

Statement
by His Excellency Mr. Alexander Mikhnevich
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus
at the OSCE Ministerial Council (Ljubljana, 5-6 December 2005)

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

This year we are observing the 30th Anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, and it is a high time to assess the results of the work done, to define directions for future development.

A year ago at the OSCE Ministerial Council in Sofia the Delegation of Belarus put forward a number of principle questions on the OSCE reform. We are convinced that without addressing those questions it will be impossible to make the OSCE a truly effective organization, working in the interests of all its participating States.

We welcome launching a meaningful dialogue on the issues of reform in 2005 and note in this respect the importance of the "Panel of Eminent Persons" Report and the OSCE High-Level Consultations.

Continuation of effective and practical work in this direction will be of paramount importance for the Organization's future.

I would like here to emphasize two points of principle.

Firstly, we should not allow the use of the OSCE institutions and structures as mechanisms for exerting political pressure on the participating States.

Secondly, we are witnessing the repeated attempts to establish some kind of hierarchy among the OSCE commitments. Belarus proceeds from equal status of all the commitments and insists that they be applied equally to all participating States.

In this regard we attach special importance to OSCE ODIHR elections observation activities.

Regrettably, we don't see substantial improvements in the work of this OSCE institution yet. In the course of this year we could make sure several times that ODIHR's judgments about absolutely similar facts can be very different depending on which of the participating States those facts are observed in.

We are convinced that without comparative analysis of electoral law and practices of all participating States and revision of the existing modalities of work of OSCE ODIHR missions, it will be impossible to increase confidence in their assessment of elections and to avoid the subjectivity.

Mr. Chairman,

The most recent events in the OSCE area, including outbreaks of violence and mass disorders, have demonstrated that the concept of "multidimensional" security can momentarily acquire a very concrete and tragic meaning.

The issues of transnational challenges were raised today several times already. Without being repetitive, we would like to particularly mention trafficking in human beings whose scope has become truly global. Belarus deliberately highlighted this issue at the recent UN Summit. We believe that the OSCE should become even more actively involved in combating this evil. In this process it is inadmissible to reload the whole burden of responsibility on the "countries of origin". This is a dead-end track. The real progress in

fighting this modern form of slavery can only be achieved through joint efforts, also with “countries of demand”.

In this purpose there is a need for a meaningful dialogue with the OSCE Partners for cooperation, for developing real cooperation between the OSCE and other security organizations. It goes without saying that this interaction must be pursued only on an equitable basis. We must not just “adhere to” or “endorse” decisions and documents adopted by other institutions.

The OSCE’s “first basket” clearly deserves a stronger focus. During our FSC Chairmanship this year we became convinced that the OSCE politico-military dimension has by no means lost its relevance. At the same time, a number of the existing OSCE documents in this area are no longer up to the present geopolitical situation and they need to be revised. We believe that the CFE Treaty should come into force as soon as possible.

There is also a need to further enhance the OSCE economic and environmental dimension. It is our firm belief that there are a number of areas where the OSCE could, provided there are sufficient resources and human capacity in place, make a substantial contribution. We support discussions on the transport theme within the 2006 OSCE Economic Forum.

Dear colleagues,

In 2006 the international community will observe the 20th Anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster that became a tragedy for millions of people in Belarus and other countries. We address the expressions of our appreciation to all the delegations for their support to the Ministerial Declaration on the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, which was initiated by the Republic of Belarus. We also invite all participating States to the International Chernobyl conference to be held in Minsk on in April 2006.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, I would like to underline that preventing new dividing lines from reappearing in the OSCE area, preserving unanimity of participating States with regard to the values and principles that form the basis of our Organization should remain the OSCE’s most important priority for the near future.

It is only through mutually respectful dialogue based on shared values, the respect for sovereign choices of development by every country, that the OSCE can regain its authority, becoming the “organization of the first choice”.

Allow me to express gratitude to the Slovenian Chairmanship for its contribution to the work of the Organization in 2005 and preparation of this Meeting.

We would also like to wish Belgium a successful work as the OSCE Chairman-in-Office in 2006.

Thank you for your attention.