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OPENING STATEMENT

**by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office Dr Dimitrij Rupel
at the OSCE Ministerial Council,
*Ljubljana, 5 December 2005***

Excellencies,
Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to Ljubljana!

It is a pleasure for me to host you all here in the capital of Slovenia.

This has been an important year for the OSCE and I am proud to have been its Chairman-in-Office.

Thirty Years of Progress in the OSCE area

This year, we are celebrating the 30th anniversary of the beginning of the Helsinki process. This has been an adventurous, constructive, even a wonderful process. Maybe, back in 1975, the statesmen who signed the Final Act, could not have imagined how much they influenced, or contributed to the transformation of Europe. We can now agree, however that it was they that started *the process of All-European integration and harmonization*.

Of course, they could not have foreseen, and certainly they did not intentionally support the stormy events and phenomena such as *Perestroika* and *Glasnost* in the Soviet Union, *Solidarnost* in Poland, *Charter 77* in Czechoslovakia or *Nova revija* in Yugoslavia. They did not expect the European historical stage to be taken over by people like Gorbachev, Havel, Reagan, Walensa or Wojtyla, who themselves could not imagine that their ideas would be polluted by the actions of people like Milošević. Of course, the Helsinki signatories did not anticipate the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia or Yugoslavia. They would have been surprised by the fragility of the Iron Curtain and the Berlin Wall. Certainly, they did not expect democratic transformation to occur in so many Central and Eastern European countries, and they did not expect the political changes in the Caucasus and in Central Asia either. Nobody could predict that the Eastern and Central European nations – most of them still Socialist countries in 1990 – fourteen years later would join NATO and the European Union.

Democracy and stability are vital for achieving the dream of Europe whole and free. This takes time and is above all a process. Therefore we should encourage reconciliation between realists and idealists in how we engage with and balance democracy and stability, human rights and authority, principles of sovereignty and self-determination. Reform cannot succeed overnight.

The OSCE shares the principles and paradoxes of European integration and coexistence. *I am referring to diversity as the core, and the differences as the glue of European integration.* If we are sincere, we must express admiration of this European phenomenon. I guess that very rarely in history such a large and relatively stable community or - if you want, organization - has been kept together by such extravagant foundations - and binding material.

We can say that we have accomplished a great deal since 1975, and *the OSCE is a success story.* We still have many tasks confronting us. But we have managed to build a relatively prosperous and economically promising, predominantly democratic community united in an organization that is ready and able to meet the challenges that lie ahead of us.

In the following years our priorities will change. As François Mitterrand said at the Paris Summit fifteen years ago, there are no more enemies in the OSCE area. We must now unite to face common threats of a different nature, while living up to our tradition. It is not simple to reach consensus among 55 participating states, but the deal that is done sticks.

The decisions that we take here in Ljubljana will, I think, chart a course for the next decade. They will sharpen the OSCE's focus and increase its capabilities in areas where it has added value. For example, we have an opportunity to strengthen the OSCE's capacity to deal with new threats and challenges such as *migration, integration, organized crime, and border security.*

Calmer Waters

At the beginning of this year I said that Slovenia was taking over the helm of the OSCE in choppy seas. You will recall that until the spring we had no scales, no budget and no Secretary General. We also heard echoes of the Cold War in some public statements, and the very relevance of the Organization was questioned.

Now I believe that the waters are calmer and the mood more constructive. We have an excellent Secretary General, Marc Perrin de Brichambaut. Agreement has been reached on scales of contribution, and I am hopeful that the financial difficulties that we experienced at the beginning of this year will not resurface in 2006.

Progress for Peace

But let us be frank. The OSCE's usefulness is measured by its success in the promotion of democracy, peace and security. And here also we have a positive record this year.

Fast breaking developments in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan this spring demanded a rapid and constructive international response. In both cases, the OSCE was the lead international agency that immediately responded on the spot.

In Kyrgyzstan, after the events of March 2005, the OSCE quickly stepped in to assist the Kyrgyz authorities to ensure a stable transition period after the resignation of President Akayev. The OSCE assisted the authorities in the pre-election period and sent an election observation mission to the Presidential elections. The OSCE has assisted the new government in its ambitious reform process, in particular in the economic field. I invite the Kyrgyz authorities to continue co-operation with the OSCE in all dimensions, including through the OSCE Centre in Bishkek.

It is important that the new government in Bishkek continues promoting reforms, especially those on the institutional level. The country was severely tested in March, and we saw numerous shortcomings in terms of capacity to control a crisis. Much remains to be done in uniting the country, establishing effective security, and not least, in promoting Constitutional reforms. Reforms are the only long-term security guarantee.

In Uzbekistan, the OSCE has kept a close eye on developments surrounding and following the violent events of 13 May in Andijan. The OSCE worked to ensure respect for the rights of refugees who fled to Kyrgyzstan. It is the only international organization to bring expert international monitors to observe the Andijan trials. I urge the Uzbek authorities to allow further monitoring of these trials.

Maintaining law and order and countering the threat of terrorism are legitimate priorities for Uzbekistan, just as they are for all OSCE participating States. At the same time, OSCE principles and commitments call for ensuring respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law while addressing these threats.

Presidential elections took place in Kazakhstan yesterday. We look forward to a preliminary election observation report which will be issued today.

Progress for peace was made this year in the framework of the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. An OSCE-led fact-finding mission to the occupied territories as well as high level meetings, particularly between the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan, have provided hope – for the first time in a long time – that we may reach a solution to this conflict. We should try to reflect this in the Ministerial Statement. We would all benefit by peace and stability in the South Caucasus. I urge the parties to work together and through the OSCE to resolve outstanding differences.

In order to capitalize on the opportunity along this dimension, we need broad political stability in South Caucasus. This means stability and reforms in Azerbaijan must follow the November 6 Parliamentary elections. While progress was recorded, the election failed to meet a number of important OSCE standards. It is now necessary for the government to live up to its commitments and to rectify the election and diversify power.

In Georgia, there are grounds for optimism with the joint declaration on 30 May between Georgia and the Russian Federation on the agreement of closure of Russian military bases in Georgia. I understand that implementation is proceeding well. This also means progress with regard to the commitments of the last OSCE Summit in Istanbul. The Training Assistance Programme for Georgian border guards is an encouraging story. While the situation in South Ossetia remains volatile, the OSCE is helping to build confidence between the parties, and is supporting economic rehabilitation. We need to maintain constructive dialogue between the parties, and to seek a peaceful and lasting solution to the status of South Ossetia within Georgia. I am encouraged by recent initiatives including the three stage conflict resolution plan presented by President Saakashvili.

In Moldova negotiations have resumed – after more than one year of interruption – on a peaceful and sustainable resolution of the status of Transdniestria within Moldova. The new 5+2 format, that now involves the EU and US in the negotiation process, has brought a new dynamic to the fore that offers hope for a settlement to this long-standing dispute. So too have efforts of the mediators, particularly the Yushchenko plan. Now that we are back on track, we need to keep up the momentum.

Discussions have begun on the future status of Kosovo. The OSCE has, for many years, played a key role in strengthening democratic institutions, human rights and the rule of law in Kosovo and that role should be continued. I expect that a resolution to the Kosovo status will come next year. I encourage all of you to make a clear commitment at this meeting – through a Ministerial statement – about what role the OSCE should play. While resolving the status of Kosovo, we should not forget Serbia, Montenegro or Bosnia and Herzegovina. This region belongs in the European Union.

Let me also use this opportunity to remind you that we are pressed for time in the Balkans. The perpetual social and economic stagnation and the bewilderment over the future of the Western Balkans are not only making it difficult to win the hearts and minds of the current generation, but we are also losing the young, the future generation. Too many young people are turning to political nationalism and radicalism. I am particularly uncertain of the value added, at this point, of continuing an inflexible visa policy in place for this region. It is impossible, dear friends, to sell the European dream and at the same time restrict access to it. Restrictive visa policy is not the correct prescription for dealing with organized crime and labor migration. Rather let's work more aggressively through the OSCE, and help this region help itself. The key is in capacity building.

Counter Terrorism

The nature of conflicts is changing. Our enemies now wear backpacks and target innocent civilians on public transportation.

Attacks this year demonstrate that terrorism remains a threat to us all. It is therefore vital that the OSCE continues to play its part in the international effort to combat terrorism. Here I urge strong co-operation also with NATO.

We must not allow terror to undermine the principles and values on which our societies are built. We must find a way to ensure security and defend human rights. Because the link between security and human rights is at the heart of the OSCE, the Organization is well suited to assist States in grappling with this thorny issue.

Migration and Integration

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since the beginning of the year I have stressed the importance of migration and integration. These are two of the most important issues facing the OSCE area today. We need to manage migration, and to ensure open yet secure borders. I hope that we can agree during the next two days to decisions on migration and to a concept on border management and security.

Managing diversity within our multi-ethnic and multi-cultural cities and societies is a challenge faced by almost all OSCE states. There is no prototype for harmonious integration, but it is clear that tolerance and non-discrimination are key elements. We should not succumb to segregation, ghettoization, even violence.

I also applaud the fact that next year the OSCE will pay greater attention to vital issues such as energy security, transport, and changes in military doctrines. We have to move with the times.

The Wider World

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In an increasingly inter-connected world, the OSCE needs to be plugged into a wider network. We should take greater advantage of our status as a regional arrangement of the United Nations. We should undertake activities that can ease the UN's burden and strengthen the OSCE's competence. Co-operation with the ICTY Prosecutor's Office in trial monitoring is a good example.

We should build on the co-operation agreement that was made with the Council of Europe this year. There is also scope for closer OSCE-EU co-operation. I again urge better co-operation between the OSCE and NATO.

And we need to be more open to NGOs, civil society, the press and public.

The OSCE is the bridge from Eurasia to the Pacific, and from the Mediterranean to North Africa and the Middle East. We have a strong self-interest in effective partnership, and we should realize the mutual benefits of, for example, opening a dialogue with China. I regret that the time is not ripe to initiate such a dialogue at this meeting, but I encourage you to give it active consideration for the future. After all, China has a stake in stability and development in Central Asia and we all agree that security today is more indivisible than ever.

We should also seriously think about adding the *dimension of the dialogue between cultures and civilizations*, particularly between the Middle East and the OSCE region.

I would like to welcome representatives of our Mediterranean and Asian Partners, in particular Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon of the Republic of Korea. Minister, I hope that the historic experience of the CSCE and our current work can provide you with inspiration for building security and co-operation on the Korean peninsula, and promoting regional security in the Asia-Pacific.

Pulling Together

Colleagues,

Our work is not yet done.

I believe that the willingness is there to pull together and to work in the common interest of peace and security. The thirtieth anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act has reminded us of the importance of the human dimension in the work of the OSCE. The human dimension remains the bedrock of our Organization. Our common commitments unite us.

I look forward to hearing your views.