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Utkast

Welcome address by the First Deputy Speaker Tobias Billström at the Helsinki +40 seminar “The OSCE’s Role in (re)consolidating European Security”, Stockholm 11 March 2015

Dear colleagues and guests,

It’s a pleasure for me to welcome you all to the Swedish Parliament and to this seminar on European Security. I’m glad that we now are able to finalise this project that has been on our agenda for more than a year, and that this can be done in cooperation with the Swedish Institute of International Affairs. This seminar is the third leg in the line of seminars - from Moscow - to Washington - to Stockholm, preparing input to the final Colloquium in Helsinki in July.

Sweden, the Swedish parliament and Swedish parliamentarians are strongly committed to the important work of the OSCE. The Swedish Delegation to the OSCE, led by Mr. Kent Härstedt, is actively and devotedly engaged in the work of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly – by participating and contributing to the work of the Assembly, and as active participants in election observations, most recently in Tajikistan 1 March.

Europe in 1975 – divided into east and west, characterised by a lack of confidence and a lack of dialogue. In that context the Helsinki Final Act represented an important breakthrough, the beginning of a new era, and a new and broadened approach to security issues. The inclusion of the economic-environmental and the human dimensions marked the beginning of a more comprehensive, and a more constructive way of facing the challenges. It moved focus from security as a matter of interest for military headquarters to a matter of interest for the people of Europe – and beyond.

Since then we have had the privilege to witness a transformed Europe: the breakdown of the wall between east and west, the birth of new independent states, a firm commitment to democratic values, increased trade and cultural exchanges, higher standard of living. However, unfortunately we have also witnessed civil wars, human tragedies, environmental disasters, an economic crisis, a more unstable Europe and – in the recent years – a growing threat to the democratic values and the respect for international treaties and human rights.

Europe in 2015 – is a strong actor on the international scene committed to the values of human rights and democracy, a Europe with a strong will to overcome the challenges caused by the downturn and a strong advocate for dialogue and inclusion. But, at the same time a Europe which is facing polarisation, the consequences of unsolved conflicts

and the challenge of maintaining trust between countries and people on a new political arena.

I firmly believe that trust and dialogue are keys to the future development, but trust and dialogue must be based on mutual respect.

Today you will discuss the current situation for Security in Europe and the future role of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. The parliamentary dimension is essential as the link to the people of Europe. I look forward to the result of your work and I hope you allow me to give you a challenge for your coming discussions: How can we broaden the engagement and ensure that the intentions and ideas from Helsinki 1975 are passed forward and transformed into the complex challenges that Europe is facing today?