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AFFAIRS AND IMMIGRATION OF THE GRAND DUCHY OF
LUXEMBOURG, AT THE FOURTEENTH MEETING OF THE OSCE
MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Brussels, 4 and 5 December 2006

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Colleagues,

Some of the speakers who preceded me have emphasized that the world has not necessarily become any safer over the past few years. Since globalization is not just an economic phenomenon, this development has definite repercussions for security in Europe and therefore we cannot be indifferent to it. This being so, one can only rejoice that the situation in Europe, and more specifically in the OSCE area, has, by and large, remained stable. I am personally convinced that our Organization is making a great contribution to this state of affairs.

This relative success must not, however, make us lose sight of the major challenge which the OSCE continues to face. Our Organization must adapt itself to changing conditions and further strengthen its capacity for ensuring and preserving security on the European continent. In order to meet this challenge, we, the 56 participating States of the OSCE — and here I want to welcome the representative of the Republic of Montenegro and congratulate his country wholeheartedly on having joined our Organization — must demonstrate ambition and determination so as to make judicious decisions in the following three areas:

First, if we truly want to modernize the OSCE, we must strengthen its effectiveness.

The OSCE is an international organization that has existed for more than 12 years yet it still does not have legal personality or capacity. This situation presents undeniable problems. The absence of legal capacity complicates the Organization's work in its relations with other actors, participating States or third parties and raises major problems with regard to responsibility. Certain ad hoc stopgap measures arranged with the different participating States in which the Organization is directly present provide it with relative, and, what is more, variable protection depending on where its activities are being carried out. It is therefore in the interests of the good governance of our Organization that we increase the security legally speaking of the institution. For that reason, I am delighted that, after having increased the security of the modalities of internal functioning, we are now very close as well to reaching an agreement on the adoption of a decision to provide the OSCE with adequate external legal capacity by 2007.

In addition to this question of principle, I admit that I wonder whether the results of our efforts regarding “the reform of the OSCE” are going to live up to our expectations — and this despite the extraordinary efforts and continued commitment of the Belgian Chairmanship. Much will depend on the implementation of the decisions to be adopted.

Second, we must strengthen and increase the security of the OSCE’s valuable “acquis” in conflict prevention.

Conflict prevention must be understood in the broadest terms and be associated with the politico-military dimension as well as the human dimension and human rights, and also the economic dimension and development.

Through its Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the OSCE has at its disposal renowned international expertise in election monitoring and assistance in the holding of elections. We must continue to develop this asset, which can certainly be improved, while preserving the institution’s autonomy and the methodology it uses.

The ODIHR and the human dimension of our Organization are not, however, limited to election-related activities. This is, moreover, why we asked the ODIHR to prepare a report for us on other subjects as well, and that is what the ODIHR has done.

A study of the ODIHR report seems to justify the following two conclusions:

- On the one hand, making the Organization and its institutions more effective does not necessarily mean a change in the rules which govern them or which they are asked to apply: the OSCE would certainly gain much in effectiveness if participating States were to implement in full all the commitments they have subscribed to;
- On the other hand, several recommendations contained in the ODIHR report deal directly with the Office itself; they are the outcome of consultations the ODIHR has held with participating States; it would therefore make sense to ask the ODIHR to implement them through a simple Ministerial Council decision, the adoption of which should not require difficult and prolonged negotiations.

Conflict prevention also presupposes economic security. In this area, as in others, we must nevertheless seek to obtain more substantial results with the limited resources available to us while ensuring that we retain only those activities that have a direct link with the role of the Organization and for which it has the necessary expertise.

As regards the politico-military dimension, I believe it is essential that we preserve and perpetuate the “acquis” and confidence-building measures. It is for that reason that my country is not only committed to the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe but also asks that the Istanbul commitments be implemented in full so that the conditions necessary for ratification of the adapted Treaty can at last be put into place.

Third, we must step up our efforts to stabilize or resolve existing conflicts.

Unfortunately, renewed tension in Georgia, prevarications in the search for a solution to the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh and growing evidence of separatism through the so-called referenda and elections in Transdniestria and in South Ossetia are not helping us to find a solution to what are referred to as “frozen” conflicts.

I should like to salute the tireless efforts of the OSCE’s emissaries to bring about an agreement in these matters. All the OSCE can do, however, is to create a framework conducive to the search for a lasting solution. It is for the parties involved, and them alone, to take the decisive step, inspired by basic, universally recognized principles and ensuring that their actions are also in conformity with these principles.

Lastly, new responsibilities could fall to our Organization in other parts of the OSCE area. I am thinking, in particular, of the western Balkans.

The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina could see its importance grow when the Office of the High Representative closes its doors next year and the international community begins its withdrawal.

In Kosovo, where the OSCE deployed its largest mission, the role of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo could acquire a new dimension depending on the decisions taken on the future status of Kosovo and on their implementation. The OSCE must stand ready, in co-operation with the European Union, to assume, if appropriate, new responsibilities in support of a peaceful, democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo.

Mr. Chairman,

Before I come to a close, I should like to express my very best wishes to the future Spanish Chairmanship and to assure Spain of our complete support as it faces the numerous challenges with which it will find itself confronted.

Lastly, Mr. Chairman, permit me to congratulate you on the excellent work accomplished by the Belgian Chairmanship throughout the year and on your personal commitment to our Organization.

Thank you for your attention.