

Thirteenth OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting  
Ljubljana, December 5-6, 2005

**Statement by Mr. Urmas Paet,  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia**

Mr Chairman,  
Dear Colleagues,  
Excellencies,

Listening to the speakers before me I am pleased to note that I am not being original when I open my address by stressing that the common norms, values and principles we subscribed to 30 years ago in Helsinki and 15 years later in Paris, are today as relevant as ever. These basic values have guided our activities in the framework of the OSCE during the past decades. They have served us well and must therefore stand in the very core of the organisation also in the future.

We talk a lot about the widening 'values gap' within the organisation. And it is a sad fact that sometimes we indeed give grounds to questions on whether we read Helsinki and Paris in a similar way. However, understanding the same language in the same way is a prerequisite for a fruitful cooperation and for the creation of the political landscape we set out to achieve in Helsinki.

Therefore I am convinced that it is not enough to introduce only administrative and structural changes to revitalise the OSCE. There is no way around tackling the real problem, which appears to lie in the commitment of the members to their organization. What we need is stronger willingness of the members to translate their commitments into reality. The other choice for the OSCE is to be marginalized in international relations.

The peaceful resolution of regional conflicts in Southern Caucasus and Moldova must stay high on the agenda. It would be a significant step towards long-term stability in the

regions and would offer them a credible development perspective. The lack of tangible progress in one of the core activities of the organisation has seriously undermined the credibility of the OSCE not only in the countries concerned but far beyond. A change in attitudes and genuine political will can make a difference here.

In this context I cannot stress enough the importance of fulfilling the 1999 Istanbul commitments. We welcome the progress made by Russia and Georgia in their Joint Statement of May 30th, 2005. We also urge Russia to complete the withdrawal of its military forces from the Republic of Moldova without further delay.

Mr. Chairman,

It is the fact of life that any international organisation needs to adapt itself to the changing realities. In this regard we pay tribute to the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons and welcome the ongoing efforts to make the OSCE more effective. We should continue to build on the experience of the organisation in its areas of excellence such as human dimension and anchoring the democratic way of life in its member states.

The comprehensive approach of the High Commissioner on National Minorities to the issues related to minorities and the contribution of the ODIHR to democratic processes are highly appreciated. The OSCE has acquired a unique expertise in these areas which can be developed further. In this regard enhancing democratic elections through supplementary commitments would be a step in the right direction. Allow me to point out that Estonia has extensive experience in the areas of social integration, as well as introduction of new election technologies - electronic voting. We are happy to share it with other Member States.

The OSCE should be firm to defend the democratic development and human rights in all its Member States. The resurgence of racism and xenophobia; efforts to strangle the NGOs through administrative and legislative measures; harassment of independent media

and prevailing state control of media; manipulation of elections; neglect of the rights of national minorities and indigenous people warrant our immediate attention.

The strength of any organisation is also reflected by its ability to respond to new challenges and tasks. Indeed, the OSCE has a solid track record in the areas of fighting terrorism and combating trafficking in human beings. More attention should now be given to gender mainstreaming which is rapidly gaining importance in today's world.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to Slovenia for the successful presidency and wish Belgium success in its new task.