



**Closing remarks by Chairman-in-Office Alexander Stubb
16th OSCE Ministerial Council, 5 December 2008**

Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to share with you three reflections on the spirit of Helsinki and this Ministerial Council meeting.

Firstly, I think we have had a successful meeting. We have had a record attendance of almost 50 foreign ministers, showing an increased standing of the OSCE in international relations. After the tragic events in Georgia in August, we have been able to sit down at the same table and take a number of significant decisions.

The discussion we had during the working luncheon yesterday was one of the best I have ever experienced at an international event. It was refreshing, open, frank, constructive and analytical. For me, those qualities harked back to the spirit of Helsinki.

Secondly, in diplomacy you win some and you lose some. I think that in the past two days we did win some. The exchanges we have had in this room, over the lunch and in smaller groups have been very useful. Moreover, we agreed on some 15 decisions that will signpost the future of the OSCE and also on the regional statement on Nagorno-Karabakh, which builds on the 2 November declaration by the Presidents of Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation. I referred to this important declaration agreed upon in Moscow in the previous session.

The attempt at a regional statement on Moldova was not bad either, and we were able to establish a lot of common ground.

In diplomacy you also lose some. We were not able to agree on a ministerial declaration. It was a missed opportunity. I really felt strongly that after six years it was time to agree on a strong declaration that would set a new course. However, it was not the time and place to take this important step. The attempt was good and my feeling is that we were close to reaching an agreement. The main final sticking points were the language of the CFE and the OSCE's role in Georgia. The text we worked on for a few weeks reflects the Organization's central tenets well and I would like to attach it to the journal of the day as MC.GAL/13/08.

I would have been much happier had we been able to agree on a ministerial declaration. Nevertheless, none of us can feel disappointed. In 1975 in Helsinki we were able to agree on a document that still serves as the foundation of our work. We reached a document in Helsinki in 1992 and I think we made some progress in 2008 as well.

My third point is that we now need to keep our eyes on the future. This year the OSCE has shown its real strengths in crisis management, which, frankly speaking, is more important to me than a political declaration. I think we have been able to revitalize the OSCE, and the Organization has worked better than it has done for years.

The OSCE has made a difference in Central Asia, in the South Caucasus and in the Western Balkans. No one can question the OSCE's role in promoting co-operative security and the common values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law in its area.

Finally I would like to extend my warmest thanks to the colleagues who have supported me throughout the year and during this meeting. I also appreciate the day-to-day work done by the OSCE ambassadors, the Secretary General and his team, and all those who have been working to ensure a successful Chairmanship and Ministerial Council.

I wish the best of luck to Minister Bakoyannis and the incoming Greek Chairmanship in taking the OSCE forward in 2009.