



CHAIRPERSON'S PERCEPTION

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF BELGIUM, KAREL DE GUCHT, CHAIRMAN-IN-OFFICE OF THE OSCE, AT THE FOURTEENTH MEETING OF THE OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

The Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the participating States of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) met in Brussels on 4 and 5 December 2006 to reiterate the importance of the commitments participating States have undertaken in the framework of the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe and to stress the need for continued implementation.

Ministers reaffirm their belief in the Organization's continued ability to define and implement appropriate answers to commonly defined threats and challenges to the overall security in the OSCE region.

The three dimensions of the OSCE continue to offer a unique approach to security. Ministers therefore welcome strengthening work, in a balanced manner, in all dimensions, while at the same time recognizing the need to continue to pursue cross-dimensional aspects of security.

Ministers adopted several Decisions on strengthening the effectiveness of the OSCE, thanking the Permanent Council for its work in this area and the ODIHR for its report to the Ministerial Council.

Building upon the examples of the Donor Conference for Economic Rehabilitation in the South Ossetian-Georgian conflict zone and the OSCE-led Environmental Assessment Mission in the fire-affected territories in and around Nagorno-Karabakh, Ministers are determined to continue efforts to build confidence in conflict areas. Early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation remain at the centre of attention. Most Ministers call on all parties involved to show the necessary political will to create a peaceful OSCE region through negotiated solutions.

Most Ministers urge States Parties to the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty) to fulfil the outstanding commitments undertaken at the 1999 Istanbul Summit. Most Ministers welcome the Agreements signed on 31 March 2006 by the Russian Federation and Georgia following the Joint Statement of the Foreign Ministers of the Russian Federation and Georgia of 30 May 2005 that have led to

substantial progress on the ground, and call for completion of this process. Taking note of the fact that, as regards Moldova, no progress could be registered in 2006, most Ministers call on the Russian Federation and parties concerned to allow the process of withdrawal of ammunition and related military personnel to resume expeditiously. Ministers reaffirm their shared determination to promote the entry into force of the Adapted CFE Treaty.

The OSCE has a well-earned reputation for dealing with the politico-military aspects of security. The Seminar on Military Doctrine as well as the special FSC meeting on the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security showed that the Organization's work in arms control and confidence- and security-building measures continues to play an important role in fostering security, peace and co-operation in the OSCE area. In parallel, as new threats have emerged, the OSCE response in the fields of non-proliferation, action against terrorism and countering the risks from SALW and from excessive stockpiles of conventional ammunition, which includes rocket fuel mélange, plays an important complementary role in fostering security in the OSCE area. The FSC meeting on SALW and the FSC workshop on the implementation of UNSCR 1540 (2004) were important building blocks for future work.

Arms control, disarmament, and confidence- and security-building measures remain essential in the OSCE's comprehensive security concept. The CFE Treaty continues to be a cornerstone of European security. The State Parties at the Third Review Conference of the CFE Treaty this year emphasized the important contribution of the CFE regime to security in the OSCE region.

Ministers welcome the continued implementation of the Treaty on Open Skies and the progress achieved. They are confident that the continuing implementation on the Treaty will further contribute to the promotion of openness, transparency and stability in the OSCE area. Most Ministers also encourage and welcome more OSCE participating States to join the Treaty. They take note that one application for accession is still on the agenda of the Open Skies Consultative Commission.

The OSCE plays an important role in security sector governance and has over the years gained considerable experience in this field. Ministers agree to consider taking stock of the OSCE's experience in 2007.

Ministers remain united in their firm stand against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, and give full support to the programme of the 2007 Spanish Chairmanship that will continue the work by previous Chairmanships. The OSCE will, through the implementation of its strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century, continue to facilitate international efforts to prevent and combat terrorism, reaffirming the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy adopted by the General Assembly on 8 September 2006. Ministers reaffirm that the promotion and protection of human rights and the rule of law are essential to all components of counter terrorism, recognizing that effective counter-terrorism measures and the protection of human rights are complementary and mutually reinforcing. Ministers furthermore express

their profound solidarity with victims of terrorism and reaffirm their commitment to protect the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Ministers reaffirm their commitment to promote open and secure borders throughout the OSCE region, in conformity with the Border Security and Management Concept, in order to contribute to implement the Strategy to address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century. This will develop mutual understanding and fruitful exchange in a secure framework. Ministers support regional initiatives on border security and management and strongly encourage the further implementation of the Concept. In this context, the OSCE will respond to the request for assistance of Tajikistan.

The fight against organized crime and the promotion of the rule of law play an important role in strengthening the common security of the OSCE participating States. The Decision on Organized Crime further demonstrates the OSCE's readiness to address the threats to stability posed by crime. Ministers declare their intention to further develop activities in this field and look forward to continued international co-operation on legal and police-related matters. With reference to the Declaration on Criminal Justice Systems, Ministers resolve to strengthen the implementation of OSCE commitments in the field of criminal justice. Participating States support the fight against illicit drugs and welcome the OSCE's activities in this regard, in close cooperation and consultation with UNODC. They look forward to a continued involvement of the Organisation in the global efforts to counter the illicit drugs threat.

Ministers welcome the continued leading role of the OSCE in combating trafficking in human beings, give support to the Special Representative on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and restate the need for enhanced and comprehensive implementation of the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings and its Addendum. The Ministerial Decisions on combating trafficking and on combating sexual exploitation of children show the OSCE's determination to join forces in order to overcome these grave and heinous crimes.

Economic and environmental stability contributes towards creating safe and secure societies. The OSCE's experience and action, based on the 2003 OSCE Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension, show the willingness of the Organization to broaden and deepen its approach of security issues in a comprehensive way. Ministers agree that the new format of the Economic and Environmental Forum has contributed to its efficiency. With reference to outcomes of the Fourteenth OSCE Economic Forum and its follow-up process, they recognize the fundamental importance of secure transportation networks and of transport development to enhance regional economic co-operation, stability and security.

Ministers reaffirm their support to the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) as an effective mechanism to co-ordinate international responses to perceived threats to environmental security. Most Ministers reaffirm their support to ENVSEC's contribution to conflict prevention and regional confidence-building. Ministers welcome the United

Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the Regional Environmental Centres as new partners to the Initiative.

Ministers recognize that a high level of energy security requires a predictable, reliable, economically viable, commercially sound and environmentally-friendly energy supply, and reaffirm the commitments of the OSCE Strategy Document adopted at Maastricht in 2003. They note an increasing energy interdependence between producing, consuming and transit countries within the whole OSCE area that needs to be addressed by strengthened dialogue and co-operation contributing to energy security. Ministers support a role for the OSCE, whose membership includes countries of origin, transit and destination, as a platform for energy security dialogue.

Ministers are convinced that full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the development of societies based on pluralistic democracy and the rule of law are prerequisites for progress in setting up the lasting order of peace, security, justice and cooperation that we seek. In this respect, they express their determination to fulfill all human dimension commitments and to promote conditions throughout the OSCE region by which all can fully enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms under the protection of effective democratic institutions and the rule of law. Ministers reaffirm the important role of the OSCE institutions - the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Representative on Freedom of the Media – in assisting all the participating States to implement their OSCE commitments.

Most Ministers underscore the crucial role of human rights defenders, including non-governmental organizations and independent national human rights institutions, in helping participating States to promote and fulfil their OSCE commitments. Most Ministers also recognize that the relationship with NGOs should be further promoted with a view to strengthening democracy and prosperity.

Ministers reaffirm that freedom of expression is a fundamental human right and a basic component of a pluralistic democratic society. In this respect, free, independent and professional media play an essential role. Participating States encourage media twinning consisting of capacity-building in support of professional media through peer-to-peer exchanges.

Dialogue, partnerships and a focus on youth and education are key elements in stemming the threats from discrimination and intolerance. The OSCE is well-placed to promote mutual respect and understanding in pluralistic societies and recognize in this respect the work of the three Personal Representatives of the Chairman-in-Office in support of the overall effort of the OSCE to combat intolerance and discrimination. Ministers look forward to the high-level conference on combating discrimination and promoting mutual respect and understanding next year in Bucharest.

Ministers call for a consistent implementation of the 2004 Action Plan for the promotion of Gender Equality as well as further integrating in the OSCE the security perspectives of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000).

Ministers welcome the report on the OSCE's work in the area of migration since 2005 and see an important value in a continued attention for the work on migration and integration issues in all three dimensions of the OSCE and to further facilitate dialogue, partnership and co-operation between OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation on migration-related issues.

Ministers agree to return to the offer of Kazakhstan to assume the OSCE Chairmanship of the Organization in 2009 at the latest at the Ministerial Council meeting in Spain.

OSCE field operations play a positive role as instruments of the OSCE's work in putting into practice, *inter alia*, through assistance and capacity-building, the goals and principles of the Organization and this in full co-operation with host States and in accordance with their mandates.

The OSCE stands ready to remain engaged in Kosovo, building on the Organisation's expertise in developing and monitoring democratic institutions, human rights, including community rights, and the rule of law as well as on OMiK's extensive field presence, and to assist all efforts in developing a multiethnic and tolerant society.

Ministers stress the crucial role of parliaments and parliamentarians in safeguarding democracy, the rule of law and the respect of human rights at both the national and international levels. In this regard, they recognize the important role of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and appreciate the close interaction that has developed in recent years. Ministers commend its active contribution to conflict resolution by creating a forum for inter-parliamentary dialogue.

Under chapter VIII of the UN Charter, the OSCE continues to play an important role as a regional arrangement. Ministers reaffirm the Declaration on Co-operation with the United Nations adopted by the Permanent Council in March 2006. Ministers encourage further deepening and strengthening the co-operation with other relevant regional and international organizations.

Ministers will seek to strengthen the links and good relations with Asian and Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation. Security and stability are shared goals and challenges and Ministers therefore look forward to intensify the co-operation in areas of common concern.