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Statement by

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Serbian Chairmanship of the OSCE:

Rebuilding trust and confidence in order to create a positive agenda for the future

Briefing to the UN Security Council

New York, 24 February 2015

Thank you Mr. President,
Distinguished Members of the Security Council,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to have the opportunity to address the United Nations Security Council in my capacity as Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the world's largest regional security arrangement under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter.

In doing so, I shall present to the Council the main points of Serbia's OSCE Chairmanship agenda. I shall also brief you on a number of other issues of critical importance for peace and security in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian space.

Serbia's Chairmanship of the OSCE comes during the worst crisis of European security since the end of the Cold War. Mistrust and divisions, confrontational policies and zero-sum logic are undermining the co-operative approach to security that is at the heart of the OSCE's comprehensive body of commitments and principles. The OSCE of 2015 is very different from the OSCE of just two years ago. The crisis in and around Ukraine continues to dominate security considerations in Europe just as it did in 2014, but its impact is far greater. Today, the OSCE faces sharpening institutional divisions, competition and confrontation in a context of mutually exclusive perceptions. Yet the current crisis has highlighted the enduring strengths and advantages of the OSCE as the organization best suited to bridge the growing divides and facilitate co-operative solutions. The OSCE response to the current crisis has once again demonstrated its relevance to European security.

The Organization has proved itself capable of substantive engagement under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. The deployment of two OSCE field missions – the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), and the Observer Mission at the Russian Checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk – is the most visible example of the OSCE's ability to launch collective actions even during a highly divisive crisis.

The OSCE has been continuously engaged in trying to find a diplomatic solution to the current crisis. Serbia is now doing its utmost to pursue these efforts in an impartial and transparent manner. Our highest priority is to protect the inclusive and co-operative nature of the OSCE's work, and to prevent the crisis from escalating into a larger confrontation. Serbia recognizes that both the OSCE and European security are at a critical juncture and is fully committed to working with the main stakeholders to restore peace and stability in Ukraine.

We are making every effort to rebuild confidence and trust among participating States and to restart our work together towards the vision of a Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community. I would like to acknowledge the unstinting efforts of the 2014 Swiss OSCE Chairmanship, and of Swiss Minister Didier Burkhalter personally, to facilitate a political process aimed at de-escalating the crisis. I would also like to thank Ambassador Heidi Tagliavini, my Special Representative to Ukraine and to the Trilateral Contact Group, for her tireless commitment to helping the parties find the path towards peace and commend the dedicated work of the Special Monitoring Mission.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since assuming the Chairmanship of the Organization at the beginning of the year, my agenda has been dominated by the ongoing political crisis and escalation of violence in Ukraine: an increasing number of people in eastern Ukraine has been hit by recurrent violence and waves of civilians have been dislodged from their homes

in a desperate search for safer ground, accounting for a combined figure of over one million displaced, more than 5 000 killed and more than 12 000 wounded.

It is therefore high time for peace to take hold. The Package of Measures announced in Minsk on 12 February is the best available roadmap to bring about calm to the east of the country. We hope that the political will displayed by the signatories to the Package of Measures in Minsk will prevail to ensure that the guns are silenced and human suffering is eased.

Ukraine is at the critical juncture; what is needed is full adherence to the cease-fire to allow for the implementation of the other elements of the Package, most notably the withdrawal of heavy weapons and equipment. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission is ready and willing to play its role to facilitate, monitor and supervise these crucial activities, in close co-ordination with the Trilateral Contact Group.

While the current focus understandably remains on implementing the military aspects of “Minsk II”, we should not lose sight of the non-military elements of the agreement, such as the badly needed restoration of socio-economic ties, local elections and constitutional reform.

Turning to the humanitarian situation, I wish to emphasize the importance of co-ordination and co-operation between the OSCE and the relevant UN agencies. While the Monitoring Mission is not a humanitarian presence, it is well placed through its large number of monitors in the conflict zone to assist with identifying urgent humanitarian needs. I welcome the close co-operation between the OSCE and the UN in the country on the humanitarian and the matters of the protection of human rights.

Concerning border-related issues, I would like to highlight the ongoing importance of the OSCE Observer Mission at the Russian checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk. Despite the limited scope of its operations, it remains the only international presence on the international Ukrainian-Russian border. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission will continue to conduct patrols to locations on the Ukrainian side of the border, but increased border monitoring activities will be dependent upon the security situation on the ground.

I sincerely hope that in the weeks and months to come we can further build on the measures recently agreed in Minsk, with a view to returning peace to eastern Ukraine. Serbia’s Chairmanship will continue to do its utmost to help reach this goal.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We must not overlook the detrimental impact of the crisis in and around Ukraine on the broader OSCE agenda, in particular on the protracted conflicts in Moldova and the South Caucasus.

Particularly as we prepare to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act this year, we need to find ways to rebuild trust and confidence and to re-engage in joint efforts to strengthen security across the whole OSCE region. We must keep a close eye on the broader strategic perspective of European security. And we must continue to uphold our common values and principles as enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act and other landmark OSCE documents. I strongly believe that the OSCE has a crucial role in the overall European security architecture – as an inclusive platform for dialogue, building trust, and bridging the growing East-West divide. This is captured in the motto of Serbia’s Chairmanship – *“Rebuilding trust and confidence in order to create a positive agenda for the future”* – and we shall not spare any effort in pursuing this goal. In this regard, I welcome the creation of the Panel of Eminent Persons on European Security as a Common Project, which was launched in December at the annual OSCE Ministerial Council in Basel. I am confident that the Panel has the potential to generate innovative

ideas that can help us recapture the “spirit of Helsinki” and I look forward to its recommendations on how to replace the current culture of confrontation with one of co-operation and joint action.

Addressing the protracted conflicts is high on Serbia’s OSCE agenda. All parties should step up their efforts within the agreed formats to move away from the current *status quo* and show more political will to make progress towards peaceful settlement. We believe that small but concrete steps will help improve trust and confidence among the parties and can pave the way to address problems effectively.

I am particularly concerned over the recent developments related to Nagorno-Karabakh. Last year’s three meetings between the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan were an encouraging indication of a renewed appetite for dialogue. However, since then we have observed a sharp deterioration of the situation on the ground and the political process has slowed down. Serbia’s OSCE Chairmanship continues to support the efforts of the Minsk Group Co-Chairs to facilitate high-level meetings and to explore, together with the parties, all avenues that may lead to a long-overdue settlement. In Munich earlier this month, I met with the Co-Chairs and my Personal Representative to discuss further steps to decrease tensions in the region. On that occasion, I discussed the situation also with the Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan. I shall continue my engagement with the leaders in the region when I visit them in a few months.

Serbia’s Chairmanship continues to support the OSCE’s close co-operation with the UN and the EU in co-chairing the Geneva International Discussions. Our co-facilitation with the EU of a joint Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism helps us ensure the safety and security of people living close to South Ossetia’s Administrative Boundary Line. The OSCE continues to support the swift resumption of the meetings of the Gali Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism. We are keeping the possibility of some form of OSCE presence in Georgia on the agenda to enhance our support for both the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism and the Geneva discussions.

It is unfortunate that the “5+2” process for the settlement of the Transdniestrian conflict has stalled in recent months. I intend to try to re-energize the process. My Special Representative recently visited Chisinau and Tiraspol precisely for that purpose. The establishment of the new Government in Moldova will hopefully also contribute in this regard. Restoring a regular rhythm of official “5+2” meetings during the course of the year is the first step. What is needed now is the political will to move forward and to make tangible progress. This would benefit the populations on both sides of the Dniestr/Nistru River.

Some years ago, Mr. President, the Western Balkans was riddled with conflicts similar in nature. Nowadays, however, cooperation and solution of problems by peaceful means prevail. We have decided to include in our Chairmanship, as a matter of priority, the promotion of cooperation in the Western Balkans, which is telling proof that, irrespective of height and entrenchment, the obstacles on the road to peace can be overcome with political reason and good will.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The OSCE’s activities in Ukraine and in areas affected by protracted conflicts underline the fundamental role of regional organizations in maintaining peace and security in their respective regions as envisioned in Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. Serbia’s Chairmanship will continue to pursue the efforts initiated under the Swiss Chairmanship to further operationalize the role of the OSCE as a Chapter VIII regional arrangement.

The OSCE stands ready to make its experience available to the UN High-Level Independent Panel on Peacekeeping Operations. As we speak, the members of the Panel are visiting Vienna. They will meet with relevant OSCE interlocutors, including representatives from the participating States.

The OSCE's anti-terrorism activities provide another example of the substantial contribution that regional organizations acting under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter can make in support of UN-led efforts to fight terrorism. Recent events have underscored the need for the international community to remain vigilant and join forces in tackling this deeply troubling phenomenon. I am pleased to highlight the OSCE's close collaboration with virtually all UN entities taking part in the UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force.

The benefits of this kind of collaboration have been plentiful. We are determined to make the most of all opportunities for collaboration in the future. As we know, the OSCE and the UN share common interests in many parts of the OSCE area. Increased cooperation will enable us to maximize synergies globally, regionally and locally. At the same time, we will use existing resources more effectively and leverage capacities on the ground like the OSCE field operations.

At the 2014 Ministerial Council in Basel, OSCE participating States committed themselves to countering the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters, as well as kidnapping and hostage-taking for ransom by terrorist groups. Both Ministerial declarations support relevant Security Council resolutions.

Thanks to its comprehensive approach to security, the OSCE not only plays an important role in countering terrorism, but also helps prevent divisions within societies and to foster tolerance and non-discrimination. Our Chairmanship will devote special attention to the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters, and also to violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism, particularly radicalization of youth. We will convene an OSCE-wide counter-terrorism expert conference on this issue in Vienna on 30 June and 1 July.

The OSCE is well placed to work through its participating States and field operations on promoting community-based approaches to countering violent extremism, including through the involvement of youth, women and civil society. We are also in dialogue on this issue with our Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The partnership between the UN and the OSCE is critical for addressing security challenges in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian space. The OSCE engages in political dialogue, co-ordination and information exchange with the UN on thematic and regional issues both at the political and expert level. All OSCE structures work with a wide range of UN entities to enhance security in all three dimensions across the OSCE area and in the adjacent regions. We highly value this close co-operation. We are eager to make it more operational and result-oriented through revamped staff talks, targeted staff exchanges and the pragmatic implementation of the existing institutional framework.

The OSCE is also committed to creating new synergies with the UN in key regions of common interest, including Eastern Europe, South East Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and Afghanistan, as well as the southern Mediterranean. Both OSCE and UN field operations are precious assets, and their potential for co-operation should be exploited to the maximum.

The OSCE is eager to intensify partnership with the UN. I hope that we can turn creative ideas for co-operation into successful initiatives.

I thank you for your attention.