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Remarks by OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic at today's Working Lunch with the Panel of Eminent Persons, also attended by OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier, as well as the members of the Munich Security Conference Core Group:

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

When Serbia was entrusted to lead the OSCE in 2015, we looked forward to celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act during our Chairmanship. This pioneering document, with its revolutionary concept of comprehensive security, represented a historic triumph of cooperation over conflict. For decades, the ten Helsinki principles provided a solid foundation for European security and stability. Some argue that the Helsinki Final Act recognized the postwar territorial realities in Europe. At the same time, the document's carefully crafted language produced a completely new concept in bilateral and multilateral relations, creating a direct link between the political-military and the human rights "baskets" as a fundamental component of peace and security. This unique construct set in motion a political and ideological movement that eventually led to the end of the Cold War.

But recent events have endangered the Helsinki legacy – and at the same time demonstrated the continued relevance of the Helsinki Final Act. The Helsinki principles have been seriously jeopardized, and armed conflict is once again a reality in Europe. So this year, instead of celebrating the Helsinki Final Act and continuing work toward the 2010 Astana Summit vision of a security community, Serbia's OSCE Chairmanship is grappling with the biggest challenge of European security architecture since the end of the Cold War.

To help us find a way forward together, we should make every effort to learn from experience. For this very reason, both us and the OSCE Troika supported the establishment of the Panel of Eminent Persons tasked to provide, through its two reports, a constructive contribution to the discussion on how to overcome divisions in Europe. I take this opportunity to thank all the members of the Panel, and especially you as the Chair,

Ambassador Ischinger, on your efforts which have resulted in the finalization of the Interim Report in the past days.

Recommendations of the Interim Report, derived from "lessons learned" during the crisis in and around Ukraine, are now available to all the OSCE participating States. I am convinced this will contribute to the discussion on further development of our Organization. I would also like to, in the build-up to the Ministerial Council in Belgrade, express my hope that the Panel and its Final Report will contribute to the essential debate on security in the OSCE area.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Reconsolidating European security will only be possible if we can achieve a durable settlement of the crisis in and around Ukraine, and jointly address its broader implications for European security. In hindsight, we can now see that the roots of the crisis went far deeper than anyone initially realized. East-West tensions, fed by different threat perceptions and security narratives, had already re-emerged before the crisis erupted. Constructive engagement on key issues of European security had been difficult for quite some time. Growing mistrust, confrontational policies and a weakening attachment to the OSCE concept of comprehensive security hindered cooperation in various areas. A lack of progress in arms control and other key areas of the OSCE agenda had also been evident. All of these challenges have only grown worse since the emergence of the crisis in and around Ukraine.

In the current context, the OSCE could be a valuable tool for diffusing the crisis and moving away from a zero-sum mentality and toward engagement and shared responsibility. As the only regional platform that brings all the key stakeholders to the table, the OSCE is keeping critical lines of communication open, and finding opportunities for joint action.

The OSCE is already playing an important role in helping to de-escalate the conflict and facilitating the political process. Serbia's Chairmanship is doing everything it can to achieve a political solution on the basis of the Minsk Agreements. Our chief concerns are preventing the crisis from turning into a larger conflict, ensuring a sustainable political process, and protecting the inclusive and cooperative nature of the OSCE's work. Serbia has good relations with all the key stakeholders, and we are committed to working with them toward these goals in an impartial, transparent and reliable manner. I am also confident that de-escalation on the ground and visible progress in the Trilateral Contact Group would set the scene for restarting discussions on broader issues of security in our region and the future role of the OSCE.

Together with the Trilateral Contact Group, Special Monitoring Mission is the most visible element of the OSCE response to the crisis in and around Ukraine. But the entire OSCE toolbox has been mobilized to address the crisis, as well as to support other critical steps Ukraine should take, including constitutional reform, protection of the rights of national minorities, national dialogue and reconciliation. All in all, the OSCE has convincingly demonstrated that it can deliver.

One of the key lessons we have learned from the OSCE response to the crisis in and around Ukraine is that we need to strengthen the Organization's capacity to prevent and respond to

conflicts. But the participating States could also make better use of the OSCE as a platform for overcoming the existing divide, restoring trust, and rebuilding a cooperative approach to common security challenges. With greater political support from the participating States, much more could also be done to help resolve the protracted conflicts in Moldova and the South Caucasus; to address threats stemming from instability in neighboring regions, including the southern Mediterranean and Afghanistan; and to tackle transnational and global threats like terrorism, organized crime and climate change.

Without a shared understanding of security and a dedicated joint response, particularly by the key players, we risk seeing all of these challenges escalate. The “frozen” conflicts could heat up and revert to armed conflicts. Instability feeds tensions within societies that can lead to ethnic conflicts, radicalization and violent extremism that contribute to further destabilization. And transnational and global threats to security simply cannot be tackled alone.

Excellencies,

To make the European security architecture more resilient we must replace the current culture of confrontation with one of cooperation and joint action. We need to find ways to re-engage in joint efforts to strengthen security across the whole OSCE area. This will be a challenging and long-term task – but the truth is, we have no other option.

We must remember that we have a shared responsibility for peace and security in Europe. Here we should look back to the roots of the Helsinki process and values it was based on and learn from the commitment of those Cold War leaders to work together. In a time of much deeper divisions than today, they found the courage and political will to achieve a pragmatic compromise and balancing act around a comprehensive concept and fundamental principles of security that served us well for decades.

Restoring trust and confidence among OSCE participating States while respecting our fundamental shared principles and commitments should be the essential elements of our joint endeavor. In spite of all that is happening, the Helsinki principles remain valid. They do not need to be reconsidered. Instead we must work together to reaffirm them in good faith, strengthen them, and make them more difficult to defy.

With this in mind, I convened an informal and inclusive high-level meeting in Helsinki next month to address the broader implications of the current crisis on European security, and on the OSCE in particular. My Troika colleagues, ministers of Switzerland and Germany, will be there as well. We will look for common ground on how to move our security dialogue and cooperation forward. Some of the key questions for discussion include:

- How can we promote a shift from confrontation to cooperation? Are there security challenges on which we can work together and engage in constructive cooperation?
- How can we ensure that the principles and commitments that all OSCE participating

States have committed to uphold are respected and implemented fully and in good faith?

- And how can we strengthen the capacity of the OSCE to address current and future challenges to our security, including preventing and resolving conflicts?

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to refer to the experience of Serbia. Our recent past has left us with difficult legacies, but we have been working hard to overcome them and to set a positive and inclusive agenda for the future. The OSCE has played an important role in Serbia's transition, and in the Western Balkans more generally, supporting a wide range of reforms as well as regional cooperation and reconciliation. We have benefited from the OSCE presence in the region, and I firmly believe that OSCE Field Operations provide valuable contribution to their host countries. The OSCE's inclusive platform for dialogue and joint action – one of the key outcomes of the Helsinki process – is an important mechanism for stability, not only in the Western Balkans, but throughout the OSCE region. OSCE Field Operations should not be pressured to close under artificial pretense. At the same time, it is important that field operation should work in partnership with host countries.

Trust can be destroyed quickly, but it takes a long time to rebuild it. We need to take a number of small steps to restore confidence. To do so, we first need a collective call to reframe our dialogue around a positive, forward-looking agenda. But we must act now, because time is running out.

The OSCE is a unique and invaluable asset for the international community. The current crisis has underscored its enduring strengths and its utility as the organization best suited to bridge divides and facilitate cooperative solutions. If we want to ensure that the OSCE can continue to carry out its work effectively in the future, we must invest more in the Organization, both politically and in terms of resources. And then we must work together to put it to good use.

Thank you.