

ENGLISH only

SPEECH OF THE GREEK DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER,

Dr. YANNIS VALINAKIS

Mr. Chairman, Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to take part in the 13th Ministerial Council of the OSCE in the beautiful city of Ljubljana.

I would like to start my speech by sincerely thanking our hosts for the constructive and professional work done during the Slovenian Presidency of the OSCE. Indeed, Minister Dimitrij Rupel has been a very diligent and active Chairman in Office in a crucial period for the future of the OSCE. He and his dedicated staff deserve our warmest congratulations for their excellent job in moving the agenda of the OSCE forward.

Greece subscribes fully to the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of the UK Presidency on behalf of the EU. I wish, however to address certain points of particular interest to my country.

Greece is profoundly convinced of the strategic role and position of the OSCE as an integral part of the European security architecture and of its potential to respond adequately to a new set of threats and challenges.

The bedrock on which the OSCE stands is its acquis and the Helsinki principles. There is no doubt, I believe, that its broad membership, consensus-based decision making, comprehensive and cooperative approach to security and the well established political dialogue, with all participating States enjoying an equal voice, proves that the OSCE is a great asset in the European security architecture and a unique tool in the network of international organisations.

What the OSCE needs today is a stronger sense of common purpose, setting its priorities right and a clearer focus, as well as a cross dimensional approach in its activities in order to combat effectively the rising scourge of terrorism and organized crime, promote democratic institutions and protect human rights. Assistance in capacity building, police training, rule of law and the fight against trafficking in human beings are areas where the OSCE could indeed take a leading role.

Thirty years after the Helsinki Final Act, Greece's commitment to

the furtherance of our shared vision remains strong. It is in this context, that my Government has decided to announce Greece's readiness to assume the Chairmanship of the OSCE in the year 2010.

Mr. Chairman, Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We all agree that, today, the OSCE needs to embrace change and improve its modus operandi. Such an improvement, however, should not be made at the expense of its firmly established standards and principles, common values and commitments.

Our efforts, therefore, should aim at increasing the efficiency, transparency and accountability in the Organisation as a whole, its Institutions and field operations. Furthermore, strengthening the sense of ownership in the OSCE will motivate towards a more active engagement the States participating. In this regard, my country supports all steps and decisions aiming at safeguarding a fair distribution of posts among all participating States.

Greece believes that it is high time for the OSCE to acquire legal personality and become a full- fledged international organisation. We share the conviction that the OSCE institutions, the High Commissioner for National Minorities, the ODIHR and the Representative on the Freedom of the Media are all central to the OSCE. In rendering the OSCE more efficient it is of great importance to keep their autonomy intact.

Greece supports the proposal for an enhanced and more active role of the Secretary General for the sake of continuity in the activities of the Organisation, better performance as well as more effective implementation of decisions taken. The SG should be considered as the guarantor of the Organisation's long term agenda and the guardian of the institutional memory of the OSCE.

The position of Greece with regard to structural changes in the OSCE is that the latter ones should contribute to increasing the effectiveness of the OSCE, thus avoiding the duplication of work and the proliferation of organs. The introduction of new structures should facilitate decision-making rather than increase bureaucracy.

One of the OSCE's strengths is its close co-operation with other international organisations, especially the EU, the Council of Europe, UN, NATO as well as other international organisations which share our objectives. Evidently, the OSCE does not have the potential nor should it try to take the lead on all issues. A cross

dimensional approach would, therefore, also mean that in certain areas the Organisation should strive to be a catalyst for other international major players.

Mr. Chairman, Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Before concluding, I would like to raise three more points.

I seize this opportunity to underline that Greece attaches particular importance to the OSCE's role in the Western Balkans. In fact, the OSCE's effective presence in the area is crucial in enhancing the democratisation process and institution building as well as fostering the engagement of civil society in public life and the holding of democratic elections. This could substantially pave the way of those countries towards achieving their goal to become members of the EU, after having fulfilled all the criteria and requirements set in this respect.

Greece attaches also great importance to the strengthening of our dialogue with our Mediterranean partners and we welcome, therefore, all steps offering them the opportunity to make the best possible use of the experience and the acquis of the OSCE in all three dimensions.

Last but not least, Greece welcomes the completion of the first phase of implementation of the Treaty on Open Skies, the positive assessments of the 2005 First Review Conference as well as the accession to the Treaty by OSCE participating States. Greece takes note that one application for accession is pending.

I thank you for your attention.