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Sofia, 6 December 2004
Statement by Mrs. Brigita Schmögnerová,
Executive Secretary

Mr. Deputy Minister, Mr. Secretary General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The United Nations and the OSCE are confronted with the same task: how to better respond to security challenges of the 21st century. The Report of the United Nations Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, which is assumed to further stimulate the United Nations reform, includes economic and social threats, including poverty, infectious diseases and environmental degradation, among the six main clusters of threats with which the world must be concerned now and in the decades ahead. It also urges the United Nations to cooperate more closely with regional organisations and to recognize – in an innovative way – the role of regional organisations in security. The member States of UNECE and OSCE recognized earlier that the two organisations working together could address new security challenges more effectively than alone. That is why they instructed us, the Secretary General of OSCE and the Executive Secretary of UNECE to sign a Memorandum of Understanding.

By signing this MoU, UNECE and OSCE are already taking a step towards implementing these recommendations. We have a solid basis to build on: the long history of cooperation between our organisations. UNECE has since 1996 been providing reports to the sessions of the Economic Forum on the implementation of OSCE commitments in the economic and environmental field. Our organisations have worked together in implementing a number of projects, in particular in the environmental field. The two Villars seminars co-organised by UNECE and OSCE provided a useful forum to discuss the complicated relationship between conflict prevention and security on the one hand and economic development on the other, and the recent Vienna workshop opened discussions on early warning mechanisms.

The Secretary General and I are going to appoint, as foreseen by the MoU, a Joint Working Group as well as focal points. Their task will be to manage day-to-day cooperation, like the preparation of the next review session, the work on improvement of the review process and the development of a joint early warning mechanism. We will explore new areas of cooperation, like joint work with the private sector to encourage PPP-s and responsible investment, which would contribute to stability and security. UNECE could offer decision-making bodies of OSCE the economic and environmental information relevant for security and conflict prevention. This, in turn, would strengthen the ability of OSCE to provide clear and relevant political signals to international financial and other organisations with economic agendas, as foreseen by its Strategy Document.

Coordination whenever necessary – through regular expert level contacts and high-level meetings as foreseen by the MoU – and cooperation will I hope improve the ability of both organisations to deliver and meet the expectations of member States.

It is our intention to fully involve member States in the development of new forms and areas of cooperation. I stand ready to brief the Permanent Council of the OSCE or the Sub-committee on Economic and Environmental Activities on current work, new strategies and reform plans of the UNECE. I also hope that the Secretary General will be able to address the sixtieth Session of UNECE in February 2005. We expect member States to provide the Secretariats with overall guidance on the main direction and content of future cooperation between the two organisations.

Finally, I would like to thank the Inter-Secretariat Task Force for having prepared and negotiated the MoU and also Delegates who actively participated in giving this document its final shape.

I trust that the MoU signed today will form the basis of a close and long-term partnership between UNECE and OSCE. I will work actively with the Secretary General to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by this new partnership.