

MC.DEL/38/04
6 December 2004

ENGLISH
Original: GERMAN

**STATEMENT BY DR. URSULA PLASSNIK,
FEDERAL MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
THE REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA, AT THE TWELFTH MEETING OF
THE OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Sofia, 6 and 7 December 2004

Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I should like to thank the Chairman-in-Office, Foreign Minister Passy, and his colleagues in Vienna and Sofia for their tireless efforts and successful work on behalf of our Organization. I should also like to say thank you for the hospitality extended to us in Sofia. I wish the future Slovenian chairmanship every success.

Faced with the recent dramatic developments in Ukraine, the OSCE has shown that even under difficult conditions it can make successful progress in its work for our common values. At this point, I should like to express my gratitude to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and its Director, Mr. Christian Strohal, for their valuable work not only in Ukraine but also at other important elections, for example in Afghanistan, Georgia and the United States of America.

This experience should give us courage at a time when it has become increasingly difficult to establish common guidelines for carrying out the work of the OSCE. We should ask ourselves to what degree the spirit of the OSCE Charter is reflected in our decision-making and our decisions.

The fight against new threats such as terrorism, organized crime and its particularly objectionable form, trafficking in human beings, must remain a key task for the OSCE. With its multi-dimensional approach, the OSCE is eminently suited to this task. For several years now we have, with Mrs. Helga Konrad, devoted ourselves to the struggle against trafficking in human beings, especially trafficking in women and children.

Today, racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, discrimination against Muslims and various forms of intolerance are regrettably something we hear about on a daily basis. The OSCE must take up these challenges in a comprehensive way.

In the politico-military dimension, where Austria, as you are aware, has been chairing the Forum for Security Co-operation for the last three months, we have been able to achieve notable progress in controlling small arms and light weapons. For the first time, an attempt has been made here to destroy sizeable stockpiles of ammunition held in some OSCE

participating States, which pose a great security risk to the civilian population and the environment.

It is important that the OSCE deals more intensively with the complex security policy problems in Central Asia. The OSCE Academy in Bishkek, which has become an important part of regional co-operation, can be seen as a visible success for the work of the OSCE. The police academy and the Border Management in Central Asia project are exactly the kind of thing that the OSCE should, in our view, pursue further.

The focus on Central Asia should not, however, lead us to neglect the Balkans. Political stability, security and prosperity have still not been achieved in that region. The OSCE is fulfilling an important stabilizing task here for security in all of Europe.

The settlement of various conflicts in our region must also not be put on hold. The Moldovan-Transdniestrian conflict, Nagorno-Karabakh and Georgia must remain the focus of our attention.

One of the striking features of the OSCE is its operational work with its institutions and field operations. A working group chaired by Austria is endeavouring to increase the effectiveness of field operations.

We have also found an appropriate solution for the accommodation of the Secretariat in Vienna and I should like to inform you that building work began recently.

In 2005, the OSCE will celebrate the tenth anniversary of its existence as an organization and commemorate the signing of the Helsinki Final Act 30 years ago and the Charter of Paris 15 years ago. We must tackle the increasing discrepancy between the objectives set out in the basic documents and the results of our daily work. I therefore welcome the proposed appointment of a panel of eminent persons to deal with this question.

Thank you for your attention.