

**Address by Her Excellency Mrs. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir  
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland**

Mr. Chairman, Minister Stubb,  
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me at the outset congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, for the dynamism and commitment you and your team in Helsinki and Vienna have brought to your year in Office.

The Finnish Presidency has played an exceptionally constructive and proactive role in addressing the crisis in Georgia. The Finnish Chairman in office of the OSCE and the French Presidency of the EU, as well as the Swedish Presidency of the Council of Europe, deserve praise for bringing to bear the energies of the key European institutions and ensuring synergy where it was desperately needed.

Protection of civilians, particularly women and children, is best guaranteed by the presence of international, impartial observers. The decision to send additional military observers from the OSCE was therefore a positive step. It is imperative that monitors from the OSCE and the EU have full access to all parts of Georgia, including South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the most deadly conflicts in Europe's history. There are still dangerous flash points, as recent events in Georgia illustrate. The OSCE should continue to play a proactive role together with other key regional and

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international institutions, to calm and eventually solve these frozen conflicts. OSCE field missions have a particularly valuable role to play.

I hope it is clear to all of us that true Pan-European security cannot be achieved by simply ensuring that we are better armed. Indeed, it is particularly urgent to safeguard the key European arms control treaty, the CFE (Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe).

The best path to long term, sustainable security is shared respect for fundamental values of democracy, rule of law and human rights.

The present security structures, the UN, NATO (NATO-Russia Council), the EU, the OSCE as well as the Council of Europe have made major contributions to maintaining peace. These organisations are the best foundation for future developments, even though their effectiveness can in some areas be improved.

As has been illustrated by the constructive role played by the French EU Presidency, the EU is a major force for maintaining long term peace in Europe. At the same time, the transatlantic dimension of European security is also fundamental.

We should address concerns among all members. Iceland is open to considering new ways to strengthen security across the OSCE area, possibly through a summit, provided that discussions are based on the principles enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris. Such a summit would need to be well prepared. The aims should be to strengthen and improve the present structures – it must offer added value.

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Mr. Chairman

Allow me to pay tribute to the work of the OSCE's human dimension and to ODIHR. ODIHR plays a key role in fostering democracy, in particular through its election observation role. Iceland continues to send observers on behalf of ODIHR on a regular basis. The success already achieved is to a large extent the result of its interdependence and integrity. Therefore the autonomy of ODIHR must not be compromised. I would also like to pay tribute to the work of ODIHR on anti-discrimination as well as the work of the Secretariat on gender issues.

Mr. Chairman,

The OSCE is one of a number of forums in which governments coordinate measures on terrorism and organised crime. Iceland has for years emphasized the importance of protecting human rights in the fight against terrorism. Counter-terrorism measures must take place with full respect for international law, human rights and the rule of law. It is vital that all governments establish and apply anti-terrorism legislation carefully and precisely.

Finally, I should like to thank you and your team, Minister Stubb, for the excellent organisation of this meeting and for your hospitality.

Let me also wish the incoming Greek Chairman in Office every success for the OSCE Presidency in 2009.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman