

OSCE Ministerial Council, Athens, 1-2 December 2009

**Statement on behalf of Ireland by the
Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Micheál Martin, T.D.**

Mr. Chairman

I warmly congratulate the Greek Chairmanship for its excellent stewardship of the OSCE over the past twelve months. I would also like to add a special note of thanks to those involved in the smooth organisation of this Ministerial meeting. Greece's famously warm and friendly hospitality is much in evidence here.

Ireland is happy to associate itself with the intervention of Sweden, speaking on behalf of the European Union.

Our Ministerial meeting this year is taking place at a time of greater hope and opportunity in world affairs than when we met last year.

We are, I believe, witnessing a new dynamic in international relations. The Lisbon Treaty has now come into effect. This Treaty will consolidate the EU's voice on the international stage and make it more effective in pursuing many of the shared goals of the international community. The renewed impetus in US-Russian relations has positive potential for all of us, especially in this Organisation.

Encouraging bilateral developments in our region have also, I believe, added to the sense of opportunity and momentum.

The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe itself has played its key role in developing the new dynamic, particularly through the valuable discussions that are taking place under the Corfu process.

I hope we will be able to reach agreement today on the way forward for that process, so that we can chart a solid framework for our ongoing dialogue on European security. This follows our deliberations last year in Helsinki and at the Corfu informal meeting in June. The anchoring of the reform of European security within the OSCE framework is something which I greatly value. Ireland looks forward to discussing the recent proposals from the President of the Russian Federation in this context.

Security is not one dimensional. Ireland is committed to the concept of a common, comprehensive and indivisible security based upon a set of agreed principle and commitments. Adherence to these principles and the implementation of these commitments is crucial for the sustainability of cooperative security.

A key priority for Ireland is to reinforce the existing body of Human Dimension commitments. I look forward to what I hope will be positive decisions today on Human Dimension issues.

Ireland attaches great importance to the role and expertise of the OSCE in the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms and the promotion of the rule of law and democratisation throughout the OSCE area. In this regard, I would like to acknowledge and pay warm tribute to the work of the OSCE institutions - the Representative on Freedom of the Media, the High Commissioner for National Minorities and the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights - which offer invaluable assistance to all participating States as they seek to implement their commitments. Ireland supports wholeheartedly their activities and has made substantial voluntary contributions to them in recent years. ODIHR sets the gold standard in election observation methodology. In June this year Ireland was very pleased to welcome the ODIHR Mission, which observed our elections to the European Parliament.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend our thanks and appreciation to the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Mr. Miklos Haraszti as he draws towards the end of his term of office. Mr Haraszti has been a clear voice for media freedom

throughout the OSCE area. He has exercised his mandate impartially and with great zeal. He leaves a legacy of solid achievements for his successor.

Turning now to the protracted conflicts, Ireland looks forward to progress being pursued over the coming months, even if the challenges are great.

More than a year on from the August 2008 conflict, the situation in Georgia remains of concern. A particular focus for all of us must be the humanitarian situation of those affected by the conflict, especially internally displaced persons. I regret that the OSCE Mission in Georgia, which opened in 1992, had to close this year due to a lack of consensus on its mandate. I still hope that a way can be found for the OSCE to re-establish a presence in the country.

The Geneva Talks process, co-sponsored by the OSCE, EU and UN, is a crucial instrument in facilitating a way forward involving all parties. In addition, the European Union Monitoring Mission has made a significant contribution to stabilising the situation in Georgia. Ireland strongly supports the work of the EU Monitoring Mission, to which we are contributing personnel. However, the effectiveness of the Mission is being adversely affected by a lack of access to all areas and I call on the parties to work towards resolving this.

We must also keep a focus on the unresolved issue of Transnistria. I know that the OSCE, as well as the EU, stand ready to assist the parties involved in working towards a solution acceptable to all.

I commend the continuing work of the OSCE's Minsk Group in addressing the long-running dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh. The recent meetings which have taken place at the highest level between Armenia and Azerbaijan are encouraging. Although not connected to this issue, the positive developments in relations between Armenia and Turkey are a significant step forward, which open the prospect of enhanced peace and stability in the entire region.

I extend my best wishes and congratulations to the incoming Chair, Kazakhstan. We look forward to working with you over the coming year in fulfilling your ambitious

agenda. This is the first time a Central Asian state is assuming the Chairmanship-in-Office – another significant development and opportunity for the OSCE. Ireland will be happy to support you in every way we can in pursuing a balanced approach to the work of the Organisation across all three dimensions.

Mr. Chairman, as you know, Ireland has offered its candidature to chair the OSCE in 2012, if that is acceptable to participating States. Ireland, a founder member of the OSCE and an original participant in the Helsinki process, has, to date, never assumed the Chairmanship of the OSCE. If we are granted that honour for 2012, I can assure you that we will work hard to pursue the principles and aims of the Organisation, which is unique in terms of its geographical spread and overarching responsibilities. We look forward to working closely with Lithuania and Kazakhstan within the OSCE troika format from 2011 on.

It will be an honour to have an opportunity to make a tangible contribution to the promotion of European peace and security. Ireland will work hard to build on the impressive achievements of the OSCE. Effective multilateralism must have a higher priority now as we address the numerous global challenges and changed economic circumstances. This is the time for multilateralism and the OSCE to rise to those challenges and opportunities.

Thank you.