

**Statement by Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland,
Ilkka Kanerva,
At the Fifteenth Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council,
Madrid 29 and 30 November 2007**

Mr. Chairman, Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to align Finland with the statement of the Portuguese European Union Presidency. I would like to echo the words of appreciation and thanks to the Spanish Chairmanship, particularly to Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos and his team, for their excellent work guiding the OSCE throughout the year, and for the gracious hospitality that we have enjoyed here in Madrid.

Now I would like to make few comments from the Finnish national perspective.

As Finland is preparing to assume the duties of the Chairmanship in the beginning of next year, we are faced with many uncertainties. Some of them touch upon the OSCE's activities directly, while others are broader issues of international relations, which are discussed in different settings.

The discussion on difficult issues also in the OSCE is not necessarily a sign of crisis. Dialogue on the basis of equality has been our hallmark since the beginning of the CSCE process. The OSCE is essentially a forum for political dialogue. During its chairmanship year Finland would like this function to be further strengthened.

The Madrid Ministerial Council comes at the end of a year full of challenging negotiations. Spain deserves praise for setting ambitious goals to the Organization's work. We support the Spanish chairmanship in their efforts to achieve results on as many open questions as possible.

Mr. Chairman,

The OSCE is a regional arrangement under the United Nations Charter. It is a unique forum which is based on consensus in decision-making. This requirement places a heavy burden on those who want to develop its activities, but it also guarantees that the decisions enjoy the support of all participating States. Our Organization is an instrument of peace, security, stability and cooperation in its region. It has developed an impressive set of principles, norms and commitments.

The incoming Chairman is often asked about his or her broad lines in taking the OSCE further. My answer would be that we should base our action on the

broad concept of security, stress continuity on the base of existing commitments, and take into account changing situations.

We should cultivate the achievements of co-operative security in Europe. We should also take into account that the OSCE and its methods could serve as a model in other regions of the world. But we should have the patience to practise in our own region what we preach.

Mr. Chairman,

South-Eastern Europe is again in the spotlight. The troika-led process to find a negotiated solution to Kosovo's status is in its final stage. The OSCE has invested a great amount of capacity and resources in Kosovo over the years. We should make every effort to continue the OSCE's work for the benefit of the people in Kosovo and the region.

The OSCE-led peace processes in Moldova and Georgia have unfortunately not made much progress. We should urge the parties to join in result-oriented talks. I am ready to do my share as the incoming Chairman to revive the negotiations. I will support the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Process to use every opening for a political settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

In spite of all efforts, the fate of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe remains uncertain. Finland believes that the CFE Treaty plays an important role in the security architecture of Europe. I would like to encourage the parties to the Treaty to do their utmost to safeguard the continuation of the CFE regime.

In the politico-military area the OSCE has continued to do important work, especially in destroying small arms and light weapons as well as stockpiles of ammunition.

The OSCE could also usefully undertake activities assisting participating States to improve the security and management of their borders. Finland is ready to contribute to such efforts in Tajikistan. We could think of ways to involve neighbouring countries in such activities, including Afghanistan, one of our Asian Partners for Cooperation.

In light of emerging challenges we should think of economic and environmental activities which also have a clear security aspect. Building on the Belgian and Spanish work on transport and environmental questions, Finland proposed maritime and inland waterways co-operation in the OSCE area as a priority theme in the economic and environmental dimension. We were pleased to see the interest of the delegations participating in the first conference held under this theme in Helsinki in September, where we had a chance to highlight concerns especially in Northern Europe.

Growing volumes of transport will hopefully lead to increasing cooperation among states bordering on important waterways, and with countries which are landlocked and face different kind of challenges.

Mr Chairman,

The dialogue in the OSCE should be guided by our shared values of democracy, rule of law and the respect for human rights. These values cannot be compromised and the work of our Organization must be firmly anchored to them.

In the field of the human dimension, the OSCE should be seen as an Organization offering advice and assistance. In recent years, tolerance-related activities have assumed a visible role, and they should be further developed.

Action plans have been adopted by previous Ministerial Councils on such important questions such as combating trafficking in human beings, improving the situation of Roma and Sinti populations, and on gender issues. Progress on the implementation of these action plans should be assessed. Supportive measures should be taken where needed.

Participation of Non-Governmental Organizations is an important aspect of the OSCE's activities. We should pass the clear message that we welcome the contribution of civil society actors also in the future.

Democracy finds its expression in elections but more broadly, in people enjoying the freedom of association, assembly and expression. Election-related activities of the OSCE, especially election observation, are viewed critically by a number of participating States. However, these activities also receive clear support from other participating States. Credible election observation by the ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, in close cooperation, can only be based on listening to the concerns of participating States, who in turn respect the commitments they have given.

Mr Chairman,

The OSCE is the product of years if not decades of construction work. No organization is ever complete, and ours is no exception. Making the OSCE more efficient is, of course, the wish of every Chairman-in-Office.

The OSCE structures and institutions support everything that the OSCE does. While the political support of the participating States is essential for their activities, they should retain the necessary freedom of action. The field operations of the OSCE continue to fulfil an important function in close cooperation with the host governments.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to conclude by thanking Minister Moratinos and you, Minister De Gucht, for the great cooperation between Spain, Belgium and Finland in the

OSCE troika during 2007. I hope for my part that good troika cooperation with Spain and the chairmanship country of 2009 will continue next year.