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REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

ENGLISH only

STATEMENT

as delivered by

His Excellency Mr. Besnik Mustafaj,

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Albania,

at the 14th Ministerial Council Meeting of the OSCE

Brussels, 4-5 December 2006

Distinguished Chairman,
Distinguished colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

This Ministerial meeting offers me the opportunity and pleasure to address this august audience on behalf of the Albanian government and to share not only views and ideas on how to further enhance the functionality and effectiveness of our Organisation, but also to present certain efforts of my country towards European integration, including in the context of the OSCE values.

I share your evaluation on the constructive role and attitude of the Belgian Chairmanship towards further strengthening the work of the Organisation in achieving the common objectives, as well as for its contribution in adopting a number of decisions including the Rules of Procedure of the Organisation.

Mr. Chairman,

Albania has considered its active participation in the OSCE not only as a possibility to make a contribution to issues of security and cooperation in the broadest space for a regional organisation that history has ever known, but also as a reference framework for the general democratic development of the country.

We support the continuous efforts of the Organisation on its reform course. It is our belief that this exigency which we see as a process, in which the OSCE has already embarked, can be achieved with our common efforts. It will focus the OSCE more on its true niche and ensure more effectiveness in addressing the challenges facing the OSCE space today. The experience and the three-dimensional activity of the OSCE are important factors that should help strike the correct balance between the implementation of principles, norms and commitments, the needs and priorities articulated by the host country, and the adaptability of focused assistance with the delivery capabilities of the OSCE and absorbing capacity of participating states.

Albania will continue to be an active participant in this Organisation, thus making its contribution to the further strengthening of the credibility, role and work of the Organisation in achieving the common objectives. It is in this context that we have weighed and presented the Albanian candidacy for the Chairmanship of the OSCE in the year 2012.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Hoping that developments in Albania might form part of your interest, let me briefly touch upon some of them. The Albanian Government is working energetically for the continuous improvement of the political climate in the country, for the deepening of economic, institutional and legal reforms with a view to ensuring the transformation and progress of the whole society and the strengthening of people's confidence in their state and its justice. Strengthening the rule of law is for us the only path to win the difficult war against the challenges of transition. The sound support and the appreciation that has been found among our friends and international institutions during all these months is a matter of great encouragement in this direction.

The signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement for the EU on 12 June 2006 is proof that the reforms in Albania are proceeding of the right direction, that political stability and security in the country have increased, that western values

are more and more predominant in the country. The future of Albania where it aspires to be, where it deserves to be and what it is working hard to achieve would thus be only certain.

The Albanian Government has appreciated the work of the OSCE Presence in many directions. Based on the results achieved and the clear tendency and patterns of progress, we believe that time has come to re-dimension and focus the role of the OSCE Presence in two-three major aspects, such as strengthening institutions of the rule of law, principally in the justice sector, completion of a modern legislation package on elections, and certain principal aspects of good governance. Certain aspects of work that were relevant for the years 1999-2002 ought to be considered completed. The role of the OSCE Presence ought to be gradually reduced in parallel with the progress of the country and is more and more ready and prepared to take responsibilities and ownership of its development. It should be noted that duplication with other Organisations that are operating in Albania should be avoided, while it is expected and requested that the role of the EU in Albania is gradually increased. The good relations of cooperation with the OSCE Presence would further progress thus noting that the successes and progress of the country are a success of the work and the fulfilment of OSCE's mandate.

Distinguished colleagues,

The local elections that are going to take place soon in Albania are rightly assessed as a test of the further maturity of the Albanian politics. The Albanian Government is fully committed in ensuring the conduct of a free and fair electoral process, thus sanctioning the confidence displayed by the overwhelming majority of the population on 3 July 2005. Conducting an electoral process in line with international standards is for us more important than the results of the elections. Let me use this opportunity to note the fruitful cooperation we have had and do have with the OSCE Presence in Tirana and the ODIHR. I would like to thank them for their readiness expressed and the contribution made in the preparation and conduct of the process of local elections in the country. We are fully open for welcoming in these elections as many observers as possible from the OSCE/ODIHR, the Parliamentary Assembly and other institutions that have expertise and can play a first hand role in assessing the electoral process. The Council of Europe and other international organisations have already been invited to send their representatives to monitor these elections.

Mr. Chairman,

The Albanian Government highly appreciates the significant role the OSCE, as part of the international civilian and military presence in Kosova, has played in the progress achieved in Kosova. Through its activity, in cooperation with other international organisations and the internal institutional factors in Kosova, the OSCE has contributed in building and developing a system based on democratic values and international standards of human rights. We salute the readiness of the OSCE to continue to play an active role, in line with the mandate it will be requested to deliver, after the settlement of the final status of Kosova.

We hope this status will be settled as soon as possible, right after the elections in Serbia. Any further postponement may put in question the positive developments achieved so far. The settlement of the status soon is not only a necessity dictated by the reality in Kosova, it also benefits the strengthening of peace and security in Kosova, in the region and beyond. We support the Contact Group positions and statements to the effect that the referendum on the constitution and the elections in

Serbia and the issue of the final status for Kosova are independent from one another. We are convinced that the final status of Kosova would reflect the aspirations and the free will of the citizens of Kosova for an independent, democratic and European state. We trust that independence would be conditioned by an international presence and, in this context, the OSCE will have its important role.

Let me finally express my conviction on the importance of this ministerial for the future of the OSCE. The documents that we are going to adopt together would be added values to the work of this Organisation and would be a guidance for the OSCE in the years to come. Let me conclude by thanking the Belgian Chairmanship for a work well done and by wishing full success to the incoming Spanish Chairmanship which we assure of our full support and cooperation.

Thank you.