

**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY  
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CHAIRPERSON OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL  
AT THE OPENING SESSION OF THE 2008 ANNUAL SECURITY REVIEW CONFERENCE**

Vienna, 1 July 2008

On behalf of the Chairman-in-Office, it is my pleasure to open the 2008 Annual Security Review Conference and to extend a warm welcome to all participants.

This year the review of security-related issues is taking place in an interesting period for international affairs. One could say that the debate has been more intense than usual, exposing differing views on major security issues like the fate of the CFE treaty, missile defence, the status of Kosovo or the enlargement of NATO. While these issues have been individually discussed in the OSCE, the ASRC provides an opportunity to look at the big picture of European security.

Despite the disagreements we have had, our common interests in the globalized world do encourage us to work closer together. A lot will depend on how political leaders will take pending issues forward in the coming months. Changes in administrations will provide a fresh opportunity to look at our co-operative security. There seems to be a new constructive tone in today's political rhetoric, which gives us hope that existing problems will be overcome.

At the OSCE, we have faced several challenges in the past six months. The OSCE Mission in Kosovo has been able to continue its important work despite difficult circumstances. The budget and scales of contributions of the Organization were agreed on and the potentially contentious nomination of the new Director of the ODIHR was made under very auspicious circumstances.

Moreover, the OSCE mechanisms for confidence-building proved their usefulness in the case of incidents involving unmanned aerial vehicles in Georgia. Although parties have not yet been

able to agree on how to avoid these kinds of incidents, the discussions in the Permanent Council and the Forum for Security Co-operation have eased tension and contributed to possible further work on the settlement of the conflicts in Georgia. The Finnish OSCE Chairmanship will build on these results in the coming months.

This year's ASCR has an ambitious agenda. Without restricting the freedom of each and every State to raise any security issue for discussion, I would like to highlight three subjects that the Chairmanship feels merit closer attention at this year's ASRC: OSCE engagement with Afghanistan, the state of the CFE treaty and the settlement of the protracted conflicts.

We have some major hotbeds of conflict with very real spill-over possibilities close to the OSCE area. The Finnish Chairmanship has worked hard to implement the decision taken in Madrid regarding the OSCE's engagement with Afghanistan. The international community has made a pledge to support Afghanistan, and along with other organizations the OSCE can contribute towards a stable and democratic Afghanistan. I hope that the ASRC discussion will help us guide the OSCE action to this extent.

In terms of traditional military security, the continuing deadlock in the negotiations on the future of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe is a major concern to us. The CFE Treaty remains a cornerstone of European military security and its possible erosion represents a serious setback to our security. The Finnish Chairmanship hopes that the ASRC will provide an opportunity to re-energize the dialogue to resolve the outstanding issues.

The unresolved conflicts in the OSCE area are major obstacles to human security, democratization and economic development. The Finnish Chairmanship has called for intensified international efforts to promote conflict resolution. In order to bring results, our endeavours need to be backed up by sustained and strong political will on the part of the parties and the international community.

The emphasis on the protracted conflicts has been reflected in the practical work of the Finnish Chairmanship. The Chairman-in-Office visited all conflict areas early in the

Chairmanship and his Special Envoy Heikki Talvitie has been busy mediating between all parties. Ambassador Talvitie has promised to report on the work done so far and to assess the current situation at the third working session.

The Annual Security Review Conference is a joint event of the Permanent Council and the Forum for Security Co-operation. We believe that if we are to benefit fully from the Forum's expertise, we have to deepen the co-operation between the FSC and other OSCE bodies. We have been very pleased about the good co-operation between the PC and FSC during the Spanish and Estonian Chairmanships of the Forum.

The OSCE's security work is not done in a vacuum and we need to engage in a discussion with other international organizations, institutions and NGOs. In many cases we are subject to same threats: in these cases, we should respond to them together. The Finnish Chairmanship has sought to intensify co-operation with other organizations and I warmly welcome representatives of other international organizations present with us today.

The recent Small Arms and Light Weapons Conference in Brussels organized by the OSCE and EAPC and supported by the United Nations is a case in point. This three-day conference in late May was the first regional gathering of its kind. The event facilitated debate on the proliferation, illicit trade and use of small arms, with the aim of harmonizing responses to the threat also at the global level. Co-ordination and co-operation between different organizations are crucial if we are to effectively address small arms issues and other threats.

The Annual Security Review Conference was established by the Ministerial Council in Porto in 2002. It was instituted in response to the need for a periodic review of all security-related matters affecting the OSCE area. It is mandated to formulate recommendations for further consideration. In our view, the Conference provides an excellent opportunity to make a joint analysis of the old and new security challenges and to consider new measures for addressing them.



Moreover, the Chairmanship is looking forward to the Conference as a half-way house on our journey from Madrid to Helsinki. We hope that the Conference will provide us with an opportunity to survey issues that merit further attention in the course of preparations for the Ministerial Council meeting in Helsinki.

Before finishing allow me to thank the OSCE Secretariat and in particular Operation Service of the CPC for assisting the Chairmanship in planning and organizing this important event.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I hope we will make full use of the two days ahead of us and I wish we are able to come up with concrete proposals to promote co-operative security.

Thank you.