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DEPUTY STATE SECRETARY AND HEAD OF THE DELEGATION
OF SWITZERLAND, AT THE FOURTEENTH MEETING OF THE
OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Brussels, 4 and 5 December 2006

Mr. Chairman,

First of all, I should like to thank the Belgian Chairmanship of the OSCE for its generous hospitality and its determined commitment to make this Ministerial Council a success.

You have succeeded in facing up to the challenges and forming a solid Chairmanship that has highlighted important issues and set the direction for the future. The results can be seen in practice. They include the final results in front of us today in the form of substantive decisions, reports and statements. Your achievements and those of your energetic team deserve respect and recognition.

The thirtieth anniversary last year of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act was used as an opportunity to provide the OSCE with resources to make it stronger and more effective. One year later we can take stock and see whether we have managed to use this opportunity and impart a fresh impetus to the OSCE not least in the interests of our countries and government.

In that connection, I should like to touch on the following aspects.

In this year that is drawing to a close, the OSCE has been very much concerned with itself. This is entirely understandable in the light of the task it was given in Ljubljana of strengthening its effectiveness. The outstanding reforms will be completed next year. There is no doubt that it is in the interests of the Organization to devote more time and effort to its core tasks. While respecting the three-dimensional, comprehensive view of security, priorities must be set. We refer first and foremost to the democratization process and the consistent promotion of human rights throughout the OSCE area. This includes confidence- and security-building, the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, which could be further developed, and also conflict prevention. In this area in particular there is still a need for action, which places demanding responsibilities on our Organization. Conflicts and more specifically the people in the affected regions are also looking to us to strengthen the core areas in the Organization. This is also a question of credibility.

Good progress has been made with the reform efforts — there is just a little left to be done under the Spanish Chairmanship. In some areas, the results achieved so far have been

appreciable; in others they have not lived up to the original expectations. A stronger OSCE means strengthening coherence and continuity and also demonstrating this to the outside world, including other international actors. In this respect, it has become clear once again that any overlapping with other international organizations must be avoided.

Mr. Chairman,

We are aware that the frequency and thematic scope of events in the annual calendar and the number of OSCE activities have increased considerably over the past few years. Hardly a week goes by without an OSCE meeting on old and new issues. I cannot conceal the fact that this development gives rise to a certain amount of concern for my delegation in Vienna and for the departments in our capital. Smaller States do not always have sufficient resources to send experts to every meeting. What is more, it is sometimes difficult to see how to reconcile the increase in activities and meetings with the results achieved. If we want to devote ourselves really effectively to the core issues of the OSCE, there must, in our view, be timely and careful consideration in advance of whether a new issue that the Organization intends to address actually satisfies a widely supported need.

Lastly, I should like to say a few words about the work of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). For our country this institution and its activities form an important pillar of the OSCE. The task of the ODIHR is to provide all participating States with real support in establishing confidence and security. It remains to be seen to what extent the ODIHR's activities are adapted to the new circumstances and requirements. The ODIHR report that the Ministers have in front of them and the decisions that have been drafted here in Brussels show the way forward.

Mr. Chairman,

Thanks to the Belgian Chairmanship we now have a good prospect for finding a long-term solution to the problems we are facing or at least of examining possible solutions. It is now up to us to make use of this impetus to make rapid and resolute progress in the reforms in accordance with the Ljubljana "road map". In this context, we welcome the incoming Spanish Chairmanship and offer it the unstinting support of the Swiss delegation.

At this juncture, I should also like to point out briefly in conclusion that an OSCE Chairmanship can offer advantages to those countries that are in the process of reform and of introducing and applying the norms and values that the Organization stands for. A candidacy should basically be the starting point of an irreversible process resulting in special efforts and recognizable progress on the part of the relevant authorities as regards respect for human rights and the implementation of democratic reforms. With that in mind, we welcome the candidacy of a Central Asian participating State. It is in the interests of our Organization that this candidacy finds consensus among the participating States in the foreseeable future.

Thank you for your attention.