



**Opening Statement by H.E. Mr. Luís Amado,
Minister of State and Foreign Affairs of Portugal,
President of the Council of the European Union**

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies

On behalf of the European Union, I am delighted to address the 15th Ministerial Council of the OSCE. I would like to congratulate you, Minister Moratinos, for your remarkable Chairmanship and express our appreciation for the gracious Spanish hospitality here in Madrid.

A comprehensive approach to security has always been at the heart of the OSCE. The European Union remains firmly committed to the core values of this Organization, namely the promotion of democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, good governance and the rule of law which set the basis for consolidating security and stability in Europe. In our view, the OSCE continues to play a decisive role in guaranteeing European peace and stability, in close cooperation with other international actors, in particular the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations.

South Eastern Europe faces new challenges today. Stability in this region is essential for security in Europe. The EU commends the OSCE for the significant role it has played in the region and hopes it will continue to do so in the future.

The EU appreciates the decisive work of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo (OMIK) and believes its mandate should be extended for another year, irrespective of the outcome of current negotiations on Kosovo. Therefore, the EU would like to encourage all the participating States to adopt a Council Decision that would allow it without further delay. We think there is scope for OMIK to continue to help building a democratic, multi-ethnic, prosperous and stable society.

The EU remains firmly committed to its European Neighbourhood Policy and hopes that the implementation of the Action Plans will continue to

contribute to the stability of our neighbouring regions and thus to the stability of the whole OSCE region.

The EU supports the OSCE in its endeavours to bring a peaceful solution to the frozen conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, Georgia and Moldova.

The Minsk Group and its three Co-Chairs have been working hard to shape a set of fair and balanced basic principles for a peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which has lasted far too long. The EU encourages the continuation of an active dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan and would like to take this opportunity to call on the parties to engage fully in the negotiations.

The EU strongly supports Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The EU reiterates its willingness to contribute to the peaceful resolution of the conflicts in Georgia. We are concerned about the tension in Georgian-Russian relations and emphasize the importance of toning down public rhetoric and call upon both sides to continue the diplomatic dialogue. We value the work of the OSCE in defusing tension, building confidence and working for the reconstruction of the South Ossetian region of Georgia. We support the Economic and Rehabilitation Programme for South Ossetia, Georgia, to which the EU and its member States are major contributors. We believe in its potential to help building confidence between the sides. We would also like to underline the importance of holding regular Steering Committee's meetings and appreciate that one of those could take place in Vienna recently.

The European Union reiterates its firm support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova. The EU noted with satisfaction the meeting of the 5+2 that took place in Odessa on the 23rd October. Although an informal meeting, it was a breakthrough after a long stalemate and constituted a new hope for the continuation of talks in that format. We encourage the parties to use fully the possibilities offered by those meetings. We urge them to build on the positive momentum and to continue negotiations on a peaceful political settlement of the Transnistrian question. These negotiations should aim at reaching a comprehensive solution covering the political, economic and security aspects of the conflict, including the transformation of the peacekeeping operation.

The EU regards the CFE Treaty as the cornerstone of European Security and is deeply concerned by the emerging uncertainties about the future viability of the Treaty should the Russian Federation cease to implement Treaty operations after 12 December. The EU calls on the Russian

Federation to continue to play a full part in the CFE regime while solutions to the current crisis of the CFE regime are being sought and until the Adapted CFE Treaty enters into force.

Mr Chairman,

The EU commends the work of the OSCE field operations, often carried out in difficult conditions. We call on host States to make effective use of the assistance they provide in order to help implement OSCE principles and commitments.

Mr. Chairman,

Cooperation with Central Asia remains a priority for the EU. To achieve this goal, the EU recently approved a Strategy for a new Partnership with Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. We hope that its implementation will further promote, both at bilateral and regional levels, the fulfilment of our common objectives.

European security and stability also go beyond OSCE external borders. In this respect, the EU takes this opportunity to reiterate its commitment to remain actively engaged with our Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Cooperation, on the basis of the OSCE core values. We therefore welcome the principle of an OSCE engagement with Afghanistan focussed on border security.

Mr. Chairman,

In the political-military dimension, we have increased our efforts in the fields of arms control, confidence and security building measures and non proliferation. The Code of Conduct on the political-military aspects of security contributes to the democratic control of armed forces and to the fight against transnational threats of terrorism. The EU welcomes the OSCE's efforts in addressing the risks posed by illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons, including by air, as well as excessive stockpiles of conventional ammunitions and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Given its comprehensive approach to security, the OSCE has also played an important role in addressing the non-military aspects of security such as terrorism and violent extremism and radicalisation that lead to terrorism, border management, travel document security, police training and illicit drug trafficking. In this regard, we commend the initiatives of the Spanish

Chairmanship to tackle these issues, which enabled participating States to enhance their cooperation.

Though we are convinced that the OSCE actively contributes to the worldwide efforts to combat terrorism, the European Union believes that further steps need to be taken. Among these, we could mention cooperation between civil society, business community and governments, the promotion and protection of human rights and rule of law as essential components of counter terrorism activities, the implementation of policies to counter radicalisation and recruitment of terrorists, the intensification of dialogue with the OSCE Partners for Cooperation on matters related to counter terrorism, as well as the reinforcement of international cooperation in the framework of the UN.

Mr Chairman

The EU attaches great importance to the economic and environmental dimension of the OSCE and reiterates its support for the full implementation of the 2003 Maastricht Strategy. We see merit in updating the OSCE agenda on environment related issues, whenever there is scope for a reinforcement of security in its area.

The EU believes that cooperation in the field of the environment, bilateral or regional, is not only beneficial but that it also constitutes an excellent confidence building measure in itself, thus enhancing stability and security.

The EU attaches the utmost importance to the human dimension of security. It constitutes an integral part of the OSCE comprehensive approach to security, both in terms of conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation. We must therefore continue to strive to guarantee the implementation of the human dimension commitments and to draw attention to shortcomings in their implementation.

Human rights defenders play a decisive role in the promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The EU applauds their dedicated work, sometimes under dire circumstances, and reiterates its keen support for the adoption of an OSCE Ministerial Decision on human rights defenders.

Regarding Election Observation, the European Union takes this opportunity to reaffirm its support for the standards and commitments contained in the Copenhagen 1990 Document and further developed since then. Furthermore, the EU fully supports the internationally recognized election

observation activities and methodology of ODIHR. In this context, we are concerned that due to unprecedented restrictions and a number of bureaucratic obstacles, the ODIHR was unable to proceed with its election observation mission of the upcoming Duma elections. The EU calls upon the Russian Federation to enable the ODIHR to observe the 2008 Presidential elections without restrictions and in accordance with established practice.

Allow me also to underline the importance the EU attaches to the close co-operation between the ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, on the basis of the 1997 Cooperation Agreement.

When speaking about the OSCE Institutions, we cannot overlook the valuable work of the High Commissioner on National Minorities and of the Representative on Freedom of the Media. The EU also expresses its appreciation to efforts undertaken by the Special Representative on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. We are determined to continue to cooperate actively with all of them, in accordance with their respective mandates.

Mr. Chairman,

As we gather here in Madrid for our 15th Ministerial Council, let me express the EU's determination to contribute constructively to a balanced and focussed Ministerial Declaration that would demonstrate the vitality of our Organization.

We believe that a decision on the OSCE future chairmanships, based on a sequence for 2009, 2010 and 2011, and acceptable to all parties concerned is also paramount. The EU restates its full confidence in the efforts undertaken by the Spanish Chairmanship to find a consensual solution on this issue.

The EU ascribes great importance to adopting the text of the Convention on the international legal personality, legal capacity and privileges and immunities of the OSCE here in Madrid. We are of the view that this Convention, when adopted, will improve considerably the functioning of the OSCE, including its field operations. We also see merit in devising a Statute or Charter for the OSCE, as long as this does not re-open existing commitments. We would be willing to consider working on such a Statute or Charter. The modalities would need to be agreed on later.

Mr Chairman,

Allow me to conclude by welcoming Finland to the helm of our Organization for the coming year and by conveying to Foreign Minister Ilkka Kanerva our best wishes for success and our support for his incoming Chairmanship.

Thank you

The Candidate Countries Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedoniaⁱ, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, as well as the Republic of Moldova and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

ⁱ Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.