
Chairmanship: Sweden**1335th PLENARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

1. Date: Thursday, 16 September 2021 (in the Neuer Saal and via video teleconference)

Opened: 10 05 a.m.
Suspended: 1.05 p.m.
Resumed: 3 p.m.
Closed: 6.25 p.m.

2. Chairperson: Ambassador U. Funered
Ambassador T. Lorentzson

Prior to taking up the agenda, the Chairperson welcomed the new Permanent Representative of Finland to the OSCE, H.E. Ambassador V. Häkkinen, the new Permanent Representative of Kyrgyzstan to the OSCE, H.E. Ambassador T. Makeyev, and the new Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the OSCE, H.E. Ambassador V. Verba.

3. Subjects discussed – Statements – Decisions/documents adopted:

Agenda item 1: ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE OSCE
PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY,
H.E. MS. MARGARETA CEDERFELT

Chairperson, President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (PA.GAL/15/21 OSCE+), Russian Federation (PC.DEL/1422/21), Slovenia-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia, members of the European Economic Area; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Andorra, Georgia, San Marino and Ukraine, in alignment) (PC.DEL/1457/21), United Kingdom, Turkey (PC.DEL/1420/21 OSCE+), Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan (PC.DEL/1428/21 OSCE+) (PC.DEL/1451/21 OSCE+), United States of America (PC.DEL/1415/21), Belarus (PC.DEL/1423/21), Armenia (PC.DEL/1435/21), Norway (PC.DEL/1421/21), Georgia (PC.DEL/1441/21 OSCE+), Ukraine

(PC.DEL/1491/21), Kazakhstan (PC.DEL/1416/21 OSCE+), Canada (PC.DEL/1443/21 OSCE+), Secretary General

Agenda item 2: REPORT BY THE HEAD OF THE OSCE MISSION IN KOSOVO

Chairperson, Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo (PC.FR/32/21 OSCE+), Russian Federation (PC.DEL/1426/21 OSCE+), Slovenia-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia, members of the European Economic Area; the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Georgia, in alignment) (PC.DEL/1460/21), Albania (PC.DEL/1427/21 OSCE+), Turkey (PC.DEL/1418/21 OSCE+), United Kingdom, Switzerland (PC.DEL/1452/21 OSCE+), United States of America (PC.DEL/1417/21), Norway (PC.DEL/1419/21), Bosnia and Herzegovina (PC.DEL/1463/21 OSCE+), Belgium (also on behalf of Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Norway, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States of America) (Annex 1), Cyprus (Annex 2), Spain (Annex 3), Serbia (Annex 4)

Agenda item 3: UPDATE ON THE EXTENSION OF THE MANDATE OF THE OSCE OBSERVER MISSION AT THE RUSSIAN CHECKPOINTS OF GUKOVO AND DONETSK

Chairperson (Annex 5), United Kingdom (Annex 6), Slovenia-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Georgia, Moldova, San Marino and Ukraine, in alignment) (Annex 7), United States of America (PC.DEL/1424/21), Canada (Annex 8), Ukraine (Annex 9), Switzerland (PC.DEL/1454/21 OSCE+), Turkey (Annex 10), France (also on behalf of Germany) (Annex 11), Georgia (Annex 12), Russian Federation (Annex 13), Secretary General

Agenda item 4: REVIEW OF CURRENT ISSUES

Chairperson

- (a) *Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine and illegal occupation of Crimea:* Ukraine (PC.DEL/1494/21), Slovenia-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, in alignment) (PC.DEL/1459/21), United Kingdom, Turkey (PC.DEL/1449/21 OSCE+), Canada (PC.DEL/1445/21 OSCE+), Switzerland (PC.DEL/1455/21 OSCE+), United States of America (PC.DEL/1429/21)

- (b) *Deteriorating situation in Ukraine and continued non-implementation by the Ukrainian authorities of the Minsk agreements*: Russian Federation (PC.DEL/1432/21)
- (c) *Aggression of Azerbaijan against Artsakh and Armenia with the direct involvement of Turkey and foreign terrorist fighters*: Armenia (Annex 14)
- (d) *Recent developments in Belarus*: Slovenia-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Georgia and Ukraine, in alignment) (PC.DEL/1458/21/Rev.1), United Kingdom, Canada (PC.DEL/1448/21 OSCE+), United States of America (PC.DEL/1430/21), Belarus (PC.DEL/1439/21 OSCE+), Lithuania
- (e) *Situation of human rights in the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine, and illegal detentions of Crimean Tatars*: Ukraine (PC.DEL/1493/21), United Kingdom, Slovenia-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, in alignment) (PC.DEL/1462/21), Turkey (PC.DEL/1450/21 OSCE+), United States of America (PC.DEL/1431/21), Canada (PC.DEL/1446/21 OSCE+), Russian Federation (PC.DEL/1434/21)

Agenda item 5: REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE
 CHAIRPERSON-IN-OFFICE

- (a) *Concluding Meeting of the 29th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum, held in Prague and via video teleconference on 9 and 10 September 2021*: Chairperson
- (b) *Participation of the Chairperson-in-Office via video teleconference on 15 September 2021 in the Ukrainian Women's Congress, held in Kyiv and via video teleconference on 15 and 16 September 2021*: Chairperson
- (c) *Address by the Chairperson-in-Office, to be delivered via video teleconference on 20 September 2021, to the 2021 OSCE Asian Conference, to be held in Vienna and via video teleconference on 20 and 21 September 2021*: Chairperson
- (d) *Conference entitled "ODIHR: three decades and ready for the future. Democracy, human rights and security in the OSCE", to be held in Warsaw and via video teleconference on 14 and 15 October 2021*: Chairperson

Agenda item 6: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL

- (a) *Participation of the Secretary General in the Concluding Meeting of the 29th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum, held in Prague and via video teleconference on 9 and 10 September 2021*: Secretary General

- (b) *Visit of the Secretary General to the OSCE Documentation Centre in Prague on 9 September 2021*: Secretary General
- (c) *Appointment of Ambassador I. Hasani as Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities*: Secretary General, Chairperson

Agenda item 7: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- (a) *Parliamentary elections in the Kyrgyz Republic, to be held on 28 November 2021*: Kyrgyzstan
- (b) *Thirty years since the Baltic States joined the OSCE*: Latvia (also on behalf of Estonia and Lithuania) (Annex 15), Russian Federation (PC.DEL/1433/21)

Point of order: Latvia

4. Next meeting:

Thursday, 23 September 2021, at 10 a.m., in the Neuer Saal and via video teleconference



1335th Plenary Meeting
PC Journal No. 1335, Agenda item 2

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF BELGIUM
(ALSO ON BEHALF OF ALBANIA, AUSTRIA, BULGARIA,
CANADA, CROATIA, THE CZECH REPUBLIC, DENMARK,
ESTONIA, FINLAND, FRANCE, GERMANY, ICELAND, IRELAND,
ITALY, LATVIA, LITHUANIA, MALTA, THE NETHERLANDS,
NORWAY, SLOVENIA, SWITZERLAND, THE UNITED KINGDOM
AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA)**

Madam Chairperson,

I am making this statement in a national capacity and also on behalf of Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Norway, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. We will submit a final list of aligned States, which we request to be attached to the journal of the day.

Madam Chairperson,

We are very pleased to welcome the Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, Ambassador Michael Davenport, to the Permanent Council. We recognize and appreciate the outstanding work carried out by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo to support the authorities of the country in strengthening their institutions.

We recall the Mission is the second largest of the OSCE field operations and that it plays an essential role in Kosovo. The Mission has continued to adapt its activities to Kosovo's needs and to the evolving challenge posed by the COVID-19 pandemic – which has demanded persistence and creativity in finding effective ways to implement the Mission's mandate.

We recognize that, as a matter of good governance within our organization, one of the best ways to understand how effectively OSCE field operations are implementing their work is to hear directly from the partners and beneficiaries on the ground. Therefore, we consider it essential to have contact among participating States and stakeholders, partners and interlocutors co-operating with the OSCE Mission in Kosovo. We welcome and applaud the

participation of a beneficiary of the Mission during the informal meeting on 15 September, and request this practice be continued in the future.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council**

PC.JOUR/1335
16 September 2021
Annex 2

Original: ENGLISH

1335th Plenary Meeting
PC Journal No. 1335, Agenda item 2

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF CYPRUS**

Madam Chairperson,

The Republic of Cyprus fully subscribes to the statement made by the European Union, but I would like to add some remarks in a national capacity.

The delegation of the Republic of Cyprus joins other delegations in welcoming the new Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, Ambassador Michael Davenport, to the Permanent Council. We would like to thank Ambassador Davenport for his statement and comprehensive report and to express our appreciation for the important work carried out by the Mission.

Like other participating States, the Republic of Cyprus does not recognize the 2008 Unilateral Declaration of Independence by Kosovo. In this context, we would like to stress that any initiative with regard to the OSCE Mission in Kosovo must be consistent with United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), which along with Permanent Council Decision No. 305 of 1 July 1999, provides the Mission's mandate.

Madam Chairperson,

The Republic of Cyprus supports the EU-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Priština and the efforts of EU Special Representative Miroslav Lajčák, and encourages the sides to continue working constructively with the Special Representative on all the principles governing this process.

I would like to request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council**

PC.JOUR/1335
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ENGLISH
Original: SPANISH

1335th Plenary Meeting
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**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF SPAIN**

Madam Chairperson,

Spain endorses the statement made by the European Union under this agenda item, and I should like once again to express our support for the important work performed by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo together with other international institutions present in the territory of Kosovo. I should also like to thank Ambassador Michael Davenport for his statement and activity report, and to express our appreciation for the work that he has been carrying out together with his team.

Madam Chairperson,

Like other participating States, Spain does not recognize the territory of Kosovo as a State and is of the view that any action relating to the OSCE Mission in Kosovo should have respect for United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) as its frame of reference.

Achieving progress in the EU-facilitated Belgrade-Priština dialogue is a prerequisite for both parties to be able to make headway on their respective paths towards Europe. In that regard, the territory of Kosovo has, in the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, its own specific framework for relations.

Spain continues to believe that dialogue and negotiation are the only possible way of resolving the dispute over the territory of Kosovo, and wishes to make constructive use of its good offices in order to expedite that.

Madam Chairperson, I request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

Thank you.



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**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF SERBIA**

Madam Chairperson,

Allow me to welcome Ambassador Michael Davenport and to thank him for his first report to the Permanent Council. Serbia reiterates its support for the efforts of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, which should be undertaken in a status-neutral manner in line with its mandate based on United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). We value the quality reporting by the Mission and its five regional offices and their follow-up on cases with an inter-ethnic component.

Serbia appreciates the Mission's continued focus on the needs of non-majority communities and the challenges they are facing. I will now touch on some of these challenges.

As stated in the report (I quote), "The Kosovo Serb community remained the most affected in comparison to other non-majority communities." There have been 94 ethnically motivated incidents affecting Kosovo Serbs since the beginning of the year, including physical attacks, damage to property, burglary, cattle theft and illegal logging. The institutional responses were inadequate as usual.

Since the aim of such incidents is clearly to discourage the return of internally displaced persons, we very much appreciate the Mission's readiness to assist in the case of Dragica Gašić, a displaced Kosovo Serb woman, to publicly condemn attacks against her, to keep the international community informed and to provide support for her daily needs, including essential medication.

Allow me to remind you that Ms. Gašić returned to her apartment in Đakovica on 9 June after having been notified by the authorities that her property, previously illegally occupied by a Kosovo Albanian family, had been vacated. However, her return has been marred by continuous intimidation, including the throwing of stones at her window, the denial of access to medication and groceries, and administrative obstacles to the installation of video surveillance equipment that would help to make her feel safer.

On 27 June, 11 local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) even initiated a petition calling on the Government to "undertake legal measures as soon as possible to expel the

woman” because “Đakovica is not ready for the return of Serbs”. Three of the undersigned NGOs – the shelter Safe House, the Local Youth Action Council and Medica – had previously co-operated with the OSCE Mission in Kosovo.

Protecting the fundamental rights of displaced persons is impossible without safeguarding their property and housing rights. We expect the Mission to follow up on this and similar cases and to be careful when selecting local partners for the implementation of its programmes and activities.

At the same time, we value the Mission’s support in resolving property issues and providing sustainable solutions for internally displaced persons within the framework of the Skopje Process.

The report also points to the continuing desecration of cemeteries and historical monuments, and instances of burglary, graffiti and vandalism against cultural and religious heritage. Following the first liturgy held in the Church of Christ the Saviour in Priština after 23 years, the words “Jesus hates Serbs” were sprayed onto the entrance.

Local institutions continue to ignore court rulings on the property rights of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The Constitutional Court of so-called Kosovo confirmed in 2016, after 16 years of judicial proceedings, that the Visoki Dečani monastery, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is the rightful owner of over 24 hectares of land in the vicinity of the monastery. However, the authorities still refuse the request of the Serbian Orthodox Church for its land to be duly registered, despite the continuous appeals by the international community, including “the Quint” countries (France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States of America).

It is therefore not surprising that the renowned heritage organization Europa Nostra and its partner the European Investment Bank Institute included Visoki Dečani on their list of the seven most endangered heritage sites in Europe in 2021. Europa Nostra noted that the monastery had been targeted by “local extremists” and faced the risk of “unsuitable local development”, which would undermine its status as a World Heritage Site. The response of the authorities in Priština was to dispute Europa Nostra’s decision and to request that the monastery be removed from the list.

We commend Ambassador Davenport for his visit to Visoki Dečani and the statement he made on that occasion. We also encourage the Mission to continue monitoring institutional responses and compliance with court decisions, and to publish a thematic report on threats to the Serbian and other communities’ cultural and religious heritage.

Madam Chairperson,

The arbitrary denial of visits by officials from central Serbia continued throughout the reporting period, despite the timely announcement of such visits in line with the agreed procedures. Journalists, sports clubs and pilgrims travelling from central Serbia to the province are being prevented from visiting monasteries, attending sports events, inspecting their properties, and seeing relatives and friends.

On 24 August, the so-called Court of Appeals of Kosovo upheld the verdict of the Basic Court against former minister and mayor of Zvečan Ivan Todosijević, sentencing him to two years' imprisonment for a public statement that he made in 2019 in connection with the 20th anniversary of the NATO aggression against Yugoslavia. The Court of Appeals, in accordance with the Brussels Agreement of 2013, should have a multi-ethnic composition of panel judges. Mr. Todosijević's sentence was confirmed without the participation of the Serbian judges. In that regard, European Union spokesperson Peter Stano pointed out that "the provisions of the agreement on the composition of panel of judges were in this special case not respected".

This is only one example of non-compliance with agreements previously concluded under the EU-facilitated Belgrade-Priština dialogue. After meetings in Brussels on 15 June, Mr. Kurti openly refused to recognize their validity, arguing that the agreements had been made by previous authorities.

I regret having to recall, once again, that the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities has yet to be established. This is an obligation guaranteed by all the signatories to the 2013 Brussels Agreement, including the European Union.

On a more positive note, we commend the Mission's focus on the needs of non-majority communities during the pandemic, such as access to timely and pertinent information in their mother tongue. We also welcome the accreditation of the Balkanology degree programme at the University of Priština's Faculty of Philology, which will offer comparative study of the Albanian and Serbian languages and address a need for qualified Albanian-Serbian interpreters to work in the institutions.

Madam Chairperson,

Despite all the challenges, Belgrade remains willing to engage in meaningful dialogue. However, only a sincere commitment by all relevant actors to addressing the outstanding issues in good faith with the aim of regulating relations and upholding fundamental human rights and freedoms can ensure reconciliation, peaceful co-existence and respect for diversity.

To quote the remarks made by President Aleksandar Vučić during this week's farewell visit by the Federal Chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel, to Belgrade: "I am against a frozen conflict and I do not think that is the solution ... I think it would be good if this generation could solve it, but there must be a compromise solution – not one that would humiliate or defeat one side".

Before concluding, let me briefly respond to some of the statements we have heard today. Regarding the informal meeting with the Head of Mission and a representative of the so-called recipient of OSCE assistance on the ground, we believe it is necessary to be precise: there is no established practice of inviting officials from Priština. There have been individual cases, and they were contested. We firmly stand by our position that such invitations are unacceptable, contravene the status-neutral position of the Organization with regard to Kosovo and Metohija, and merely deepen existing divisions in the OSCE.

It does not bode well for the functioning of the OSCE that it is necessary, at a meeting of the Permanent Council, to issue the firm reminder that this is a consensus-based organization, and that any attempts to flout the consensus directly undermine the OSCE.

Finally, allow me to wish Ambassador Davenport all the best in his future endeavours.

I request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

Thank you.



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STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRPERSON

The OSCE Observer Mission at the Russian checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk is an important component of the OSCE's response to the crisis in and around Ukraine. The Mission was deployed on 24 July 2014, following the joint declaration by the Foreign Ministers of Ukraine, Russia, France, and Germany on 2 July 2014, in which they reconfirmed their commitment to sustainable peace and stability in Ukraine.

During Sweden's term as OSCE Chairmanship, the mandate extensions of the Observer Mission have been subject to frequent discussions. This year's first decision to extend the mandate by four months was adopted on 21 January 2021, in line with the recent practice. In order to ensure the Mission's effective management and operations, the Chairmanship has since made intensive efforts to maintain this practice, including through consultations in the relevant committees and at the political level in a meeting between the Chairperson-in-Office and her counterpart from the Russian Federation. However, due to the position of the host country, the Permanent Council was subsequently only able to extend the Mission's mandate for two months at its special meeting on 28 May and its meeting on 22 July, respectively.

Prior to the start of discussions in the Advisory Committee on Management and Finance and the Preparatory Committee on the extension of the current mandate, which expires on 30 September, the Russian Federation announced that it would not support a further extension of the Mission's mandate in the position expressed in the statement by its Permanent Representative to the OSCE at the 1334th meeting of the Permanent Council of 2 September.

In the same meeting, the Chairperson recalled the broad support for the important work of the Mission and urged the Russian Federation to reconsider its position and engage constructively in discussions towards a solution that could accommodate any concerns. To this end, the Chairmanship has since engaged in consultations with participating States, particularly with the host country. However, it soon became evident that the position expressed by the Russian Federation was definitive and that no alternative solution could be found. On 6 September 2021, this position was confirmed in a note verbale addressed to the Chairmanship and the Secretary General, distributed by the Russian Federation under document number PC.DEL/1410/21, which stated that 30 September 2021 would be the deadline for all types of border observation activities.

Thus, the Chairmanship must regretfully conclude that all options to achieve consensus on the mandate extension of the OSCE Observer Mission at the Russian checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk beyond 30 September 2021 have been exhausted. I hereby inform the OSCE Secretary General thereof and will instruct her to take the necessary steps accordingly.

The Chairmanship remains convinced that the OSCE Observer Mission at the Russian checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk contributes to confidence-building and increased transparency at the Russian-Ukrainian border through its impartial monitoring and reporting. We will continue to explore other alternatives that would enable the OSCE to fulfil this role as well as the relevant tasks assigned to the organization in the Minsk agreements.

In this context, the Swedish Chairmanship underlines the need for the full implementation of the Minsk agreements in their entirety and recalls that the Trilateral Contact Group, consisting of the representatives of Ukraine, the Russian Federation and the OSCE, reached an understanding in the Minsk Protocol of 1 September 2014 on the need to ensure permanent monitoring on the Ukrainian-Russian State border and verification by the OSCE, together with the creation of a security zone in the border regions of Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

The Swedish Chairmanship reaffirms its strong commitment to a sustainable political solution in line with the OSCE's principles and commitments, with full respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

This statement will be attached to the journal of the day.



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**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF THE UNITED KINGDOM**

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

The United Kingdom took note of the note verbale circulated by the Russian delegation informing the OSCE Chairmanship and OSCE Secretariat of their refusal as host country to extend the mandate of the OSCE Observer Mission, and their expectations for the closure of the Mission.

The position of the United Kingdom on the OSCE Observer Mission has been consistent and clear. Despite its severe limitations, the Mission provided important information on the situation at the two Russian border checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk and we have repeatedly joined others in calling for both an extension of time, and an expansion in scope, of its mandate. As the responses to Ambassador Varga's most recent report made clear, the Mission continues to enjoy the support of the overwhelming majority of participating States, albeit not the host country.

We deplore this decision by Russia to unilaterally close the Mission. This is yet another negative step by Russia at a time when greater transparency and confidence-building are sorely needed in the region, following the largest Russian military build-up on Ukraine's borders and in illegally annexed Crimea since 2014.

We remind Russia that, as a signatory to the Minsk agreements, including the 2014 Minsk Protocol, it has committed to ensuring permanent monitoring of the Ukrainian-Russian State border and verification by the OSCE. Russia's decision takes us even further away from fulfilling the comprehensive monitoring foreseen under the Minsk Protocol and contradicts the spirit of the Minsk agreements. It is deeply alarming.

We ask Russia how they intend to fulfil the commitment they undertook in signing the Minsk Protocol to ensure permanent monitoring of the border by the OSCE.

I ask that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.



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**STATEMENT BY
THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

The delegation of Slovenia, in its capacity as EU Presidency, passed the floor to the representative of the European Union, who delivered the following statement:

The European Union deplores the decision by the Russian Federation not to agree to an extension of the mandate of the border Observer Mission to Gukovo and Donetsk beyond 30 September. This is an unfortunate political signal confirming Russia's lack of political will to contribute to the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

The border Observer Mission is an important confidence-building measure informing the participating States about the situation on the ground. Since 2014, this Mission has provided us with information about the movements over this border which unfortunately is not under the control of the Ukrainian Government. Together with the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) and the Trilateral Contact Group, the border Observer Mission is an important instrument in the OSCE toolbox for resolving this conflict.

In 2014, Russia illegally annexed the Crimean peninsula and started its destabilizing acts of aggression in eastern Ukraine in blatant breach of international law and OSCE principles and commitments. This is why we repeatedly call on Russia to immediately stop fuelling the conflict by providing financial and military support to the Russian-backed armed formations, and we remain deeply concerned about the presence of Russian military equipment and personnel in sovereign territory of Ukraine.

The Minsk agreements call for permanent monitoring of the border and verification by the OSCE and include a commitment to reinstate full Ukrainian control over its entire international border. This is why we persistently claim that effective and comprehensive monitoring of this border is crucial for a sustainable political solution to the conflict in line with the Minsk agreements and an integral part of the efforts aimed at fostering stability and security in the region. The fact that Russia, as a party to the conflict, the host country of this Mission and a signatory of the Minsk agreements decides to end the border Observer Mission is a clear step backwards when it comes to finding a peaceful resolution to this conflict. We deeply regret this decision by Russia.

We would like to ask to have this statement attached to the journal of the day.

The candidate countries the Republic of North Macedonia¹, Montenegro¹ and Albania¹, and the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia and San Marino align themselves with this statement.

¹ The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.



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**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF CANADA**

Madam Chairperson,

We note the Russian Federation's clear communication on its desire to see the border Observer Mission closed and its relaying a timeline for when the Mission's component assets and personnel will no longer be welcome in the Russian Federation. However, we entirely disagree with the Russian position to end the Mission.

With the conclusion of the border Observer Mission, today is an appropriate time to take stock of the Russian Federation's actions pertaining to the mandate and objectives of the border Observer Mission over the past seven years. It is clear that the Russian Federation was not serious in providing the border Observer Mission with a sufficient mandate and capacity to observe the entire Russia-Ukraine State border not under control of the Government of Ukraine. They never allowed the Mission to use the equipment it needed; never agreed to a mandate to observe all eleven official border crossing points or the numerous unofficial sites; never provided the border Observer Mission with permission to approach the vehicles to effectively monitor their contents; and never agreed to an extension for a reasonable period of time.

While we have been repeatedly reminded by the Russian Federation of its supposed "generosity" in allowing the Mission to operate on its soil, this willingness did not extend to building transparency and creating a positive environment for resolving the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Just as the actions of the Russian Federation in spring 2014 demonstrated Russia's disrespect to its commitments made with the other 56 participating States, its refusal to join consensus on maintaining the border Observer Mission demonstrates its disrespect for the Mission as a true confidence-building measure and step in the right direction for implementing the Minsk agreements, which call for effective and comprehensive monitoring of the border. While the border Observer Mission never fully met this requirement of the Minsk agreements, it was a monitoring platform that could have assisted Ukraine and Russia in meeting their Minsk commitments, if only Russia had allowed it to fulfil its full potential.

Madam Chairperson,

By ending the border Observer Mission, Russia is sending yet another indication that it is no longer interested in the effective operation of our Organization in conflict-prevention

and confidence-building. It is increasingly clear that the OSCE's effectiveness lies with the participating States' responsibility to work towards consensus rather than the misuse of consensus as an obstructive weapon of diplomacy.

I offer Canada's heartfelt thanks to Ambassador Varga and his entire team on the ground and within the Secretariat for their dedicated and valuable work over the past seven years. Your work is highly valued by the participating States and we applaud your commitment to working under trying and limiting circumstances. We wish you the best of luck in your future endeavours.

I would ask that my statement be added to the journal of the day.

Thank you.



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council**

PC.JOUR/1335
16 September 2021
Annex 9

Original: ENGLISH

1335th Plenary Meeting
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**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF UKRAINE**

Madam Chairperson,
Dear colleagues,

From the very beginning, Russia's position on not extending the mandate of the OSCE border Observer Mission at the Russian checkpoints of Gukovo and Donetsk was strongly condemned by Ukraine, including in a statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine on 2 September.

Today, owing to Russia's destructive decision, the participating States are faced with the inevitable fact that the border Observer Mission will cease to exist by the end of September this year. It means that the Russian Federation has decided to stick to its critically unproductive approach aimed at undermining politico-diplomatic efforts to resolve the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

The Russian delegation often used to stress that the border Observer Mission had been established before the Minsk agreements were signed. That is of course the case. Nevertheless, this OSCE field operation has always been important in terms of wider efforts to provide transparency along the segment of the border between Ukraine and the Russian Federation that is temporarily not under the control of the Government of Ukraine.

Moreover, the border Observer Mission's activities have always played a notable role in view of Russia's negligence when it comes to implementing the Minsk agreements in general and paragraph 4 of the Minsk Protocol of 5 September 2014 in particular, which envisages permanent monitoring and verification at the State border between Russia and Ukraine by the OSCE, along with the establishment of a security zone in the border areas of Ukraine and Russia. And here I should like to emphasize: in the border areas of the two States, Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

Of course, this decision by the Russian Federation is counterproductive, but unfortunately it was entirely predictable, given that the Russian side has been restricting the monitoring activities of the border Observer Mission since its very inception, constantly repeating the fairy tale about "Russia's goodwill".

Last year, during the preparations for the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Tirana, the Russian Federation appeared to be the only participating State to block the proposal by Ukraine for a draft Ministerial Council decision on the OSCE's permanent monitoring and verification of the areas adjacent to the Ukrainian-Russian State border that are temporarily not under the control of the Ukrainian Government – a draft decision that was co-sponsored by 34 participating States. This document, which was in line with the mandate of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), also provided for necessary resources to enhance the border Observer Mission's capabilities for effective monitoring, including through the use of technical surveillance equipment, unmanned aerial vehicles and satellite imagery. It also encouraged the OSCE Chairmanship to develop proposals on expanding the border Observer Mission's operations.

The aforementioned situation is just further proof of Russia's unconstructive approach. The Russian Government's main interest lies in exploiting its sole control over both sides of the 409 km segment of the State border between Russia and Ukraine to keep unimpededly supplying weapons, military equipment, ammunition, regular troops and mercenaries to the temporarily occupied parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine. And the regular restrictions and impediments that Russia has been creating to undermine the activities of both the border Observer Mission and the SMM pursue the sole goal of hiding any facts about the Russian military presence in Donbas. Otherwise, why should Russia be so strictly opposed to the OSCE's comprehensive monitoring in the area of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict?

What are the principal conclusions that may be drawn from the current situation for all participating States?

First, it represents a drastic step backwards not only in terms of trust, transparency and the process of peaceful resolution of the conflict itself, but also in terms of Russia's attitude to the process. It demolishes the hopes of all the participating States that invested so much effort in the negotiations back in 2014 and more recently, holding certain expectations about Russian "goodwill".

The main lesson to be learned is as follows: no matter how many times you try to make concessions to the Russian Federation, the authorities in Moscow will take that for granted or even interpret it as a sign of weakness. In the long run, they will proceed with their destructive approach despite any concessions.

We believe that the time for "asking or expressing hopes and concerns" is over. Every destructive initiative of the Russian Federation should be reciprocated with a proper reaction by the international community. Unfortunately, that looks like the only way to make the Russian Federation return to a constructive approach and implement fully its obligations under the Minsk agreements as both a signatory to the three documents and a party to the conflict.

Secondly, in view of the border Observer Mission's closure; the ongoing Russian military build-up along the State border of Ukraine; the regular restrictions on the SMM's activities in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions imposed by the Russian occupation forces, especially in the border areas; and the "illusory" prospects for opening new forward patrol bases of the SMM, as noted by the

Deputy Chief Monitor Mark Etherington during an informal briefing for participating States on 10 September 2021, the issue of security and transparency along the State border between Russia and Ukraine should be prioritized in the OSCE's agenda.

We also believe that the OSCE would benefit from a wider discussion on border security, not least in the conflict-affected areas, the need for which is long overdue in our Organization.

The delegation of Ukraine stands ready to engage in fruitful co-operation with all the participating States in this regard, and also with the Swedish OSCE Chairmanship, including in the framework of discussions on the potential objectives of the deliverables from the Stockholm Ministerial Council meeting in December.

In conclusion, I should like to reiterate that withdrawal of the Russian occupation forces and illegal armed formations from the sovereign territory of Ukraine, followed by reinstatement of full control over the Ukrainian-Russian border by the Government of Ukraine, is a prerequisite for resolving the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council**

PC.JOUR/1335
16 September 2021
Annex 10

Original: ENGLISH

1335th Plenary Meeting
PC Journal No. 1335, Agenda item 3

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF TURKEY**

Madam Chairperson,

We thank the Chairmanship for the update on the latest developments regarding the mandate of the OSCE Observer Mission at the Russian checkpoints of Gukovo and Donetsk.

We have taken note of the note verbale of the Russian delegation dated 6 September 2021.

In our view, since 2014 the Mission has successfully provided reliable and objective information about cross-border movements at Gukovo and Donetsk, as a confidence-building measure.

It has fulfilled its mandate in a professional, impartial and transparent manner.

We believe that there is a close linkage between border monitoring and ceasefire monitoring.

We hope that the OSCE will be able to take practical steps to monitor the Ukrainian-Russian State border and ensure verification in the coming period.

Turkey is ready to constructively support discussions to this end.

I ask, Madam Chairperson, that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

Thank you.



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council**

PC.JOUR/1335
16 September 2021
Annex 11

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

1335th Plenary Meeting
PC Journal No. 1335, Agenda item 3

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF FRANCE (ALSO ON BEHALF OF GERMANY)**

Madam Chairperson,

I fully endorse the statement by the European Union and would like to add a few comments on behalf of Germany and France.

France and Germany are deeply disappointed by the decision of the Russian Federation not to renew the mandate of the Observer Mission at the Donetsk and Gukovo checkpoints, which effectively puts an end to its operations. For over seven years, the Observer Mission has provided important and objective information on the situation at the Russian-Ukrainian border. It is a vital confidence-building tool and contributes to the OSCE's conflict-resolution efforts.

France and Germany are very concerned by this unilateral decision taken by Russia, which is a negative signal running contrary to the letter and the spirit of the Minsk agreements. We recall that the Minsk Protocol calls for permanent monitoring of the border and verification by the OSCE and that the Minsk Package of Measures includes a commitment to reinstate full Ukrainian control over its entire international border.

France and Germany are maintaining their efforts within the framework of the Normandy format to fully implement the Minsk agreements. Effective and full monitoring, in particular through the Observer Mission, of the border between Russia and Ukraine is essential for improving the security situation and finding a lasting political solution to the conflict.

Allow me to remind you that the creation of the Mission and the approval of its mandate were initiated by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Normandy format countries with a view to improving transparency at the Russian-Ukrainian border as a confidence-building measure.

We are deeply concerned by the fact that the closure of the Mission will irrevocably decrease transparency and reduce trust even further.

We see no justification for Russia's decision. It merely adds to the huge restrictions on freedom of movement that the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine has had to deal with for years in the non-government-controlled areas, particularly those close to the border.

Increasing transparency and strengthening trust are important elements on the way to finding a lasting settlement to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. We urge the Russian Federation to engage constructively rather than undermining our joint efforts to find a long-term political solution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

I request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

Thank you.



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council**

PC.JOUR/1335
16 September 2021
Annex 12

Original: ENGLISH

1335th Plenary Meeting
PC Journal No. 1335, Agenda item 3

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF GEORGIA**

Madam Chairperson,

We thank you for the update regarding the extension of the mandate of the OSCE Observer Mission at the Russian checkpoints of Gukovo and Donetsk and regret that no progress has been made in this regard.

Georgia joins partners in expressing its strong concern over the announcement not to extend the mandate of the OSCE border Observer Mission beyond September 2021. This comes after Russia's recent decision to curtail the mandate renewal period from four to two months.

As noted by our delegation and many other participating State on numerous occasions, despite limited geographical coverage and technical resources, the Mission's monitoring has greatly contributed to transparency around the segments of the Russian-Ukrainian State border, which is temporarily beyond the control of the Ukrainian Government, by providing objective and unbiased information. The figures that Ambassador Varga laid out during the latest report to the Permanent Council speak for themselves.

Permanent monitoring of the border and verification by the OSCE is the subject of point 4 of the Minsk Protocol agreed among Trilateral Contact Group in September 2014.

We believe that the decision taken by the Russian Federation goes against the spirit of this agreement and demonstrates the true attitude of Russia towards resolution of the conflict. The closure of the Mission will adversely affect the security situation on the ground and further diminish confidence and predictability, which are already at a low point.

We join our voice to the calls on Russia to implement its obligations and commitments. Russia's aggression and its support for the occupation forces in eastern Ukraine are the reason we need border monitoring in the first place.

Madam Chairperson,

Taking this opportunity, let me reiterate our staunch support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. We recall that the Minsk Package of Measures includes the commitment to reinstate full control by Ukraine over its entire international border.

In conclusion, we wish to wholeheartedly thank Ambassador Varga and his very able team for their commitment and the important work they have done all these years under challenging circumstances.

Thank you.



1335th Plenary Meeting
PC Journal No. 1335, Agenda item 3

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

The Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe presents its compliments to the OSCE Chairmanship and the OSCE Secretariat and has the honour to inform of the following in line with the position of the Russian Federation, expressed in the statement by the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the OSCE at the 1334th meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council on 2 September 2021.

The mandate of the OSCE observers at the two Russian border checkpoints “Donetsk” and “Gukovo” on the Russian-Ukrainian border expiring on 30 September 2021 shall not be further extended. This date will be the deadline for all types of mandated observation activities.

In this regard, the Russian Federation kindly requests the OSCE Secretariat to start proper organizational formalities concerning the exit strategy and closure of the above-mentioned OSCE field presence.

The members of the Mission’s staff, who are not engaged in technical procedures related to the completion of the work of the field presence, are expected to leave the territory of the Russian Federation by 7 October 2021.

Members of the Mission’s staff, who are engaged in handover of vehicles, equipment and other assets, are expected to leave the territory of the Russian Federation by 13 October 2021. The relevant procedures shall be conducted within the area of the Mission’s presence with the assistance of the OSCE Secretariat and may engage members of a neighbouring OSCE field presence solely for the purpose of providing non-recurrent logistical and administrative support.

The final group of the Mission’s staff, including the Chief Observer, is expected to leave the territory of the Russian Federation by 21 October 2021. The Russian Federation proceeds from the understanding that all technical issues will be completed by that date.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and other relevant authorities and agencies of the Russian Federation stand ready to facilitate the process. In order for it to be conducted in a smooth and timely manner, the Permanent Mission of the

Russian Federation awaits an early response from the Secretariat on the practical arrangements of the exit strategy.

The Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the OSCE Chairmanship and the OSCE Secretariat the assurances of its highest consideration.



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council**

PC.JOUR/1335
16 September 2021
Annex 14

Original: ENGLISH

1335th Plenary Meeting

PC Journal No. 1335, Agenda item 4(c)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF ARMENIA**

Madam Chairperson,

We should like to update the Permanent Council on the situation along the line of contact in Artsakh and in the border regions of Armenia, which remains extremely volatile and tense at present – almost a year after Azerbaijan unleashed a war of aggression against Artsakh and its people, with the direct involvement and support of Turkey and Turkish-backed foreign terrorist fighters.

Even though the signing, on 9 November 2020, of a Russian-mediated trilateral statement on a ceasefire stopped the bloodshed and violence, many important issues are still outstanding, including issues regarding which the trilateral statement by the leaders of Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation contains relevant provisions and requirements.

First and foremost, the most pressing issue, namely the release of Armenian prisoners of war and civilian hostages, remains unresolved, as Azerbaijan continues to prevent their return, staging mock trials and handing down lengthy sentences to them – in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law, notably the Geneva Conventions of 1949, and paragraph 8 of the trilateral ceasefire statement of 9 November 2020.

The state of health of the Armenian prisoners of war and civilian hostages, the conditions of their detention and how to protect them from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment are all a source of constant concern, particularly given the Azerbaijani authorities' continued denial of their having captured numerous Armenian military personnel and civilians, which puts these at risk of being subjected to enforced disappearance.

Madam Chairperson,

The Armenian delegation has constantly pointed to the flagrant violations of the provisions of the trilateral statement by Azerbaijan, most recently during the OSCE's Annual Security Review Conference (ASRC). Unfortunately, the situation shows no signs of improving and we continue to operate in an extremely fragile and hostile environment.

The situation is further exacerbated by Azerbaijan's continuous provocations from all points of the compass and in all possible ways. After an incursion into the sovereign territory of Armenia on 12 May this year, Azerbaijan carried out a series of attacks on Armenian positions, as a result of which Armenian military personnel were killed and wounded. Units of the Azerbaijani armed forces periodically open fire in the direction of Armenian border towns and villages and even stoop to rustling cattle, thereby causing considerable damage to the property of local residents. Ceasefire violations by Azerbaijan also occur along the line of contact in Artsakh almost every day.

Another serious source of concern is the repeated arson attacks by the Azerbaijani armed forces on pastures and hayfields in the border regions of Armenia. On 29 August and 4 September 2021, the Azerbaijani military deliberately set fire to pastures and hayfields near the Armenian villages of Sotk and Kut in the Gegharkunik province; the fire spread quickly owing to the dry and windy weather. More than 300 hectares of pasture and 150 hectares of grassland were burned in four villages as a result of fires set by Azerbaijani soldiers. All this has seriously affected the livelihoods of local Armenian farmers.

Armenia possesses irrefutable evidence of these attacks, including video footage showing Azerbaijani soldiers setting grass fields ablaze using Molotov cocktails and burning tyres. Considering the usually dry and windy weather at this time of the year, these deliberate acts of arson and sabotage, accompanied by continuous violations of the ceasefire and other intimidation tactics, are clearly aimed at creating unbearable conditions for people living in the border villages and forcing them to leave their homes. We believe that such incidents should be the subject of close attention and scrutiny by the relevant OSCE structures.

Madam Chairperson,

Armenia has repeatedly expressed its readiness to start the process of delimitation and demarcation of borders. However, Azerbaijan's aggressive posturing and provocative actions, which merely serve to create obstacles to resumption of the Nagorno-Karabakh peace talks, testify to that country's deliberate policy of undermining the aforementioned process. The refusal by Azerbaijan to pull back its armed forces from the borderline in a "mirrored" fashion, as suggested by the Prime Minister of Armenia, is yet another sign of that policy.

At the ASRC, during Working session I, the Armenian delegation spoke about Azerbaijan's destructive behaviour, including such actions as blocking the motorway connecting the Armenian cities of Goris and Kapan and the Kapan-Vorotan intercommunal road, thereby grossly violating the right to freedom of movement of the civilian population of that area. Such actions also contravene the logic, the letter and the spirit of the trilateral statement of 9 November 2020.

On 9 September 2021, Azerbaijan installed a so-called police checkpoint on the motorway connecting the two aforementioned cities, specifically near the village of Vorotan, in the non-demarcated area of the State border. This step – accompanied by other illegal actions, such as checking the documents of drivers and inspecting their cargo, introducing illegal transit taxes, fines and other coercive measures – is bound to hinder trade between Armenia and Iran.

Just a few days ago, in an attempt to further restrict travel and use of the Goris-Kapan motorway, the Azerbaijani forces detained two Iranian lorry drivers. The intention is clearly to intimidate all other drivers. Given that there has been no demarcation or delimitation of borders, such actions by Azerbaijan are completely illegal. Moreover, its refusal to engage in good faith in the process of demarcation and delimitation of borders clearly indicates that Azerbaijan is seeking to further escalate the situation. Azerbaijan's actions on the ground belie its professed intention and desire to help build peace and trust and promote reconciliation in the region.

This assessment of the true intentions of Azerbaijan is further corroborated by the recent Turkish-Azerbaijani joint military exercise in the area of the Lachin corridor – another glaring example of actions aimed at disrupting the de-escalation agenda and undermining the trilateral statement signed by the leaders of Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation.

Madam Chairperson,

By constantly increasing the level of tension – among other means, through military provocations in Artsakh and along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border – Azerbaijan seeks to postpone indefinitely the resumption of the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process and, ultimately, the peaceful and comprehensive settlement of the conflict. We reiterate that only the resumption of the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process, under the auspices of the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group, can create the necessary conditions to achieve lasting peace in the region.

Armenia stands ready to engage in the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process in good faith and will continue to act consistently in support of the realization of the right of the people of Artsakh to self-determination, regardless of Azerbaijan's efforts to remove this issue from the international agenda by all means, not least by denying the very existence of Artsakh and its people. The international community must condemn such an approach in the strongest possible terms.

Madam Chairperson,

The current situation in Nagorno-Karabakh is the result of a flagrant violation by Azerbaijan of several core principles of the Helsinki Final Act, namely refraining from the threat or use of force; peaceful settlement of disputes; equal rights and self-determination of peoples; and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. No one should be under any illusion that the results of the use of force, accompanied by war crimes and violations of international humanitarian law, can ever become the basis for a lasting and sustainable peace. Such a peace can only be achieved in the region through a comprehensive settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which must include determining the status of Artsakh on the basis of the realization by the people of Artsakh of their inalienable right to self-determination; ensuring the safe and dignified return of recently displaced population to their homes; and preserving the cultural and religious heritage of the region.

Madam Chairperson, I kindly ask you to attach this statement to the journal of today's meeting. Thank you.



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council**

PC.JOUR/1335
16 September 2021
Annex 15

Original: ENGLISH

1335th Plenary Meeting

PC Journal No. 1335, Agenda item 7(b)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF LATVIA
(ALSO ON BEHALF OF ESTONIA AND LITHUANIA)**

Madam Chairperson,

On 10 September, the three Baltic States – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – celebrated the 30th anniversary since joining the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe in 1991 (at that time – the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe).

The OSCE has had an important role in promoting democracy, security and stability in our and the whole OSCE area, and since rejoining the international community in the early 1990s, all three have actively contributed to it.

The OSCE's assistance in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania during the first years of re-established independence of our countries confirmed that the Organization was an essential actor in overcoming numerous challenges related to transition and consolidating democratic achievements. The OSCE's role to help build trust between States and to provide balance of interests remains.

Joining the OSCE was one of the key elements that ensured us an opportunity to defend our national interests by participating in the multilateral political decision-making process and by strengthening international co-operation.

During the 30 years we have clearly demonstrated our commitments to strengthen democracy, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression and the safety of journalists, as well as conducting free and fair elections and their monitoring. The successful Lithuanian OSCE Chairmanship in 2011 and Estonia's readiness to chair the Organization in 2024 prove our commitments and contribution once again.

We believe that the comprehensive approach to security remains the way forward – the way to promote stability, sustainable development, gender equality and other important topics.

Today, we once again underline our unwavering commitment to the principles enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act, the Charter of Paris for a New Europe and other OSCE documents, as well as to numerous commitments we all made. We will continue to fully

support and actively participate in the work of the OSCE in all three dimensions to achieve long-lasting results.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.