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**REPORT BY THE CHAIRPERSON
OF THE**

OSCE ASIAN PARTNER FOR CO-OPERATION GROUP

**TO THE
TWENTY-SEVENTH MEETING OF THE
MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

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During its Chairmanship of the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group in 2020, Slovakia focused on promoting and strengthening an open and inter-active dialogue. In elaborating the agenda of the Group, Slovakia worked with the Albanian OSCE Chairmanship and in particular, the Asian Partners to ensure the agenda reflected also their priorities and followed a demand-driven approach. The collaboration ensured that the agenda corresponded to the interests and concerns of the Asian Partner countries and supported the priorities of the OSCE Chairmanship.

In 2020, due to the COVID-19 restrictions, all five meetings of the Asian Partners for Co-operation Group were held virtually, nonetheless allowing the OSCE participating States and Asian Partners to engage in timely discussions of key security issues of interest to all sides and share best practices and experiences with each other. Each meeting featured speakers from one of the Asian Partner countries, as well as presentations on the chosen topics by experts from international organizations, diplomats, academia and civil society.

The first meeting of the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group held on 5 June was dedicated to the topic of “Peacekeepers as early peacebuilders: Thailand’s Practical Approach to Sustainable Peace” and organized in partnership with Thailand. H. E. Radomír Boháč, Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the OSCE and Chairperson of the Asian Partners for Co-operation Group, highlighted that this meeting intended to provide an opportunity for OSCE participating States and Partners to share their views and experiences in achieving sustainable peace. This contributed to the thematic priority set by Slovakia to promote active co-operation and dialogue. H.E. OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger discussed the OSCE’s significant experience in peacebuilding, both through its field operations and an expanding array of activities of OSCE Institutions and the thematic departments in the OSCE Secretariat. He emphasized the active involvement of the OSCE, together with the international partners, in conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes. Secretary General Greminger referred to, among others, the Geneva International Discussions (GID) and Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM), the Conflict dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference, or ‘Minsk Group’, as well as the Transdniestrian Settlement Process, and the Trilateral Contact Group. The Secretary General also commented on the 25th Anniversary of the OSCE Asian

Partnership for Co-operation and noted the importance of the 2019 Ministerial Council Decision on renaming of the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group in Bratislava, which, as he underscored, was a further step toward more substantial engagement based on meaningful political dialogue and practical co-operation. H.E. Ambassador Igli Hasani, Permanent Representative of Albania and Chairperson of the Permanent Council, reviewed the priorities of the Albanian OSCE Chairmanship in 2020. H.E. Morakot Sriswasdi, Permanent Representative of Thailand focused on Thailand's peacekeeping experiences. She indicated that since Thailand has joined the UN in 1946, it has participated in more than 20 peace and humanitarian missions with approximate number of 24,000 Thai service members. Two Thai military officers participated in the thematic discussion. Colonel Nattapol Seangchan, an experienced lead national planner discussed the rationalization of applying the doctrine of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) in peacekeeping, while Colonel Narongrit Panigabutr, former Commanding Officer of Thai Infantry Battalion in Darfur, highlighted Thailand's experiences of achieving sustainable peace through sustainable development. Ambassador Tuula Yrjölä, Director of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre and Deputy Head of the OSCE Secretariat, presented on the co-operation between the UN and the OSCE in the context of the OSCE's efforts in sustaining peace and the organization's contributions to peacebuilding and peacekeeping efforts in the OSCE region. Ms. Katarína Kertysová, Policy Fellow, European Leadership Network (ELN), Perspectives 20-30 participant, focused on youth perspective of importance of peacekeeping and international co-operation.

The second meeting of the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group held on 10 July focused on "Combating Corruption" and was organized in partnership with Japan. H.E. Radomír Boháč, Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the OSCE, Chairperson of the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group opened the meeting by commenting on the timely discussion of this topic in the context of the OSCE Asian Partnership shortly after the OSCE High-level conference on *Good governance and the fight against corruption in the digital era* held on 6 July 2020. H.E. Ambassador Akira Mizutani, Permanent Representative of Japan, introduced the thematic session and made reference to several OSCE Ministerial Decisions on corruption, such as Ministerial Council Decision No. 5/14 on the prevention of corruption and Ministerial Council Decision No. 11/04 on Combatting Corruption. The first speaker of the thematic discussion, Mr. Shimizu Chitaru, Director of the International Safety and Security Cooperation Division, Foreign Policy Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, presented Japan's efforts and commitments focusing on the G20 Anti-Corruption Working Group (ACWG) under

Japan's Presidency in 2019. His presentation was followed by Dr. Oyamada Eiji, Professor at Doshisha University in Kyoto, who focused on reflection of anticorruption initiative by global community and comparison of anti-corruption assistance by the international donor agencies such as the World Bank, UNDP, EU, USAID and DFID. He also discussed anti-corruption measures in Japan and the importance of preventive measures in combatting corruption. As the 2020 Albanian OSCE Chairmanship has put anti-corruption at the top of the OSCE's agenda, Professor Paola Severino, Special Representative of the Chairman-in-Office on Combating Corruption, shared the Albanian perspective on the matter. Mrs. Judita Brzobohatá, the Corruption Prevention Department, the Government Office of the Slovak Republic, presented Slovak's efforts and activities in the area of corruption prevention, including the main priorities of the Slovak Anti-Corruption Policy for the years 2019 -2023 as well as the electronic application of the corruption risks management system. After the thematic discussion, a number of delegations delivered their statements, commending the speakers and sharing their countries' best practices on combatting corruption.

On 3 September, the 2020 OSCE Albanian Chairmanship initiated an OSCE Permanent Council meeting dedicated to the OSCE Asian Partnership for Co-operation. The Slovak 2020 APCG Chairmanship and the Asian Partners contributed to reviewing the OSCE Asian co-operation together with the participating States with reference also to this year's 25th anniversary of the partnership. The meeting honoured the continuously open and interactive dialogue with the Asian Partners based on a demand-driven approach for the topics discussed within the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group and the strong focus on sharing experiences and lessons learned between the OSCE and its Asian Partners.

The 2020 OSCE Asian Conference on "Multilateral Responses to the Global Security Challenges" took place on 12-13 October via Zoom. The Conference was organized in partnership with the Republic of Korea and was originally scheduled to take place in Seoul. All five Asian Partners for Co-operation (Afghanistan, Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Thailand) and 30 OSCE participating States attended. More than 151 political representatives and policy experts, as well as practitioners from international, regional, and sub-regional organizations, academia, business, and civil society from across the OSCE's participating States and Asian Partners for Co-operation gathered to explore ways of tackling global security challenges. The opening session was co-chaired by H.E. Ambassador Chae-Hyun Shin, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the OSCE and H.E.

Ambassador Katarína Žáková, Deputy Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the OSCE. During the opening session, keynote speeches were delivered by H.E. Amb. Taeho Lee, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea, H.E. Ambassador Ingrid Brocková, State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic (*via video message*), H. E. Agron Tare, Deputy Minister, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Albania, and H.E. Ambassador Tuula Yrjölä, Officer-in-Charge/ Secretary General, Director of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre and Deputy Head of the OSCE Secretariat. The opening speakers' remarks were followed by three thematic sessions. Session 1 focused on "Regional Confidence- and Security-Building Measures (CSBMs) and Exchanges of Best Practices between Europe and Asia", Session 2 featured discussions on "Mitigating Trans-border Environmental Risks and Challenges", while Session 3 was dedicated to "Nexus between security and access to information in the context of COVID 19 pandemic". The closing remarks were delivered by H.E. Byung-ha Chung, Director-General for International Organisations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea, and Ms. Erida Dobrushki, Minister Plenipotentiary, Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Albania to the International Organisations in Vienna. Both speakers emphasized the importance of cooperative security when addressing global challenges.

Back to back with the 2020 OSCE Asian Conference, on 14 October, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea with support of the OSCE Secretariat organised the Inter-Regional Conference on the Impact of Emerging Technologies on International Security and Terrorism. Ambassador BAE Jongin for International Security Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, opened the conference, followed by Ambassador Alena Kupchyna, Co-ordinator of Activities to Address Transnational Threats. The event gathered more than 170 representatives from over 50 countries. Experts from the public and private sector spoke about the most pressing issues in the field of emerging technologies with a first session looking at the impact of emerging technologies on international security, and a second session focusing on the impact of emerging technologies on terrorism including challenges and opportunities.

The third meeting of the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group held on 30 October focused on "Trade facilitation and the Lapis Lazuli Route" and was organised in co-operation with Afghanistan. H. E. Katarína Žáková, Deputy Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the OSCE and Acting Chairperson of the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group opened

the meeting. She briefly discussed the Lapis Lazuli Route Agreement that has been developed with a view to enhance regional economic integration and trade-based connectivity between the member countries. H.E. Ambassador Khojesta Fana Ebrahimkhel, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the OSCE, delivered her opening remarks. Ambassador Ebrahimkhel noted that it was her last OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group meeting co-organized with the OSCE as it was the end of her ambassadorial tenure in Vienna. She then focused on the Lapis Lazuli Route Agreement, noting that it was an important milestone in the collective efforts. The implementation of the agreement would make a significant contribution to the establishment of an integrated transit and transport system among the contracting parties, and more broadly, to the expansion of economic and cultural links between Asia and Europe. The first speaker of the thematic discussion, Mr. Ghullam Ali Farzam, Deputy of Directorate General of Economic Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, delivered his remarks on behalf of the Deputy Foreign Minister Meerwais Nab. Mr. Farzam emphasized the importance of strengthening the ties between the OSCE and its Asian Partners for Co-operation reiterating the significance of Afghanistan's geographical position. H.E. Ľubomír Golian, Special Representative of the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Slovakia for Afghanistan and Pakistan, was the second speaker of the thematic discussion. Following the speakers' presentations, several delegations took the screen, many of them noting the need for regional stability in ensuring economic connectivity.

On 9-10 November, the Secretariat's Transnational Threats Department and External Co-operation Section, in close co-operation with the Office of the Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, with the support of the Slovak Chair of the OSCE Asian Partners Group, and the OSCE Border Management Staff College, organized the Roundtable on "Leveraging Innovation and Technology to Address 21st Century Challenges and Crises across the OSCE and Asian Partners for Co-operation". The blended online event was joined by nearly 180 participants from across the entire OSCE area.

The roundtable focused on the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on border agencies' operations, and on a number of serious transnational security threats from trafficking in human beings to terrorist activities. Challenges related to misuse of technology for terrorist purposes, and other transnational crimes were addressed by experts representing each of the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation. The innovative use of emerging technologies, which included Biometrics and Advance Passenger Information/Passenger Name Records Systems to

help address the cross-border movement of potential foreign terrorist fighters and criminals, was also discussed. The importance of the protection of human rights when applying these technologies was highlighted by several international experts.

The fourth meeting of the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group focused on “20 years on: UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security” and was organized jointly with Australia. After H.E. Katarína Žáková, Deputy Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the OSCE and Acting Chairperson of the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group delivered her opening remarks, H.E. Julie-Ann Guivarra, Australian Ambassador for Gender Equality, contributed to the discussion via a video statement. Among other things, Ambassador Guivarra focused on the challenges of the COVID-19 crisis imposed particularly on women. She stated that the need for National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security cannot be underestimated, mentioning that Australia is currently in the process of introducing its second such plan to facilitate women’s participation in response to COVID-19. As next speaker of the thematic discussion, H. E. Peter Hulényi, Director of the UN Department, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic highlighted the importance of exploring the linkages between gender entrepreneurship and sustainable development, especially during the current COVID-19- related global health crisis, when many women have to rely on themselves as main breadwinners. He also dwelled upon the Slovak efforts in implementing WPS Agenda, focusing on the National Action Plan. Ms. Amarsanaa Darisuren, Senior Advisor on Gender Issues at the Secretariat of the OSCE highlighted the efforts in advancing the WPS Agenda by the OSCE and by its Gender Section in particular. Following the presentations by the speakers, several delegations took the floor, discussing their countries’ efforts in promoting WPS Agenda and agreeing on the importance of the gender perspective in the comprehensive security approach. In her closing remarks, Ms. Darisuren indicated that the role of regional organizations is very valuable in the implementation of the WPS Agenda on the national level, adding that WPS Agenda has great transnational potential. She stressed the need to identify existing barriers in the women’s participation in the conflict cycle and called for the recognition of unpaid work as a factor preventing women from participation in all stages of the conflict cycle.

At the 2020 Tirana Ministerial Council, a Declaration on Co-operation with the OSCE Asian Partners was successfully adopted by the Ministers of the OSCE participating States. The document, among others, welcomed the active engagement of the Asian Partners in OSCE

events and activities and renewed the OSCE's commitment to deepen and expand dialogue and co-operation with its Asian Partners.

The fifth meeting of the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group held on 11 December was organised in partnership with the Republic of Korea and was dedicated to "Addressing Challenges of Emerging Technologies and Cybersecurity". H.E. Igli Hasani, Ambassador, Chairperson of the Permanent Council, Permanent Representative of Albania to the OSCE, delivered the opening remarks. He indicated that cyber security is high on the Albanian agenda and mentioned the events dedicated to the topic which were held under the Albanian Chairmanship. Amb. Hasani emphasized the need for both pS and PfC to remain effective in the multilateral efforts to ensure stability in the cyber space. H. E. Katarína Žáková, Deputy Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the OSCE and Acting Chairperson of the Asian Partners for Co-operation Group discussed the 16 pioneering CBMs adopted through Permanent Council in 2013 and stated that the OSCE cannot act alone in the field of cybersecurity, strong cooperation and coordination is needed across national, regional and international spheres. Professor YOO Joonkoo, Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security, Republic of Korea, was the first speaker of the thematic discussion. He discussed both the benefits and potential threats posed by ICT and emerging technology. Professor YOO also indicated that at the bilateral level, the Institute leads consultations with various partners including the EU, at the same time keenly observing the work done by the UNGGE. The next speaker, H. E. Marcel Peško, Ambassador-at-large, Hybrid Threats and Enhancing Resilience Unit, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, reminded the participants the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the ICT and cybersecurity, pointing out how common cyber-attacks have become in recent months. He noted that security challenges online affect everyone and no single country can tackle them on its own. At present, many countries have very developed capacities, while others need more support, therefore, Amb. Peško suggested, the OSCE needs to focus on providing assistance to those who need it most. H.E. Károly Dán, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Hungary to the OSCE, outlined his Adopt-a-CBM initiative, which encourages individual countries to volunteer and take ownership of one of the 2016 CBMs, team up with others and thus create a group of countries dealing with one CBM. The first one taken was CBM 3 taken up by Switzerland and Germany, Serbia initiated work on CBM 9, doing comprehensive work on it, while France and Germany are leading the CBM 15 and 16. Ms. Szilvia Toth, Cyber Security Officer at the OSCE Secretariat, was the final speaker of the thematic discussion. She underscored the significance

of the Korean Inter-regional conferences, which have been organized annually since 2017, with every second conference being dedicated to the issue of cybersecurity. Discussing the 2020 Inter-regional Conference, she noted the high interest from embassies from other regions, such as Arabic and Latin American countries. The thematic discussion was followed by the presentation of the booklet on 25 years of OSCE Asian Partnership for Co-operation. The booklet includes all relevant historical documents, details of current and past projects, as well as activities implemented in the context of the OSCE Asian Partnership. It is uploaded on the OSCE website and will be made available in printed format. As the final speaker of the agenda, Ms. Marietta König, Senior External Co-operation Officer, Office of the OSCE Secretary-General, presented on past and upcoming OSCE activities, projects and events of special relevance to the Asian Partners.

The 2020 Slovak Chairmanship of the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group expresses its sincere appreciation to all the Asian Partners for Co-operation and the participating States for their meaningful and dedicated engagement in promoting this partnership as a platform for an open and mutually enriching exchange of experiences particularly under the experiences challenges with view to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Slovakia wishes every success to the incoming Albanian Chair of the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group and encourages to continue advancing an open and frank exchange, guided by the commitments reflected in the 2020 Tirana Ministerial Council Declaration on Co-operation with the OSCE Asian Partners.