

Finnish Presidency of the Council of the European Union

**14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council, Brussels  
4 – 5 December 2006**

**Statement by Erkki Tuomioja, Minister for Foreign Affairs  
on behalf of the European Union**

Mr Chairman, Excellencies,

On behalf of the European Union, I am pleased to address the 14<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Council of the OSCE. May I congratulate you, Minister De Gucht, on an outstanding Chairmanship and express our warmest thanks for the excellent Belgian hospitality here in Brussels.

The European Union regards the OSCE as an indispensable actor in the European security landscape. We are committed to the values, norms and principles of the organisation and strongly support its work in all three dimensions. We see an important role for the OSCE in contributing to the peaceful settlement of conflicts and in participating in post-conflict rehabilitation together with other international actors.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

South Eastern Europe is facing major changes. The European Union has welcomed Montenegro's independence and accession to the OSCE. We also welcome the progress in the relations between the EU and the other Western Balkan states. The European Union supports the work of the UN Special Envoy President Ahtisaari on the future status of Kosovo. We hope that the OSCE will continue to play an important role in support of a peaceful, democratic and multiethnic Kosovo.

The EU expresses its satisfaction at the recent approval of the European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plans with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. We hope that their implementation will add stability to the region and strengthen the ties between the EU and the three states of South Caucasus.

The EU fully supports Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The EU reiterates its willingness to contribute to the peaceful resolution of the conflicts in Georgia. We are concerned about the tension in Georgian-Russian relations, and about the consequences of the measures taken by the Russian Federation against Georgia. We emphasize the importance of toning down public rhetoric and call upon both sides to continue on the basis of diplomatic dialogue. Statements and actions which might be interpreted as questioning the principles of national sovereignty and territorial integrity, as incitement to separatist regimes, should be avoided. We value the role of the OSCE in defusing tension, building confidence and working for the reconstruction of the South Ossetian region of Georgia. At the donor-conference in Brussels, the European Union was the biggest donor and confirmed its role in the reconstruction effort. The capabilities of the OSCE, in strengthening security and confidence building measures should be

fully utilized - for example by more comprehensive OSCE monitoring in the South Ossetian region.

The European Union commends the efforts of the co-chairs of the Minsk group to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The EU is encouraged by the active dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan to find a settlement to the conflict. We call on both parties to seize the opportunity to make progress without delay. We welcome the successful implementation of the OSCE-led environmental assessment mission in October to assess the fire-affected areas and meet officials on both sides of the Line of Contact.

The European Union reaffirms its strong support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova. We call for an immediate resumption - without preconditions - of the negotiations on a peaceful political settlement of the Transnistrian question within the agreed 5+2 format. These negotiations should aim at reaching a comprehensive settlement covering the political, economic and security aspects of the conflict, including the transformation of the peace-keeping operation. The European Union appreciates the close cooperation between Republic of Moldova and Ukraine on customs issues and is willing to continue its Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM).

The complete fulfilment of the commitments on the Republic of Georgia and Republic of Moldova, made at the OSCE's Istanbul Summit in 1999 and reflected in the CFE Final Act, remains essential. The EU welcomes the progress achieved by the Russian Federation and the Republic of Georgia on the withdrawal of Russian forces and looks forward to the resolution of the remaining issues. We note with regret the continuing lack of progress on the withdrawal of Russian military forces and equipment from the Republic of Moldova and call upon Russia to resume and complete its withdrawal as soon as possible.

We commend the field operations and their staff throughout the OSCE area for their professionalism and work across the three OSCE dimensions, often in challenging circumstances. We urge participating host states to make effective use of the assistance that field operations provide in order to fulfil agreed mission mandates, and honour OSCE principles and commitments.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The promotion of democracy, human rights, rule of law, good governance and freedom of the expression is at the heart of the work of the organisation. The OSCE's comprehensive concept of security encompasses human security. It remains of the utmost relevance. Efforts to further promote these goals and to fully implement all human dimension commitments are still necessary. Work in the human dimension is also integral to our efforts in conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation.

Human Rights Defenders have a crucial role to play in promoting and protecting human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The EU commends Human Rights Defenders for their work, often under very difficult conditions and calls on all the participating States to fully comply with their OSCE commitments.

The European Union highly appreciates ODIHR's valuable work on human dimension issues and thanks ODIHR for the report on Common Responsibility - Commitments and Implementation, which it prepared as tasked by the Ministerial Council last year. We agree with ODIHR's conclusion on the importance of discussing the implementation of existing commitments and look forward to combining this discussion with one on possible additional commitments. The EU reaffirms its strong support for ODIHR's work in the field of elections. We appreciate the role of parliamentarians in election monitoring, and call on ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to continue their cooperation on the basis of the 1997 agreement on election observation.

The European Union also highly appreciates the work of the Representative on Freedom of the Media and the High Commissioner on National Minorities. We look forward to cooperating closely with the Special Representative on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. The EU supports the involvement of the OSCE in combating the sexual exploitation of children.

The fight against racism, xenophobia and discrimination of all kinds is a key aspect of EU policy, both inside our borders and externally. The European Union Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia will soon be expanded to form a Fundamental Rights Agency. The European Union recognizes the need to combat discrimination on grounds of religion or belief, sex, race, sexual orientation, age or disability and to promote the respect for diversity.

The EU will continue to attach importance to the strengthening of the economic and environmental dimension. We reiterate our support for the full implementation of the 2003 Maastricht Strategy. This year's efforts have concentrated on secure transportation networks and transport development as means to enhance regional economic cooperation and stability in the OSCE area. We welcome the emphasis in next year's activities placed on the promotion of environmental security and sustainable development in the OSCE area.

The EU underlines that energy security requires a predictable, reliable, economically acceptable, commercially sound and environmentally friendly energy supply, and reaffirms the commitments of the OSCE Strategy document adopted at Maastricht in 2003. We note an increasing energy interdependence between producing, consuming and transit countries within the whole OSCE area, which needs to be addressed by strengthened dialogue and cooperation contributing to energy security.

In the political-military dimension progress has been made on arms control, confidence and security building measures and non-proliferation. This work contributes to the fight against terrorism and also addresses the destabilisation of states by addressing the risks posed by illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons, including by air, as well as the risk posed by ammunition stockpiles and by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The European Union finds it particularly important to strengthen the respect for the OSCE's Code of Conduct on Political Military Aspects of Security and the democratic control of armed forces. We reaffirm our commitment to the OSCE Border Security and Management Concept and encourage its further implementation.

OSCE participating States face challenges from non-military threats to security such as terrorism and organised crime. We commend the Belgian Chairmanship for enhancing the work of the organisation in promoting an international legal framework against terrorism, in countering the use of internet for terrorist purposes and in seeking further measures to prevent the criminal use of lost and stolen travel documents. We congratulate the Chairmanship for its active work in promoting cooperation between international organisations on the issue of criminal justice systems.

The OSCE's comprehensive approach to security and conflict prevention, its broad membership and open dialogue, backed by an effective network of field operations and institutions, enable it to address old and new threats to security. The EU underlines that terrorism and other security threats can be tackled effectively only when human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law are fully respected.

Strengthening the effectiveness of the OSCE on the basis of the Ljubljana Ministerial decision, has been one of the central themes this year. The European Union welcomes efforts aimed at taking stock of the organisation's performance and increasing its value for the participating States. We welcome the progress achieved, including the adoption of the new rules of procedure, and the steps taken towards drafting a convention on the OSCE's international legal status. We attach importance to an early agreement on the legal status issue. The EU considers

it important to enhance coordination, coherence and continuity by strengthening the functioning of the secretariat. In the course of this meeting we will continue to work to find consensus on outstanding issues.

Today's challenges are not limited to the OSCE region. The European Union appreciates the cooperation with Asian and Mediterranean Partners. The EU looks forward to enhancing the dialogue with partners on OSCE values and commitments.

On the question of upcoming OSCE chairmanships, the EU hopes that an acceptable solution can be found at this meeting.

The EU reiterates its wish to finalize the Joint Declaration on enhancing EU-OSCE cooperation, which would help to further strengthen the substantial cooperation of the OSCE with the EU.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The European Union is pleased to welcome Spain as the new Chairmanship-in-Office in 2007. I wish the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Spain, Mr. Miguel Angel Moratinos a most successful chairmanship and look forward to closely cooperating with him.

Thank you

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey and Croatia <sup>1</sup>, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

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<sup>1</sup> Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process