

MC.DEL/16/05
5 December 2005

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

**STATEMENT BY
MR. SERGEI LAVROV, MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE THIRTEENTH MEETING OF THE
OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Ljubljana, 5 December 2005

First of all, I should like to join those who have already expressed their gratitude to the Slovenian Chairmanship and to the persons directly involved in organizing our meeting, including, of course, you, Mr. Minister.

We take a positive view of the work of the Slovenian Chairmanship on many aspects of the difficult agenda of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

This year, as we celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act and the fifteenth anniversary of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe, the OSCE has found itself seeking its place in the changing European security architecture at the peak of critical discussions about reform and adapting itself to new challenges.

During previous stages of Europe's development, first the CSCE and then the OSCE undoubtedly played a key role in establishing a comprehensive approach to security and establishing the principle of its indivisibility. The array of agreements on several dimensions of security amassed during this time and the experience gained in co-operation were so inspiring that they not only became part of diplomatic practice and the very fabric of international relations but also, and I am not exaggerating, entered the everyday life of countries and peoples in the vast Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian area. We value these achievements of the OSCE highly and should like to preserve them.

However, in recent years the OSCE has evolved structurally into something quite different from what its original purpose required, namely to serve as an important forum for political dialogue and the adoption of decisions on pan-European issues of real importance. Sometimes, one has the impression that we are artificially seeking where and how the OSCE can assert itself and as a result more and more often lag behind other organizations.

The fact that since 1999 it has not been possible to propose a worthy agenda to justify convening the next regular summit meeting of participating States can be regarded as a sign that things are not well within the OSCE. From year to year the same story is in effect repeated. We have already grown accustomed to it: there is talk in the OSCE about many subjects, fairly ambitious goals are set, but when in December the time comes to adopt political decisions, we all become hostages to two or three issues with which we are all too familiar. And today, we also see attempts to preserve this unfortunate tradition.

I should especially like to stress one point: we are convinced that the main reason why a number of conflict situations persist in the OSCE area lies in the fact that existing agreements are ignored and insufficient account is taken of the interests of representatives of so-called non-titular nationalities and the relevant autonomies, and there is an unwillingness to engage in real dialogue with them — an approach quite unlike that taken in certain other crisis situations on our continent, where a completely different standard is applied.

The adoption of a “road map” for the reform of the OSCE was planned for tomorrow. We hope that this will happen. The report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on this subject and the holding of subsequent high-level consultations were to mark the initial stages in this process. I want everyone to understand this correctly: for us, reform is not an end in itself but a means of relieving the OSCE of well-known geographical and thematic distortions and elaborating intelligible and transparent rules to enable the Organization to function. It is necessary to endow the OSCE with an international legal personality and a legal capacity, as suggested by the members of the Panel of Eminent Persons, and to strengthen the guiding role of collective intergovernmental bodies and to work to improve field missions and enhance the role of the Secretary General.

We welcome the adoption on the eve of the Ministerial Council meeting of a decision on new scales of contributions to the OSCE budget. We believe that through joint efforts we were able to move towards the effective implementation of the principle of the real capacity of States to pay. Of course, this work is still not completed and the new distribution of contributions for the coming year is not “the end of the road”.

I should particularly like to mention the need for serious improvement in the work of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). Autonomy of the ODIHR has turned into a complete absence of control, and decent governments cannot accept this; otherwise members of the OSCE will also want to seek “autonomy” from the ODIHR.

As regards a key area about which particularly serious discussions have been held, namely election monitoring, it is absolutely essential here to introduce clear and transparent principles for the methodology to be applied in the formation of missions, the appointment of their heads, in determining the number of observers and safeguarding balance in the composition of the missions. It is also necessary to introduce order in the publication of assessments by observers. Now, for example, all our attempts to clarify on the basis of what criteria and by whom the powers of groups of observers are established have come to nothing, although we have spoken directly with all those persons who take these decisions. They do not have the answers. What are we to say about the rest of us who observe this work from the sidelines? We should probably change this situation.

More generally, it is necessary impartially to assess how the 1990 Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the OSCE has been implemented with respect to the part concerning elections. We have statistics that show that there are quite a few countries (what is more, to the west of Vienna) where, contrary to the Copenhagen Document, the institution of international observers has still not been established and modalities for access by representatives of participating States, international organizations and other national non-State structures to polling stations have not been formalized. In some countries, there are even direct prohibitions. Archaic systems dating from the Middle Ages for the registration of voters need to be improved in certain countries.

There is a need for specific measures to ensure equal representation of election platforms in the media, transparency in the financing of election campaigns and prevention of the use of administrative resources.

We are in favour of carefully studying the situation, among other things through appropriate implementation of the Copenhagen Document, and on this basis working out appropriate evaluations and recommendations. We are convinced that precisely here the experience of the ODIHR could come in handy if in fact the ODIHR wishes to do something useful for participating States.

Russia's priorities in the human dimension remain protection of the rights of national minorities, the enhancement of tolerance, the struggle against various manifestations of xenophobia and religious and political extremism, trafficking in human beings and also questions involving migration and freedom of movement.

I am obliged once again to draw attention to the practice of curtailing the legal rights of national minorities in Latvia and Estonia, a practice that is still persisting. The population of these countries, in violation of the recommendations of the OSCE and Council of Europe commissioners, is still divided into first and second class citizens. We are discussing this issue with our Latvian and Estonian colleagues. We hope that, through such dialogue, we will be able to achieve better results than have emerged so far.

We propose that the situation with respect to various aspects of our work should be evaluated by all of us together, soberly and in a straightforward manner. The criterion applied in determining whether the OSCE is measuring up to the standards expected of it could well be the very name of the organization — "Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe". Can we say that the OSCE is today an organization that fully measures up to the standards expected of it? In the absence of any reliable legal or regulatory basis for a decision, the answer to this question would seem to be obvious. Does the OSCE genuinely concern itself with security on our continent? To say "yes" would be an exaggeration. Is the principle of co-operation really dominant in its style and methods of work? I think not many would give an unreservedly positive answer to that question.

Total "calm" prevails in the politico-military branch of the OSCE's activities. Yet precisely arms control and confidence-building measures constitute the "exclusive proprietary label" of the OSCE. Implementation of one of the most important commitments adopted at the OSCE Istanbul Summit in 1999 remains blocked — namely to ratify as quickly as possible the Agreement on Adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. Many of our colleagues are accustomed to calling the CFE Treaty the cornerstone of European security. At the same time, however, nothing has been done now for years actually to confirm the Treaty in that capacity. If steps are not taken to ratify it in the very near future, we will be in danger of losing the whole regime of control over conventional arms in Europe. I don't think any of us are interested in having that situation arise.

We are in favour of pulling the Forum for Security Co-operation out of its stagnant state. We shall be taking an active part in the forthcoming high-level Seminar on Military Doctrines which is to be held in February 2006. In this context we should like to mention the contribution made by the Slovenian Chairmanship in reaching agreement on this Seminar.

The potential of our Organization in the anti-terrorist and anti-narcotics sphere is still not being fully used. We hope that this meeting will support the decision on combating drug trafficking as proposed by the member States of the Collective Security Treaty Organization and also Uzbekistan. Another matter to be handled with priority after Ljubljana is the question of securing OSCE support for the Convention of the Council of Europe on the Prevention of Terrorism and efforts to implement the relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council, including resolutions 1566 and 1624.

If we wish to activate the economic dimension of the OSCE, we believe that transport problems should be treated as one of the most important topics for the Economic Forum in 2006. We trust that it should be possible to prepare very important draft decisions for the Forum to consider.

I have deliberately spoken rather pointedly on a number of topics today in an effort to make our main thought as clear as possible to all of you: we want to see the OSCE as a thoroughly viable, democratic, effective and useful organization for all its participating States. In order to rise to the level required for its new tasks, the OSCE will have to be reformed, and the approval of a corresponding "road map" will be needed to confirm our common commitment to the aims of strengthening the OSCE. In order to attain these goals, we must all, under the guidance of the Belgian Chairmanship, which is to take over from our Slovenian friends, redouble our efforts.

We are prepared to do this.

Thank for your attention.