

STATEMENT BY
Mrs. DORA BAKOYANNIS
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF GREECE
AT THE 16th OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL
[Helsinki, 4-5 December 2008]

Mr. Chairman,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to participate in the 16th Ministerial Council of the OSCE taking place in Helsinki – our organization’s original point of departure.

We have today an opportunity to take stock of our achievements and recalibrate our compass.

Along with my warmest thanks to our host, my dear friend and colleague Alex Stubb and his team, for their warm hospitality and excellent organization, I would like to congratulate them for their unwavering commitment to guiding the OSCE in turbulent times. The same commitment was also shown by the Finnish Chair in our cooperation in the Troika and Quintet frameworks.

Congratulations are also due to Secretary General, Ambassador de Brichambaut and the entire staff of the Secretariat for their commitment, hard work and effective contribution to the success of this endeavor.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Greece fully subscribes to the statement delivered by the French Presidency of the European Union. As incoming Chairmanship-in-Office I would like to take this opportunity to underline some points,:

We all agree I think that the OSCE remains a significant forum within the UN framework, as it is the only regional forum that encompasses the wider geographical area of North America and Eurasia. Our common efforts for cooperation are rooted in the principles of joint consultation, dialogue and cooperation among participating states, in a spirit of transparency and equality.

The OSCE is a living organism that has for more than thirty years stood by the peoples of Europe in their efforts to realize a vision of stability democracy and progress for all. The OSCE has the extraordinary ability to swiftly adapt to Europe’s new geopolitical challenges.

In this light, I would like to commend warmly Minister Stubb and the Finnish Chairmanship for presenting the draft Ministerial Declaration on “Renewing the Spirit of Helsinki”. The basic elements of this draft constitute common ground and are espoused by all participating states. We must therefore not hesitate to adopt the declaration and agree on ways to further empower the OSCE to deal successfully with old and new security challenges.

As incoming Chairmanship, we believe that a common understanding on the way ahead could and should emerge from the Helsinki Ministerial. We are looking forward to receiving a clear mandate on the steps that participating states consider appropriate to achieve our commonly accepted targets during 2009.

It is up to the 56 participating States to determine, how best to proceed to an in-depth and focused discussion on the present challenges and the future prospects of our common, indivisible, co-operative and cross-dimensional security. We firmly believe that the natural forum for such a debate is the OSCE, and we are prepared to assume such a task.

Greece supports all efforts aimed at strengthening the role of the OSCE at the heart of the European security architecture. The OSCE response to the recent crisis in Georgia is one case in point. We support a continued role for the OSCE on the ground, in monitoring the ceasefire and working to restore confidence. The Geneva process, co-sponsored by the UN, EU and the OSCE, provides a useful platform for dealing with questions of security, stability, refugees and displaced persons in the region. Sustainable and lasting solutions can only be based on a negotiated settlement in accordance with OSCE principles and in particular the territorial integrity and sovereignty of states within the internationally recognized borders.

The Forum for Security Cooperation has long been at the forefront of the Organization's efforts to initiate an honest and transparent dialogue among participating States in the area of military security and remains a valuable and effective tool for promoting understanding in the Euro-Atlantic area.

At this point, I deem necessary to reiterate our long-standing position that the CFE Treaty constitutes the cornerstone of European security. It is clear that this strategically irreplaceable regime should be safeguarded, while efforts to find a mutually acceptable solution to the current impasse must be intensified, for the Adapted CFE to promptly enter into force. The CFE regime and the CSBMs of the Vienna Document constitute an invaluable *acquis* for open cooperation in the OSCE area.

We fully endorse the continuing efforts to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and the implementation of the existing OSCE counter-terrorism commitments. We reaffirm our intention to maintain any relevant activities among the priorities of the Organization.

We believe that the OSCE's engagement with Afghanistan should remain a key priority of the Organization, which, with its capacities, is ready to rise to the challenge of contributing to international efforts aimed at enhancing stability and security in the region.

Greece attaches particular importance in all matters concerning the Economic and Environmental Dimension of the OSCE amidst the recent global economic crisis and its potential impact on security.

We are very glad that the theme of migration that has been adopted for the 17th Economic and Environmental Forum, received a wide welcome during the 1st Preparatory Conference in Prague. Migratory flows, if left unchecked, could prove to be more threatening to the security and stability of the OSCE region in the future. The migration phenomenon is directly affected by economic and social conditions, environmental degradation and climate change.

The prevalence of the rule of law, the protection and promotion of democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as combating trafficking, the protection of the rights of women and the reinforcement of their role in policy and law-making are of utmost importance for Greece.

We also fully appreciate the importance of election observation, as an area of active OSCE engagement, in which both the role of the ODIHR and that of the Parliamentary Assembly, are widely respected. We will continue to work, inter alia, on combating intolerance and all forms of discrimination and on promoting respect for the rights of the Roma and Sinti. We look forward to cooperating closely with the ODIHR, whose technical expertise, professionalism and substantive input we value.

Greece firmly supports the efforts, of previous Chairmanships, for the OSCE to acquire legal personality. We are of the opinion that this should be perceived as a process and not as a one-stop procedure. The adoption of the draft Convention on the international legal personality, legal capacity and privileges and immunities of the OSCE could be considered, as a first step of this wider process, while, any further steps should be left open to discussion.

We also recognize the valuable contribution of the OSCE Field Operations to host countries in the areas of institution-building.

This constitutes one of our main tasks and requires constant coordination between the host governments and the Heads of Missions, in order to reflect, -at all times- the real needs of host countries.

In this respect, we agree that additional attention should be given to the promotion of the Organization's presence in Central Asia. Nevertheless, this must not affect our work in South Eastern Europe, where the role of OSCE Field Operations has been pivotal in democratization, institution-building and promoting stability and prosperity across the entire region.

We also attach great importance to the allocation of adequate resources in order to ensure the efficiency of the OSCE. Our primary goal is to have a timely approval of the 2009 OSCE Unified Budget. In this regard, Greece encourages all participating States to be effective and constructive in this joint effort.

We fully support the series of the Draft Ministerial Decisions in all three dimensions to be adopted at the end of this Council, and we stand ready to contribute effectively to their prompt implementation.

In closing, ladies and Gentlemen, let me express my heartfelt conviction that the strength and driving force of the OSCE in a constantly evolving security environment are the values, principles and rules of the organization. The incoming Greek Chairmanship is committed to keep alive the spirit of Helsinki as it moves from the Nordic Aurora Borealis, to the Southern Mediterranean Sun.

Thank you Mr. Chairman
