



## **Closing Statement of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union**

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies

The European Union warmly thanks the Spanish Chairmanship and expresses great appreciation for its excellent organization, very generous hospitality and strenuous efforts to seek consensus during this Ministerial Council. We are disappointed that no consensus was reached on a political declaration.

The EU is pleased with the approval of the decision on the upcoming three OSCE Chairmanships: Greece, for 2009; Kazakhstan for 2010 and Lithuania for 2011. We appreciate the flexibility shown by these three participating States and the Chairmanship's determined efforts to pave the way for a decision acceptable to all.

We also welcome all other important decisions that have been adopted in this Ministerial Council.

Mr. Chairman,

Support for human rights defenders is a long established principle of the European Union's human rights external relations and one of our main priorities in the human dimension. We are therefore disappointed that, yet again, no consensus was reached on a decision on strengthening OSCE engagement with human rights defenders and independent national human rights institutions. The EU remains firmly committed to the approval of this decision and will continue to support the inclusion of this important issue on the OSCE agenda.

The EU deeply regrets that the text of the Convention on the international legal personality, legal capacity and privileges and immunities of the OSCE was not approved here in Madrid. The EU remains firmly committed to its approval which would give the OSCE the recognition as a full-fledged international organization. The EU reiterates its view that this Convention, when adopted, will improve considerably the functioning of the OSCE, including its field operations.

Mr. Chairman,

On elections, the EU recalls its firm support for the standards and commitments undertaken in the 1990 Copenhagen Document, in the 1994 Budapest Document and

further developed since then. We also reaffirm our support for ODIHR's election observation activities and its internationally recognized election observation methodology.

Mr. Chairman,

The EU is pleased that agreement was reached on the statement on Nagorno-Karabakh. We reiterate our call on the leadership of Armenia and Azerbaijan to continue to engage fully in the negotiations on the basis of the set of basic principles for a peaceful settlement of the conflict developed by the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group.

We regret that a consensus was not found on the statements regarding the conflicts in Moldova and Georgia. The EU thanks the Spanish Chairmanship for their excellent work and is determined to continue to play a constructive role in working towards a peaceful resolution of these conflicts.

The EU also notes with regret that no agreement was achieved on a statement on the OSCE Mission in Kosovo. We recall our firm support for OMIK's work and for the extension of its mandate for another year, irrespective of the outcome of current negotiations on the future status of Kosovo.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate our appreciation to the Spanish Chairmanship for their tireless efforts in leading this Organization over the last year. The EU looks forward with full confidence to the incoming Finnish Chairmanship. We would like to express our full support and wish them success in their endeavours.

I request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, EFTA countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

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\* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.