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Statement

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at the Opening Session
of the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
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Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have gathered here in Warsaw to assess our progress, that is the progress of the participating States, in the implementation of the OSCE commitments in the Human Dimension. A few days ago Poland hosted the events celebrating the 25th anniversary of „Solidarity”. The birth of „Solidarity” was the apotheosis of the values which lay at the foundation of the OSCE. „Solidarity” embodied untamed quest for freedom, human dignity and personal liberty. Its spirit has changed the map of Europe. And, it lives on today. Its recent and vivid manifestation has been the Ukrainian Orange Revolution.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The events, which took place in Ukraine in December 2004, resulted in a triumph of values on which the OSCE is based: democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. That triumph has proven the vitality of the OSCE ideas showing the strength of its standards. The fledging Ukrainian democracy is going now through a challenging period. Nobody said democracy

would be easy. But we have every confidence that the spirit of the Orange Revolution will prevail.

The events of the recent past in Ukraine, Georgia or Kirgistan show that some disquieting myths which started emerging in the OSCE area are not simply true.

It is not true that there are countries, places and societies in the OSCE area immune, by their nature, to the values and standards of democracy, rule of law and human rights. It is not true that if such values – democracy, rule of law, human rights – reach these societies, they will do so in a specific form, different from the model we know, for example, the countries of the European Union. It is also not true that there is one single center of gravity in the region of the former Soviet Union, and all other states in this region have to inevitably, gravitate towards it. There can be no zones of exclusive influence in the OSCE area.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As much as we are happy and satisfied in Poland with the triumph of democracy and the rule of law in Ukraine, we are also concerned with the lack of these values in another neighbor of ours – Belarus. The recent developments in that country demonstrate that systematic and increasing repression of the civil society, harassment of political opposition and independent media continue. We strongly condemn, among others, the recent actions taken by the Belarusian authorities against the Union of Poles in Belarus and the government's interference in the activities of this independent non-governmental organization. These actions are part of the policy of assault on the civil society in that country.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I look to the future with optimism. As evidenced in Georgia, Ukraine and

elsewhere, the values of freedom and dignity, are unstoppable. Freedom is a matter of time although it does not come by itself. No repression, no isolation are able to subdue freedom and democracy. Nobody, even the strongest tyrant, can suppress the quest for change. Therefore, before we start the discussion, before we engage in polemics, let us imagine how the words we pronounce today will sound in 10 or 20 years.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you have remarked, I am trying to share with you our concerns quite openly. The formal position of Poland will be duly reflected in the statement of the European Union. At the same I think it is important to set the right tone for our discussions at this meeting. This meeting can be useful only if the spirit of candidness truly prevails. It is probably the only way for the OSCE to regain its vigor and the sense of purpose. Only open and honest dialogue can improve the condition of the Organization.

The OSCE is going through a delicate phase, many call it a crisis. Reform proposals have been put forward in order to remedy the situation They mostly center on institutional and operational aspects of the OSCE.

But the problem seems to lie deeper than that. And this meeting is quite opportune to look at it. The OSCE will be as strong as strong are the principles and values that constitute its foundations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To address these issues we must ask ourselves the fundamental question: how did it happen that 15 years after adopting the Charter of Paris for New Europe which heralded a new chapter in European history – a community of values and

purpose – having so many institutions and mechanisms, we cannot still fully materialize and fulfill the objectives of the Charter, and in some parts of the OSCE we are observing clear setbacks.

The value gap, which has recently paralyzed the OSCE, is increasing. Let us be frank – the OSCE has become a proxy target. Some participating States have been indirectly questioning not the OSCE as such, but the vitality of the OSCE standards – democracy, freedom of media, good governance.

What is particularly worrisome is that in some countries important segments of the public perceive democracy and some freedoms, in particular freedom of speech, as a catalyst of instability and chaos. It is true that there are countries which experience enormous social tensions, high risk of ethnic strife, and big potential for instability. But curbing democracy and freedoms will hardly help in the long run. Equating democracy with anarchy is a deadend policy.

What is even more worrisome is that those who fear democracy look at us – partners who advocate these values – with suspicion. They see this advocacy on our part as a plot, as a geopolitical game, as an attempt to weaken, destabilize and finally gain influence. This mistrust, however, is ill-founded. This prejudice kills the OSCE.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We must use the OSCE to overcome such prejudice. It is not easy. Some of our partners, with whom we would like to engage in a constructive dialogue, even fail to appear at relevant meetings. We should nevertheless understand that the recovery of the OSCE would not be possible without a thorough political debate which would clarify the basis of common values. Do believe me - the OSCE will hardly gain its strengths from acquiring a legal personality, restructuring its

institutions and subsidiary bodies. The OSCE can be and will be strong only when it becomes the place of honest debate on three basic problems:

The first is the value gap. Unfortunately, some domains of the OSCE are deeply affected by the crisis of values. We must not allow the OSCE area breaking up into two zones, where different values prevail. The OSCE should not serve as a platform that merely legitimizes the gap, smoothes out discrepancies, and defuses confrontation.

The second is the solidarity gap. Too many countries and people in the OSCE area feel that they are left alone, that they are abandoned in the face of the gigantic social and economic problems they encounter.

The third is the civilization gap. The gap which is presently seen as alienating Europe from its neighbors in Africa and Asia may – if not attended to – relocate to some parts of the OSCE area.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A sincere review of the implementation of our joint commitments is central to the viability of the OSCE. For many years it used to be the OSCE's comparative advantage that it was so serious about the obligations it would undertake. If we want to make the OSCE stronger, we must eradicate our complacency when examining the present shortcomings. We must have the courage to face some tough questions that linger.

How did it happen that we refrain from raising this issue of compliance and implementation at formal meetings, while only discussing it in the corridors? Why does it come that even informal mentioning of the activation of the Moscow Mechanism (which was designed as a purely cooperative one) becomes an offensive gesture? Why do we tend to hide behind the NGOs' backs when trying to voice our opinion?

At this point let me thank the NGOs and their activists for their contribution to the OSCE discussion on the Human Dimension. Some say that it is the NGOs who have saved the credibility of the Human Dimension meetings in the recent years. I have even heard that, if it was not for them, the HDIM would be seen as a Hypocrisy - Driven Information Meeting. On the other hand, the NGOs activities and their hard work should not be used an excuse for not being direct and candid in the presentation of some governmental views.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The renewal of the OSCE must begin here and now. Our approach towards the implementation of the Human Dimension commitments needs some fundamental changes. We should foster a sincere debate not only at an expert level, but also at a higher, political level. We must strike a good balance between private and public meetings in the OSCE format. And last but not least, we need new tools and resources to extend the necessary assistance.

The central issue is how to restore the belief that our exercise is of a co-operative nature. The OSCE is not a diplomatic pillory. The OSCE is about the readiness to help. And, sharing our concerns here and now should encourage cooperation amongst us all.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The general assumption underlying our approach to the discussion about the commitments and standards is, of course, that nobody is perfect. And that there is no state which has built a model of perfect democracy, with a full protection of human rights and the rule of law in a short period of time. And, I am also saying this from the point of view of my country and our own experience.

Even the most established democracies have to face new challenges, like for

instance populism. People living in healthy democracies are, however, aware of those shortcomings, and are thus willing to acknowledge their existence. They need no international encouragement to continue their effort for a better country and a better quality of democracy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In many ways the Charter of Paris was only a declaration of intent. For many, the standards agreed on and adopted 15 years ago were nothing more than targets and objectives. But these 15 years is long enough to assess the credibility of the signatures made by the leaders from Vancouver to Vladivostok. Thinking about credibility in the context of the events like those in Ukraine, Georgia or Kirgistan may help to examine credibility of our own intentions. And, let us pay the credit to the OSCE for its contribution to promoting the ideals of freedom and democracy, while not being complacent about its weaknesses. I wish you a fruitful meeting.

Thank you for your attention