



Speech by Matti Vanhanen, Prime Minister of Finland

16th Ministerial Council
December 5th, 2008, Helsinki

Distinguished Ministers,
Distinguished Heads of Delegation,
Mr Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to address this closing session of the 16th Ministerial Council of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe. I am happy that once again Finland and Helsinki have had the opportunity to serve as a venue for the OSCE community to take stock of recent developments and set course for future action.

This year has been challenging in international relations. The OSCE has had its share of hard nuts to crack. In steering the organisation Finland has relied on its tradition of dialogue and co-operation, also when it comes to difficult questions. I trust that this has been the right approach.

In Georgia lives were lost and persons displaced as a result of an unfortunate armed conflict in August. Many statements yesterday and today have reflected the tragic events. All parties should now adhere to the ceasefire agreement and constructively engage in the Geneva discussions.

The deliberations during this meeting have been constructive and substantive. All key issues relevant to European security were discussed. However, it was not possible to agree on a joint political declaration. This, as we well know, has unfortunately become a persistent pattern in the OSCE ministerial meetings in recent years. The Finnish Chairmanship tried to use a fresh approach to find common ground but the differences of view on fundamental issues proved to be too wide to bridge.

However, I would like to note that important decisions are to be adopted today on a spectrum of issues from fighting trafficking in human beings to curbing the problem of small arms and light weapons.

Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our countries are experiencing a time of uncertainty as a result of a global financial crisis. In the past few months the world economy has been caught in a downward spin not seen in decades. We must now work together to turn the tide and build economic development on a sound financial

basis. The countries with the largest economies bear a special responsibility but all states must be involved in efforts to stabilise the situation.

At the same time the international community is preparing to address climate change and its manifold implications to the environment and economy. Despite the present financial turbulence, we need to keep the commitments to save energy and develop energy efficient technologies.

Excellencies,

Global problems need global solutions. But there are other problems which we sometimes cause ourselves and to which we as members of the OSCE have the duty to seek solutions.

In fact, interesting proposals have recently been made regarding the future of European security, involving also the OSCE. During these two days, the ministers have had a unique opportunity to share views and exchange ideas on security challenges and possible next steps.

From our point of view, the OSCE is a natural forum to discuss European security issues also at a high level, if needed. Finland welcomes the ongoing debate and is willing to engage in further discussions on European and global security as member of the European Union.

Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The OSCE Chairmanship has enabled Finland to strengthen its relations with many of the organisation's participating States. In particular, our contacts with countries in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, South Caucasus and the Western Balkans have increased remarkably.

I want to thank all the participating States for their support to the Finnish Chairmanship, and I wish the incoming Greek Chairmanship best success in guiding the OSCE in 2009.