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Statement

by

H.E. Ambassador Carmel Inguanez

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Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Malta

At the 16th OSCE Ministerial Council

Helsinki, 4th – 5th December 2008

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates

Allow me first to express the appreciation of my delegation for the warm hospitality extended to us by our Finnish hosts and to thank the Finnish Chairmanship for the efficient manner in which it has organized this Ministerial Council.

I also wish to convey my Government's appreciation to the Government of Finland for the leadership it has shown and to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, for the success with which you and your team have implemented the priorities of your chairmanship during challenging times for the OSCE and for security in our region.

Malta naturally fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by France on behalf of the European Union. I nevertheless wish to make a few additional remarks from a national perspective.

Mr. Chairman,

It has been said that the future has a habit of arriving unannounced. The 21st century has commenced in ways many had not foreseen. Threats and challenges different from those previously experienced have emerged, many of which are also different in scope and nature from anything we have seen. A number of these challenges have led some to call into question the effectiveness of global institutions that, for many years, have served well the international community. Calls for fresh thinking and novel approaches to world governance have become more persistent.

In recent weeks, ideas have been put forward with the aim of launching a debate on the future of security in Europe. Malta believes that any debate should be held within the framework of the OSCE as it is the only security organization that includes all Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian States on an equal footing and since it is underpinned by values and commitments that are also vital for the maintenance of peace and security in Europe. Malta would also support convening an OSCE Summit at an appropriate stage of this process.

Mr. Chairman,

Any debate on the future of security in Europe must not undermine any of our existing commitments and should strengthen, and not weaken, existing organizations, including the OSCE, advancing European security in the process. Our commitment to the OSCE remains strong and we urge participating States to adopt without further delay the draft Convention on the International Legal Personality, Legal Capacity, and Privileges and Immunities of the OSCE. Malta reiterates its support for the draft Convention and believes that the time has now come to adopt it, consequently placing our Organization on a stronger footing.

Mr. Chairman,

The situation in Georgia continues to be of serious concern. We call on all parties to respect the six-point agreement and encourage them to pursue the constructive approach shown within the framework of the Geneva process. During the recent

crisis, the OSCE played an invaluable role in lessening tensions on the ground and has also shown its value as a unique forum for dialogue and conflict resolution. We also would like to express our continued support for the work of the OSCE Mission in Georgia which is making an important contribution to the implementation of the ceasefire agreement and the promotion of dialogue and confidence-building among the parties involved.

Mr. Chairman,

The OSCE region today faces an increasingly diverse and complex range of challenges, some of which are driven by non-State actors such as organized criminal networks that also draw strength from different factors including weak economies and environmental degradation. These challenges include the phenomenon of illegal migration, fundamentalism, human trafficking, climate change, terrorism as well as high food and oil prices and the possible onset of a global recession.

Instability resulting from the illegal movement of people across borders in unprecedented numbers remains an unsettling phenomenon with clear security implications. Illegal migration continues to present Malta with enormous challenges almost on a daily basis. We are convinced that poverty, underdevelopment, instability, crime and corruption remain the core reasons motivating people to move in such large numbers. We see a pressing need to develop a better understanding of the specific characteristics and causes of migratory movements, including in regions adjacent to the OSCE, before targeted and more effective action can be mobilized. The development of a multi-faceted approach that confronts the international network of criminal organizations and comprehensively addresses underdevelopment, promotes good governance and the rule of law is urgently needed. In this sense, the OSCE has an important role to play towards this end. We are therefore particularly pleased that the theme for the 17th Economic and Environmental Forum will address migration management and its linkages with economic, social and environmental policies to the benefit of security and stability in the OSCE region.

Mr. Chairman,

Admittedly the security implications of climate change are difficult to anticipate and also differ from region to region. Malta's small size means that its contribution to climate change is very limited. At the same time, we are particularly vulnerable to its effects. For us, rising sea levels constitute a serious threat, with our low-lying areas susceptible to flooding which, in turn, would contaminate our limited fresh water supplies.

In our view, these issues will increase in relevance in the years to come. Malta believes that the OSCE has a role to play in addressing the security implications of climate change in line with its comprehensive approach to security. We hope that this Ministerial meeting will build on the Declaration adopted in Madrid last year which acknowledged that the OSCE has a complementary role to play in addressing this challenge.

Mr. Chairman,

A serious challenge to our shared security comes in the form of terrorism which is a threat transnational in nature but which cannot be defeated by any one State. The potential risk of terrorist acts with devastating consequences remains a continuing threat. Malta believes that the OSCE continues to play an important role in cooperative efforts to counter terrorism. Similarly, the accumulation and uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons constitutes a serious threat to international peace and security and, as such, we welcome the adoption by the Ministerial Council of a decision in this regard.

Mr. Chairman,

We believe that further efforts are needed to develop an ever closer relationship between the OSCE and the Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation. From the earliest days of the Helsinki Process, Malta has emphasized the link between security in Europe and security in the Mediterranean. We continue to believe this to be as true today as it was then. The contribution of the Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation adds a vital Mediterranean perspective to the OSCE security debate. A more structured dialogue between the OSCE and the Partners for Cooperation with better follow-up on matters of shared concern such as human trafficking, intolerance, extremism, climate change, terrorism and migration would be to the mutual benefit of Partners for Cooperation and the OSCE region itself.

We view the OSCE as a living demonstration of what can be achieved when States with different cultures and histories come together, even in difficult times, to pursue dialogue and cooperation on issues that affect their common security. In this sense, the OSCE provides a suitable model for the Mediterranean which the countries of the region could usefully follow.

Mr. Chairman,

Malta sees an urgent need to bridge gaps that have emerged between Western societies and the Arab world, by creating new platforms for inter-cultural dialogue such as the Alliance of Civilizations. We believe that the OSCE and the Alliance should intensify their efforts for cooperation through practical projects of mutual benefit and to consider ways in which the Partners for Cooperation could also be involved in these projects.

Mr. Chairman,

At the heart of the OSCE Mission is the promotion of democratic values, rule of law, and human rights to the entire OSCE region and, in this respect, my delegation highly appreciates the work done by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. On this 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, let us re-dedicate ourselves to work towards achieving 'dignity and justice for all of us'.

The OSCE has, over the years, made a valuable contribution to security and stability in Europe and, under your able leadership, Mr. Chairman, the OSCE has increased its relevance and credibility on the world stage. We are confident that this will continue

under the Greek Chairmanship in 2009. I wish to take this opportunity to wish the incoming Chairmanship success in its upcoming endeavours.

Mr. Chairman, the challenges ahead are numerous and the international community will need to mobilize its resources on a wide variety of fronts. At the same time, a clear-eyed analysis of the threats to security and stability in Europe will be essential if we are to ensure that we are up to these challenges, guaranteeing peace, prosperity and freedom for future generations from Vancouver to Vladivostok and from Vilnius to Valletta.

Thank you.