

MC.DEL/14/08
4 December 2008

Translation

ENGLISH
Original: GERMAN

Speech
by Federal Foreign Minister
Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier
at the OSCE Ministerial Council
in Helsinki on 4 December 2008

History was made here a little over 30 years ago. The Helsinki Final Act, which was negotiated and signed here, played a crucial role in healing the division of Europe. We can imagine the sense of anticipation that came with the fall of the Wall when we recall the Charter of Paris, which still strives to achieve a just, pan-European peace order that stretches from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

This goal is still relevant and right today. Not just Europe has embarked upon a new path since these historic changes and, as it were, reinvented itself. Many countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa have used the years that followed 1989 to redefine their position on the world stage, to make their voices more audible. A new volatility has emerged in place of what was once a rigid bloc division. Nearly 20 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall we are experiencing a world in search of a new order.

Europe can, and must, play a central role in defining this new order. And let me tell you, the OSCE is absolutely essential for doing this. By strengthening democracy and the rule of law, and through its commitment to human rights and basic freedoms the OSCE is bringing about greater security in Europe, more trust, and also deeper mutual understanding. My French colleague has underlined this also on behalf of the EU. This is all the more important in times when new mistrust and occasional old, confrontational ways of thinking are becoming noticeable – in Europe as well.

The war in Georgia was a brutal reminder of this. Widespread human suffering and serious damage have cast a shadow over the recent past. It is thanks to the hands-on intervention of the French EU Presidency and the Finnish OSCE Chair that a ceasefire was negotiated so quickly.

The conference on reconstruction and the observer mission in Georgia show that the OSCE and EU are also working closely to find a political solution to the conflict. Encouraging signs have emerged from the Geneva talks, which are being jointly chaired by the EU, OSCE and UN. These talks need to result in a political process that builds new confidence and prevents a renewed escalation of the conflict. Let me emphasize that we want to come to an agreement quickly on a viable mandate for the OSCE's work in all of Georgia. For us, this specifically includes Georgia's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

We should also use this Ministerial Council in Helsinki to look together to the future, to reopen the dialogue on basic issues of common security in Europe. The OSCE represents the idea that security in the Euro-Atlantic region can only be achieved when all states work together.

The challenges Europe faces, from the frozen conflicts to energy security, from arms control to climate change and the financial crisis, demand joint action. The goal of achieving an area of shared security stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok is therefore still valid in the 21st century, perhaps more so than ever.

We should make a new effort. Russian President Medvedev has made proposals. President Sarkozy has proposed an OSCE summit this coming summer. I say, we should take up these proposals and consider if there are forms of cooperation that provide an added value.

In my view, the following aspects are key:

- We must build and further strengthen new confidence when it comes to the frozen territorial conflicts in Transnistria, Nagorny Karabakh and, of course, Georgia. Many things in the region are changing. With regard to Nagorny Karabakh, we expressly welcome the joint declaration issued by the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan on 2 November. Similarly, the steps Turkey and Armenia have taken towards each other deserve our full support.
- We should further consider whether a broad-based stability framework beyond the Geneva talks is needed for the Black Sea region and the southern Caucasus.
- We also urgently need a new start when it comes to arms control. We cannot allow the crisis in the CFE regime to lead to the loss of this pillar of European security. For this reason, I will soon invite high-ranking experts from CFE countries to Germany to facilitate this new

beginning. The need to make progress on nuclear disarmament is just as urgent. Here, we hope for new momentum from our American and Russian partners.

The OSCE, together with the EU and NATO, remains a main stay of security and stability in Europe. We should find the courage to better coordinate our interaction and consider how to further develop the European security system so that the vision of living under a common European roof can become reality.