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**STATEMENT BY MR. MICHAEL AMBÜHL, STATE SECRETARY
AND HEAD OF THE DELEGATION OF SWITZERLAND, AT THE
THIRTEENTH MEETING OF THE OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Ljubljana, 5 and 6 December 2005

Mr. Chairman,

It has never been easy to assume the chairmanship of the OSCE. However, since the beginning of the year Slovenia has found itself confronted with challenges that strike at the heart of our Organization. The financial foundations of the OSCE were questioned, and it was the merit of your chairmanship to find solutions in good time so as to ensure that the OSCE could operate smoothly. The work carried out by Slovenia in this eventful year for the OSCE deserves the respect of all of us.

The 30th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act was an event that allowed us to pause in our everyday political business and take a look back. This review filled us with satisfaction for it reminded us of the OSCE's numerous achievements.

Yet it was not easy to get into a celebratory mood. Precisely in a year in which the OSCE was to commemorate an important anniversary the Organization entered a difficult period of self-discovery, the scope of which should not be underestimated. Allow me to touch on three points in this connection.

First, the OSCE finds itself exposed to harsh and sometimes also unfair criticism on several fronts. We have little time for the blanket accusation that the instruments of the OSCE are being misused in order to pursue the interests of certain countries behind the backs of the participating States. The OSCE has never ceased to be a collective enterprise that asks everyone to implement the values that have been achieved through common efforts. Nevertheless, we too feel that unfortunate dividing lines have developed within the Organization. We cannot dismiss the fact that the tendency towards the formation of groups has deprived the once open dialogue — a hallmark of the Organization — of much of its originality and vitality.

Today's security architecture is characterized by a network of institutions that in their own way all promote political exchange. If the OSCE does not return to a dialogue in which all those involved feel equally represented, it will be superseded by other forums.

Second, the institutions and field missions established by the OSCE provide the participating States with services whose degree of development is unparalleled by comparison with the tools of other organizations. However, they present a fragmented picture. Their fragmentary activities prevent their potential from being exploited to the

optimum level. The indecisiveness and unco-ordinated behaviour of the OSCE in the face of the bloody events in Andijan have also drawn attention to this negative state of affairs. If we accept the status quo, we run the risk of letting our Organization's trump card slip out of our hands.

The reform of the OSCE offers a golden opportunity at last to gather together the disparate branches of the Organization in a coherent whole. We do not mean to cram the Organization into a corset. Rather, it is a question of setting goals that reflect the common will of the participating States. This presupposes that our common commitment is guided by the irreversible principles of our community of values. Only then will the OSCE be regarded once more as a credible partner in co-operation, a partner from which everyone profits.

Third, the spectrum of the OSCE agenda has expanded rapidly. The range of topics which delegations and also the ministries in the capital cities have to deal with is astonishing. Hardly a week goes by without an OSCE conference or a seminar on new factual issues. It is sometimes not clear how the proliferation of subjects can be brought into a reasonable relationship with tangible results. We ask ourselves whether this development is not perhaps also an expression of a certain lack of direction on the part of our Organization. Perhaps the time has come to acknowledge the old truism that less is actually more. In our view, the OSCE should focus on its tailor-made core tasks, in particular in the areas of democratization and human rights, and politico-military confidence- and security-building. In addition, the introduction of a topic could be made dependent on a minimum consensus, for example if a given minimum number of participating States believed it useful to consider the topic in question.

The Slovenian chairmanship has made the necessary tools available to the OSCE to enable us to tackle the numerous problems. The report of the Panel of Eminent Persons provides excellent guidelines for a speedy implementation of OSCE reform. We would do well to make use of the dynamics that developed during our fruitful discussions in order to complete the reform next year in line with the "road map". We welcome the Belgian chairmanship and offer it the support of the Swiss delegation.