

FRANCE

**BY MR MICHEL BARNIER,  
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS,  
TO THE OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL SESSION  
--- Sofia, 6 December 2004 ---**

Mr Chairman,  
Ministers, Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

My first words of gratitude go naturally to the Bulgarian Chairmanship for their excellent preparation of this meeting, and more over for the remarkable work accomplished since the beginning of this year. My gratitude goes towards my friend, Minister Solomon Passy.

1. It is with great pleasure that I join you to take part in this Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Ministerial Council session. And, before I start, I would just like to say that I share the statement made by Minister Bot on behalf of the Presidency of the European Union and Mrs Ferrero-Waldner in the name of the European Commission.

In a few months' time, we will be celebrating the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the final Helsinki Act and the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Charter of Paris. It is therefore an opportune moment to take stock, evaluate the current situation and resolutely look towards the future.

Since The OSCE is at a turning point in its history. In 2004, the European Union enlarged by ten new Member States. The Atlantic Alliance, for its part, welcomed seven new members. Europe enjoys a steady peace, lets hope for good. Europe is almost reunited. This is the outcome of a process that started with the fall of the Berlin Wall just 15 years ago. And the OSCE was at the heart of the process that made this transformation possible, with the vital role it has played in security and stability in Europe for nearly 30 years.

2. Yet does this mean that the OSCE has lost its *raison d'être* and has accomplished its mission?

We know full well that this is not the case and that Europe and the world are confronted with new challenges today.

First, as it has been said by some of you, terrorism, which hit our continent hard from Madrid to Beslan this year. No one is safe from it. And also WMD proliferation, regional conflicts, failure of some States and organised crime. These five challenges are encompassed in the European Union's Security Strategy. They are also challenges to which the OSCE should be able to respond in coming years.

3. My conviction is clear. France believes that the OSCE is as relevant as ever when it comes to contributing to current and future security and stability in Europe. And this, for two reasons.

The first reason is that the OSCE brings together all the States of Europe and North America on an equal footing. It is our shared forum, based on consensus. We should not deprive ourselves of this unique body, but should take advantage of all its possibilities.

The second reason is that the OSCE has an original combination of principles and method that will enable it to overcome current problems. Since European security ties in with military security and the control of armaments – and the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces remains a cornerstone of European security in this regard. Yet we feel that security should be defined more broadly to include human, civic and economic aspects, human rights and development. France believes that it is essential to maintain this balance. There can be no security without democracy, nor any prosperity. I can only repeat what I have said at the United Nations : a freer and safer world will be a fairer world.

The consensus method has proved its worth over the last three decades. It expresses the principle of equality between our States. It conditions the preservation of essential trust. It guarantees equitable treatment for all, inasmuch as our common framework of values is respected.

4. Today, as before, maintaining this comprehensive and balanced approach is the guarantee of the effectiveness of our action. Yet the OSCE can only continue to bring the States and peoples of the Euro-Atlantic zone together if we also remain faithful to our commitments. This is the *raison d'être* of our Organization.

First of all, in the area of security where we would like to see the conditions met for the entry into force of the adapted CFE Treaty.

Secondly, in the field of human rights and democracy, which is so dear -and rightly so- to our citizens, where the rights of people belonging to national minorities should be respected and the holding of free and transparent elections guaranteed.

Such is the challenge in Ukraine, a country so close to us, as the Minister of Georgia has just mentioned, where our action is guided by a number of principles, as expressed by Javier Solana : the upholding of democracy, the rejection of violence, the search for a political solution that will preserve the unity of Ukraine and regional stability, and support of the Ukrainian institutions, which are engaged with great lucidity to find a way out of the crisis.

5. Yet, as we know, in the face of new threats, the OSCE will also have to make the necessary adjustments. What might our road map be? I would identify two major aims.

The first aim is that we should continue to deepen the OSCE's traditional areas of activity by seeking new synergies wherever possible, especially with the European Union and with the Council of Europe.

Let's learn to work together! Take, for example, the economic field. New concrete areas of co-operation could be envisaged, and my country is prepared to explore them. I refer, in particular, to energy security and the Paneuropean transport networks.

In the field of human rights, we should preserve first and foremost the OSCE acquis shared by our 55 countries. In front of intolerance, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and racism, there is no possible compromise. I personally hosted the special Paris OSCE meeting in June on phenomena of intolerance on the Internet – the Minister Solomon Passy was there, as

many of you -, and we will be hosting a conference on violence against women in the spring of 2005. I also have in my mind the violence against children so widely spread on our continent. Sexual abuse and traffics of children, violence against children and women are, with election fairness, the combats for democracy today. I am decided to engage in these fights. France welcomes as well the initiative of Spain to host in Cordoba in 2005 a conference on anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance.

The second aim is that we must reinforce the OSCE management efficiency. France is in favour of taking the States' contribution capacities more into account, in keeping with the political nature of the OSCE. We all know that The Secretary General has an important role to play in this effort to guarantee the overall cohesion of the OSCE. It is in this spirit that my country has put forward the candidacy of Mr Marc Perrin de Brichambaut to succeed, in due time, Mr Ján Kubiš, whose accomplished work for his two terms I commend.

Mr Chairman, Colleagues,

There are many challenges, but the OSCE must remain one of the linchpins of a peaceful Europe, this common area of stability, security, prosperity and democracy. It is up to us, up to our political will, to give it the necessary means for that.

I renew my thanks to the Bulgarian Chairmanship and, a few weeks in advance, I wish the Slovenian Chairmanship good luck and all the best.

Thank you.