

**15th OSCE Ministerial Council**

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**Statement by**

**KOLINDA GRABAR-KITAROVIĆ**  
**Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration**  
**of the Republic of Croatia**

Mr. Chairman,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank the Spanish Chairmanship - Minister Moratinos and his OSCE team - for their tireless efforts in guiding our Organisation during very challenging circumstances. I hope these efforts will be crowned with the adoption of decisions that will give the OSCE the impetus necessary to deal adequately with contemporary threats to security and stability, particularly in cross-dimensional activities such as the fight against terrorism, the fight against organized crime and corruption, combating trafficking in human beings, and consequently, integrated border management.

In this context, Croatia strongly supports the OSCE's engagement in Afghanistan, where alongside with our active involvement in the ISAF Mission, we are supporting Afghan governance and capacity building through efforts such as hosting and organizing study visits of Afghan civil

servants to Croatia. We stand ready to contribute to further OSCE activities in what we feel is a very important mission.

Regarding the question of upcoming OSCE chairmanships, Croatia welcomes the agreement on future Chairmanship order.

Mr. Chairman,

Croatia has aligned itself with the EU Statement which gives me an opportunity to focus on some issues of particular importance to my country.

Croatia's membership on the newly established Peace Building Commission this past year and our election as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for the 2008/2009 period, confirm that Croatia is today recognized as a country that has an important role in the activities of the international community in building and preserving peace and we take that role seriously, as evident in Croatia's currently topping the list with our participation in 15 UN peace-keeping operations.

Our commitment to assuming responsibility for strengthening global security has not weakened our efforts at the regional level. Croatia currently chairs or actively co-operates in numerous regional integration processes and initiatives, and regional cooperation remains one of the pillars of our foreign policy. In this context, Croatia believes that the

OSCE should continue to play an important role in supporting a peaceful, democratic and multiethnic Kosovo.

We are very proud that during our presidency of the South East European Co-operation Process (SEECF), new regional co-operation architecture was established, and that a Croatian diplomat was appointed as the first Secretary General of the new Regional Cooperation Council (RCC).

It is also with certain pride that we can refer to our FSC Chairmanship this year, under somewhat unpredictable circumstances and security challenges that marked it.

Mr. Chairman, dear colleagues,

Today, as the elections held last Sunday have confirmed, Croatia is a stable, democratic society.

Close to achieving full membership in the EU and NATO, it has become a model country that successfully assumes its responsibilities within the international community. We have succeeded achieving this in part through our close cooperation with the OSCE and its Mission. The OSCE has assisted us in institution building and in changing the overall post-war landscape.

As you know, through the mechanism of the “Platform” – monthly meeting of line ministers with the Mission - four chapters of the Mission's mandate were successfully fulfilled by the end of 2006.

Immediately thereafter, we placed particular emphasis on the vigorous implementation of the two remaining mandate-related issues - housing care and other programs related to refugee return and the rule of law, with the goal of completing them by the end of this year.

In the next few weeks, before the end of the year - I can now confirm that - we will have completely fulfilled our commitment to allocate 1,400 housing units, as promised. And, I can also confirm that the financial allotments, providing for the allocation of the remaining number of requisite housing units by the end of 2009, have already been made.

Regarding the rule-of-law chapter of the Mission's mandate, all benchmarks identified with the OSCE Mission within the framework of the "Platform", have been accomplished as well.

With all this in mind and after more than 11 years of cooperation between the Government of Croatia and the OSCE, the preconditions for the successful completion of the Mission's mandate are provided.

There should be no doubt left in anyone's mind about full and verifiable commitments of the Croatian Government to further cooperate with the OSCE and to fully abide by its commitments including the work towards the improvement of the status of minorities, particularly in the return

areas. It is also important to note that this is part of our EU negotiating process with very specific benchmarks, providing the best guarantee of the continuity of our policies and the further implementation of our OSCE commitments.

In addition, we believe that bilateral cooperation among the countries involved in the refugee return process, plus our cooperation with the UNHCR and other relevant international organisations, can insure the resolution of this important humanitarian and social issue.

Subsequently, we expect the decisions of the PC in the coming weeks to confirm the joint success, both for Croatia and the OSCE.

Having said this, I would like to stress that Croatia recognizes the international obligation of the OSCE towards the ICTY in monitoring war crime trials and stands ready to honour these commitments through the appropriate arrangement with our Organisation.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I would like to wish the incoming Chairman-in-Office, Minister Ikka Kanerva of Finland and his team, every success in tackling the challenging agenda of the OSCE in 2008, and I can assure them of our full support and cooperation for the coming year.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman