

**Address by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland
Mr Alexander Stubb
at the 17th Ministerial Council of the OSCE**

ENGLISH only

1 December 2009

Mr Chairman,
Mr Secretary-General,
Dear Colleagues,

As a outgoing troika member, I want to thank the Greek Chairmanship not only for the great hospitality during this Ministerial Council but for the good and fruitful cooperation during these three years.

I commend your efforts to carry on and ensure continuity of the process on the Future of European Security - a dialogue that began during our lunch discussion in Helsinki a year ago. I think it was a good and innovative idea to convene the first ever informal Ministerial Meeting in Corfu to launch the Corfu process.

I want to focus on four points:

- 1) The Corfu process needs to be consolidated with a goal oriented agenda and a structure that allows a comprehensive and cross dimensional dialogue on pertinent issues of security.

The draft Corfu Declaration and decision meet this aim adequately. It is important that we can find an agreement on them during our stay here in Athens.

- 2) The Corfu process cannot take place in a vacuum: progress on the protracted conflicts should be enhanced in the spirit of Corfu. We need to be innovative and bold to find ways on how to overcome the impasse in conventional arms control and confidence building. Although the OSCE remains the central forum for European Security dialogue, a link to work on other fora – (EU/Russia and NRC) needs to be adequately reflected in the process.

Full implementation of all commitments is important, especially on conflict resolution and in the human dimension. It is also important to address current transnational threats, especially security implications of climate change.

Our partners for cooperation should also be kept abreast on the progress made (congratulations to Australia for becoming a member of the OSCE Asian Partners Group). Intense dialogue with the civil society is a unique feature of the OSCE and should be integral part of the Corfu process.

3) Continuity of the OSCE´s work needs to be enhanced – in particular on conflict prevention and resolution:

After us the Greek Chairmanship continued with great vigor. However, due to difficult circumstances and despite CiO efforts, the OSCE Mission had to leave Georgia. But something has remained – the Geneva talks continue despite complex aftermath of the war in August 2008.

The OSCE is about confidence building and conflict settlement and should remain engaged along with other actors. In Corfu process we have to develop effective tools for the OSCE in conflict prevention and resolution. Continuity is important - we encourage the incoming Kazakh Chairmanship to build on the accumulated experience of the previous Chairmanships as well as the OSCE institutions to re-invigorate efforts to solve protracted conflict in our area.

Nagorno-Karabakh peace process is taking cautious steps to the right direction. We welcome the efforts to improve relations between Armenia and Turkey as well as the efforts of the Mediators and Observers in the 5+2 format on Transnistria.

4) Message as the outgoing Troika member: Seize the opportunity.

The security situation in the OSCE area reached its lowest point in this decade in August 2008. But it has served also as an alarm clock. The OSCE participating states wanted to reverse the situation and resorted to the organization that was established 35 years ago to overcome divisions in Europe.

For me, as the then Chairman-in-Office this was reassuring – and I think that my Greek colleagues after this year´s experience can share this sentiment.

The OSCE needs to renew itself in order to respond to the new needs of european security - otherwise it will fall into oblivion.

During our chairmanship we organized three Ministerial level meetings and several expert consultations in an informal Quintet format. I found this group a useful way of ensuring continuity of key activities of the organization. The incoming Chairmanship might find it useful again.

The former German Foreign Minister Hans Dietrich Genscher reminded in his speech in Vienna on 6 October on the occasion of the 20 anniversary of fall of the Berlin Wall that the mental wall still prevails. We all need to harness our efforts to tear it down.

This continues to be a challenge for the incoming Kazakh and Lithuanian Chairmanships as well.

I also want to express my wish to see Ireland as the Chairman-in-Office for 2012.