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CO-OPERATION OF THE RUSSIAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS, AT THE CLOSING SESSION OF THE TWENTY-FIFTH  
MEETING OF THE OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Milan, 7 December 2018

Mr. Chairperson,  
Esteemed colleagues,

Allow me to express our appreciation to the Italian OSCE Chairmanship, Minister Enzo Moavero Milanese personally and his entire team for the excellent organization of the ministerial meeting.

The main outcome of the Ministerial Council meeting is that a comprehensive discussion has taken place on a wide range of issues on the OSCE agenda. This proves that, despite the fact that the state of European affairs is not at its best, the OSCE remains an important platform for peer-to-peer dialogue among the participating States.

We regret that the biased approaches of some countries made it impossible to adopt a number of important decisions, including a general political declaration and a declaration on the OSCE's efforts to facilitate a settlement of the internal Ukrainian crisis.

At the same time, thanks to the parties' willingness to compromise, it proved possible to reach agreement regarding documents on a number of other conflicts in the OSCE's area of responsibility. We welcome the ministerial statement in support of the progress in the Transdniestrian settlement, the full implementation of the agreements reached earlier by the authorities in Tiraspol and Chişinău, and the continuation of regular meetings in the "5+2" format. We note with satisfaction the joint statement by the "troika" of OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair countries on the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which for the first time in five years was made together with the ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan.

We supported the Italian Chairmanship's initiative of adopting a declaration on security and co-operation in the Mediterranean. The situation in that region, made unstable by external interference, has a negative impact on all OSCE countries and requires close attention.

Owing to the unconstructive position taken by Georgia, no statement was adopted in support of the Geneva Discussions on the Trans-Caucasus. However, no one questioned the

need for this format of direct dialogue between the Georgian Government and Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Unfortunately, the atmosphere of mistrust and confrontation prevailing in the Euro-Atlantic region has a negative effect on the OSCE's politico-military dimension. There can be no talk of "modernizing" the Vienna Document on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures until NATO abandons its policy of "containment" towards Russia. We welcome the ministerial declaration on small arms and light weapons. We should like to draw attention to the joint statement adopted by the countries of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) on the situation surrounding the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles (INF Treaty), which has been distributed within the OSCE. The discussion on ways to rebuild trust and de-escalate tension is valuable in itself. We will continue to participate in the Structured Dialogue as long as it is not politicized. We hope that it will contribute to de-escalation and prepare the ground for work on arms control.

It is important that considerable attention was paid at the Ministerial Council meeting to various aspects of countering transnational threats. We believe it necessary to continue joint efforts to combat terrorist ideology and propaganda. We supported the Italian Chairmanship's priorities – the themes of foreign terrorist fighters and combating trafficking in cultural property. We welcome the adoption of a declaration on the role of youth in contributing to peace and security.

At the same time, more could be done in this important area for all States. Draft documents prepared by the Russian delegation on increasing the OSCE's efforts to prevent terrorism and on enhancing the role of the Organization in addressing the world drug problem were rejected on flimsy pretexts, not because of their content, but simply because they were proposed by Russia and other CSTO countries. We consider such an approach to be unacceptable.

The discussion of the economic aspects of the OSCE's work was constructive and resulted in two useful decisions – on human capital development and on the digital economy. The issue of digitalization naturally has its place on the OSCE agenda. We are in favour of maintaining its positive focus. We draw attention to the unifying potential of the topic of economic connectivity and the alignment of integration processes. We look forward to its development within the OSCE on the basis of the 1999 Platform for Co-operative Security.

The results of the Ministerial Council meeting regarding the third basket confirmed the crisis in the OSCE's human dimension, which, as we have repeatedly pointed out, requires a thorough reformatting and the removal of imbalances and double standards. Of a dozen draft decisions on human dimension issues, only three were adopted – on the safety of journalists, on combating violence against women, and on combating child trafficking. We expect the provisions of these decisions to be implemented by all participating States.

For reasons that we do not understand, certain countries once again sabotaged the fulfilment of the 2014 Basel Ministerial Council mandate on the adoption of declarations to protect Christians and Muslims. We urge the future Slovak Chairmanship to endeavour to resolve this issue next year.

The balanced draft decisions prepared by Russia on the linguistic and educational rights of national minorities and on free access of the media to information were categorically

rejected. We proposed the latter together with Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. This is particularly depressing against the background of the deteriorating human rights situation, the attacks on freedom of the media and on linguistic, educational and religious rights in a number of countries, and blatant attempts to rewrite history and glorify Nazism, especially in the Baltic States and Ukraine.

We regret that it proved impossible to reach consensus on a document on migration.

I should like to draw the Chairmanship's attention to the need to adhere to the tried-and-tested and long-standing practice regarding the speaking order of Heads of Delegations according to seniority. The unfortunate misunderstanding at this Ministerial Council meeting should not set a precedent for future meetings.

In conclusion, I should like to thank our Italian colleagues for their conscientious performance of the role of "honest broker" and their vigorous efforts to find compromise solutions throughout 2018 and here at the Ministerial Council meeting.

We trust that next year Slovakia and in 2020 Albania will continue the work on drawing up a unifying agenda for the OSCE. We shall certainly support them in this endeavour.

Thank you for your attention. I request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.