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General Committee on Political Affairs and Security,
Meeting on 22 February, 15.00 – 17.00

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen,

As rapporteur of the "General Committee on Political Affairs and Security" I look forward to present my report and draft resolution before our annual session in Kiev in the beginning of July. I will take this opportunity to inform you about my initial considerations concerning my report.

As you all know, there are still many problems to deal with in the OSCE area. Including a number of so-called frozen conflicts which remain to be solved. However, in the 1st Committee report this year it is my intention to focus on two main topics rather than spread the attention to a wide range of issues. We need to focus.

On this background I have chosen to concentrate on the following two issues:

- Energy Security in the OSCE Area
- Belarus

Please let me explain why I have decided to focus on these two particular topics, what overall messages I intend to include, and how I plan to proceed.

Firstly, Energy Security:

Energy Security has become one of the top issues at the international agenda. Few issues have more impact on the well-being and prosperity of people than energy security. Energy provides the very basis for economic development and growth. All forecasts indicate that our energy dependence will grow in the future – growing populations, developing economies and rising standards of living all point in one direction.

Often we seem to take secure energy supplies for granted but events at the beginning of 2005 reminded us, that energy supply in the OSCE area maybe is not that secured after all.

Energy security is a global challenge. National policies are no longer enough to provide secure access to energy. We need to work together, energy consumers as well as energy producers.

I strongly believe that it is an issue, which is highly relevant to deal with within an OSCE framework. I do not intend to suggest that OSCE should aspire to become an international energy

organization. Yet, energy is an issue of strategic importance to the stability and development of the OSCE member states that are among the major energy producers, consumers and transit countries. OSCE can serve as a unique platform to enhance the dialogue on energy security.

Also, the 2003 Maastricht Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension and the 2006 Ministerial Decision on Energy Security Dialogue affirm that the OSCE is an appropriate forum for the debate on energy security.

For the same reason I welcome tomorrow's general debate on energy security in the OSCE area. I am sure that this debate will serve as a source of inspiration to the rapport and draft resolution I am going to present to the Assembly in a few months. In addition I intend to have a close dialogue with experts within the energy security field, including Mr. Bernard Snoy, Coordinator of OSCE's Economic and Environmental Activities.

Secondly, the situation in Belarus:

Both OSCE PA's Berlin Declaration 2002 and its Rotterdam Declaration 2003 included resolutions on Belarus. Since its establishment in 1998 the OSCE PA's Working Group on Belarus has been assisting in the development of democracy in Belarus and to facilitate national reconciliation.

Regrettably, I feel there is a need to include Belarus once again in OSCE PA's annual declaration. There is still a need for democratization and reform in Belarus.

For that purpose I gladly accepted the Assembly's president, Mr. Göran Lennmarker's invitation to join the Working Group on Belarus.

I have already met with the Ad Hoc Groups chairperson, Ms. Uta Zapf, in Copenhagen and I am going to Minsk mid-March to attend PA's seminar on "Exploring the Opportunities for Belarus within the European Neighbourhood Policy."

Some of the thoughts that will guide my work on Belarus are the following:

- The people of Belarus has the same right to true democracy, human rights, freedom of expression, and rule of law as the rest of the peoples of the OSCE area,
- Belarus must live up to its commitments as member of OSCE,
- The Belarusian authorities need to respect the right of the people of Belarus to
 - Elect their leaders democratically
 - Express themselves freely, and have access to independent information,
 - Set-up associations in the civil society,
 - Fair and transparent treatment by the judicial system,
- Support to the OSCE office in Minsk

Some of the thoughts that will guide my work are the following:

- Energy security is a global challenge,
- The concept of energy security should be broadened to include all aspects of the value-added chain,
- The interdependence between producing, consuming and transiting countries requires a strengthened partnership,
- Dialogue and co-operation between countries, international organisations, industry and civil society need to be enhanced,
- Development of energy sources not having an adverse effect on the climate must be promoted,
- Critical energy infrastructure must be protected against terrorism and natural disasters.

In addition to the two subjects already mentioned, I will follow the situation in Kosovo with great interest as well. If new developments relevant to the OSCE PA occur which go beyond the scope of the excellent report from 2006 by former Rapporteur Mr. Grossruck and the Brussels Declaration, I will consider to include some issues concerning the OSCE field mission in Kosovo in my report.

In conclusion, I can assure you that I will do my best to write a balanced and fair report, which can form the basis for a good and clear resolution in Kiev. I am looking forward to the discussion here today, and the further cooperation with you, the distinguished members of the 1st Committee.

Thank you for your attention!