

ENGLISH only

**Statement by Frans Timmermans,  
Minister for European Affairs of the Kingdom of the  
Netherlands,  
at the 15<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Council of the Organisation for  
Security and Cooperation in Europe, Madrid, 29-30  
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Mr Chairman, Mr Secretary-General, distinguished colleagues and friends,

Let me first thank the Chairman-in-Office, Miguel Angel Moratinos, and his team for the very warm welcome they have given us in this wonderful city of Madrid.

I would like to make four points.

*[OSCE Reform; legal status]*

Last year in Brussels we completed most of the tasks we had set ourselves on the basis of the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons.

Ministers agreed on a whole range of measures, aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of our Organisation and adapting it to the changing transatlantic, European and Eurasian security environment.

One important task required further efforts in 2007 by the participating States, i.e. to provide the OSCE with a legal personality. In doing so, we would be able to complete the long journey from the CSCE-process to the full-fledged international organisation the OSCE is today.

I would like to congratulate participating states on the excellent work by delegations and legal experts. They have succeeded in bringing a Convention to the table with only the matter of the reference to a Charter to be resolved.

Let us not miss this opportunity to reach consensus on this Convention, now that we are closer to agreement than ever before.

*[Implementation of commitments in the Human Dimension]*

Mr Chairman,

The measures worked out on the basis of the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons have enhanced the effectiveness of the work of this Organisation. However, we have not addressed some of the deeper underlying political problems the OSCE is confronted with.

At the Brussels Ministerial Council last year ODIHR's report "Common Responsibility: Commitments and Implementation" presented ministers with a very good evaluation of the state of affairs in the Human Dimension.

In this report ODIHR appealed to participating states to show the necessary political will to fully implement all commitments, enshrined in CSCE and OSCE documents adopted since the early nineties.

Unfortunately, during the past year fundamental differences on OSCE commitments have opened up between participating states. These differences have put in doubt the willingness of all of our partners to continue to live up to both the letter and the spirit of those commitments.

ODIHR has been trying hard to implement the necessary measures to improve its own work. At the same time a number of participating states have called into question the very role and function of ODIHR.

I regret having to refer to unprecedented restrictions which one of the participating states has put to ODIHR, when this Office tried to organise an effective and meaningful mission to observe its parliamentary elections.

I would like to underline that ODIHR's work has always been firmly based on its mandate as approved by the OSCE participating states themselves. Without the operational autonomy on the basis of this mandate ODIHR could never have fulfilled its tasks as effectively as it has.

ODIHR has set the standards for many other international organisations aiming for the same high level of professionalism in election observation.

Attempts by some participating states to change the internal balance between the decision-making bodies and institutions within the OSCE would, if successful, harm the credibility and integrity of ODIHR's work, especially in election observation.

In our view the OSCE commitments on elections and election observation should be strengthened, not weakened.

*[Central Asia; Chairmanship-issue]*

Mr Chairman,

Another element which the Netherlands has consistently underlined is the importance to foster a sense of ownership among all participating states.

In our view this also implies that we remain open to welcoming one of our partners from the Central Asian region as Chairman-in-Office in one of the coming years.

First, such a Chairmanship would be able to focus more sharply on the added value the OSCE can have for this important region.

Second, such a Chairmanship would find itself in an excellent position to involve the OSCE partner Afghanistan more closely in the OSCE's activities in Central Asia, e.g. on border security issues.

Third, such a Chairmanship could launch another effort to build bridges between different groups of participating states with strongly diverging views.

This is why the Netherlands fully supports the efforts of the present Chairmanship to find a solution on the issue of the candidatures for Chairmanships for the sequence 2009-2011.

For the OSCE it remains of the utmost importance that this issue is solved in such a way, that it strengthens the sense of ownership and common responsibility for this Organisation from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

*[CFE Treaty]*

Mr Chairman,

Finally, I would like to add my voice to those who advocated continued dialogue on the future of the conventional arms control regime and accompanying measures, as embodied in the CFE- and Adapted CFE-treaties.

As depositary state for both treaties, the Netherlands has always felt a special responsibility for this cornerstone of European security, which provides all of us with an unprecedented level of transparency and predictability.

We remain open to strengthen this arms control regime and to bring it more up to date. At the same time we acknowledge that such talks will only be productive, after the Adapted CFE Treaty has entered into force.

The Netherlands still hopes that no state will unilaterally suspend the implementation of its obligations under the CFE Treaty. There is only one way forward and that is through continued dialogue on unresolved issues.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.