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**Statement of Iceland in response to the Address by the  
Secretary General of the Council of Europe Ms. Marija Pejčinović Burić,  
at the 1419 Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council,  
20 April 2023, Vienna**

*Thank you Mr. Chair,*

Iceland warmly welcomes Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Marija Pejčinović Burić, back to the OSCE Permanent Council, and thanks you for your detailed and important remarks.

Again, we meet against the backdrop of Russia's full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine, a blatant violation of international law and a manifestation of the assault on the international rules-based order.

Daily we witness the horrors of war, where Russia has demonstrated complete disregard for human life and dignity. The impact of this war – the destruction, suffering and loss of life – is simply beyond comprehension.

Russia's war so clearly violates everything that our two key European organizations – the OSCE and the Council of Europe – stand for, and the fundamental principles and commitments upon which they were founded.

*Madame Secretary General,*

It is within this context that Iceland assumed the Presidency of the Council of Europe, now within its final weeks and less than four weeks away from the fourth Summit of the Heads of State and Government in Reykjavík.

The Icelandic Presidency has put human rights, democracy and rule of law front and center. We have also prioritised the rights of children and youth, equality, and the environment.

Support and solidarity with Ukraine has become one of the main priorities of our Presidency. The Council of Europe is ready to play an important role in holding Russia accountable for its atrocities. In February, Iceland, in close cooperation with Ukraine, put a draft decision to the Committee of Ministers to take the first step towards setting up a Council of Europe register of damages caused by the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine.

Currently the decision and modalities of the Register are being discussed. The Register will be established by an Enlarged Partial Agreement – meaning that observer states and others can be founding partners of this hopefully international endeavour. This will be an important step and a strong message of support to Ukraine.

The Reykjavík Summit will be a critical opportunity for leaders to convene and *unite around our values*, hopefully strengthening our collective resolve and leading to real and lasting positive impact for the citizens of Europe.

More than 90% of leaders have already confirmed, and the Summit will also welcome delegations from observer states and partner organisation, including OSCE Chair-in-Office, H.E. Foreign Minister of North-Macedonia, Bujar Osmani. We have also received confirmation from the OSCE Secretary General, Helga M. Schmid. We look forward to welcoming you to Reykjavík.

*Madame Secretary General,*

Your visit here today underlines the importance of continued and close cooperation between the OSCE and the Council of Europe. This long-standing, complementary relationship is based on the promotion of human rights, rule of law, and democracy.

With a war in Europe, and the democratic backsliding preceding it, it has never been as important that the OSCE and the Council of Europe continue to reinforce each other's work.

None of our rights can be taken for granted and we must continue to demonstrate strength, resilience, and unity. We must never tire of advocating for democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and a peace that is based on justice.

*I thank you.*