSCE/ODIHR, Ambassador Lenarčič, who pointed out at a recent

conference in Rome that "increased attention on 'hard' security must never come at the expense of what is often – and in a misleading way – referred to as 'soft' security".

In conclusion, I would like to welcome the frank and open discussion on the existing multilateral mechanisms in the Euro-Atlantic area. There are obviously different views about their effectiveness and legitimacy. For our part, we never doubted the capacity of the OSCE to reform, revitalize and rebalance itself in order to face the challenges of a post-Cold-War world. However, we also believe that such a transformation must be anchored in a strong set of common values. This is not because we would not have faith in a legally binding document, but because we recognize that mutual relations are not established by treaty alone. It is also for this reason that at the end of August my country will host a strategic forum with special emphasis on Europe's security structure. I would therefore like to end my statement by inviting you all to continue this exchange of views in a place where the legendary Russian prince Gorchakov started his diplomatic career.

Thank you.