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**STATEMENT ON
SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE AS A REGION OF CO-OPERATION**

Since we last met in Porto, the countries of South-Eastern Europe have further consolidated their security, stability and democracy. We welcome the progress they have achieved in establishing stable and democratic institutions, and in particular the improvement of relations among them in transforming South-Eastern Europe into a region of co-operation. The OSCE has played and will continue to play an important role in this direction, including through its field presences. We recognize the importance of the European Union's (EU) Stabilization and Association Process and the declared intention of the countries of the region to integrate into Euro-Atlantic structures.

The continued co-operation and consultation among the international actors active in the region — *inter alia*, the UN, the OSCE, the Council of Europe, the EU, NATO, the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and the South East European Co-operation Process — and between them and the governments of the region remains essential, including in the framework of the Platform for Co-operative Security of the OSCE. Alongside the OSCE presences in the region, SFOR, KFOR, the continuing EU Police Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the imminent launch of the EU Police Mission Proxima are further proof of the commitment to the stability of the region.

We reiterate the importance of functional multi-ethnic societies based on respect for the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms. The sustainable return of refugees and internally displaced persons, without obstacles, remains essential for reconciliation and democratic development.

We call on all the countries concerned to intensify their co-operation with and to render all necessary assistance to the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), as international law demands, including in particular bringing all indictees to the Tribunal, as well as to continue to improve the capacity of national jurisdictions to prosecute cases.

We commend the progress in the implementation of the Dayton/Paris Peace Accords and fully support United Nations Security Council resolution 1244. We welcome the recent start in Vienna of a direct dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, support its continuation on practical issues, and we reiterate our support for the “standards before status” policy. We welcome further progress towards completion of the Ohrid Framework Agreement.

Organized crime, corruption and trafficking are real obstacles to democratic stability, rule of law, market economy and the development of civil societies, and require national and trans-national responses by all OSCE participating States. We welcome the commitment and achievements in the region of South-Eastern Europe in combating such phenomena, in close co-operation and co-ordination with relevant international organizations and actors. Continued efforts at all levels will be crucial. We welcome the OSCE’s involvement in police training activities, as well as the efforts under way in the countries of the region to improve their border management capacities.

We welcome the achievements in security sector reform. Civilian control over the military is a critical element of democratic reform. Accumulation of small arms and light weapons, effective arms export regimes and surplus ammunition stockpiles are issues that also need to be addressed where necessary with international assistance, including from the OSCE. We welcome and commend the continued work and progress of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office’s Personal Representative in assisting with the implementation of voluntary activities under Article II and arms control measures under Article IV of the Dayton/Paris Peace Accords, as well as the establishment of the Commission to review the implementation of measures under the concluding document of Article V and stand ready to support its future work.

We welcome the activities of the OSCE’s field presences in the region, and their evolution and adjustment in accordance with the situation on the ground and the progress achieved, in close co-operation with the host countries.