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Address by H.E. Mr. Thorsteinn Ingólfsson, Special Envoy of
the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland

Mr. Chairman, Minister De Gucht,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset let me congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, for the dynamism and commitment you and your team have brought to your year in Office. We much appreciate your initiatives and your devotion to the tasks that you have been faced with, often under difficult circumstances.

Allow me also to warmly welcome Montenegro as a new participating state of the OSCE.

In general the OSCE fulfills its task very well, though as a consensus based organisation, decisions can be difficult to reach. Iceland, therefore, does not consider any fundamental reforms to be necessary. Nevertheless, there is always room for improvement. We welcome the work undertaken in strengthening the effectiveness of our organisation, based on the decision of the OSCE Ministerial Council in Ljubljana.

Mr. Chairman,

Fostering human rights, democracy and the rule of law is at the core of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security. The OSCE must play a strong role in promoting these values and we must build on the commitments we have undertaken in our Organisation. Our success depends to a large extent on the political will of participating States to fulfill their existing commitments. Fulfilment of commitments should also be the guiding principle of any state assuming the Presidency of our organisation. I would like to stress that Iceland holds the view that any of the 56 participating states of the OSCE should be entitled to chair our organisation, but should also be aware of these obligations.

The fight against trafficking in human beings, including children, is a priority issue which affects all OSCE participating States, whether countries of origin, transit or destination. Iceland has in the past couple of years supported financially anti-trafficking work of the OSCE human rights programme in *inter alia* Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In this context, Iceland would like to acknowledge with appreciation the pioneering work carried out by Dr. Helga Konrad, the first Special Representative on Trafficking while warmly welcoming Eva Biaudet, the new Special Representative.

Mr. Chairman,

Iceland strongly supports the call for a consistent and cross-dimensional implementation of the 2004 Action Plan for the promotion of Gender Equality. It is also very important in the work of the OSCE to bear in mind UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

Central to the OSCE's effectiveness in the area of democracy building and human rights is the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). The success already achieved is to a large extent the result of its independence and integrity. The autonomy of ODIHR must not be compromised. At the same time we remain open to innovative ideas, in particular with regard to election monitoring. In this context, the report submitted by ODIHR Director Christian Strohal gives a balanced analysis and we welcome the concrete recommendations made by ODIHR.

Iceland has welcomed the UN Global Counter-terrorism strategy. The ongoing implementation of the OSCE Strategy should continue. At the same time we must ensure that human rights are safeguarded in actions against terrorism.

Mr. Chairman,

Seven years have now passed since the Istanbul Summit. We remain committed to the CFE Treaty (Conventional Armed Forces in Europe) and reaffirm our attachment to the early entry into force of the Adapted Treaty. The full implementation of the outstanding Istanbul commitments on Georgia and Moldova must remain the basis of our common efforts.

The current situation in Georgia is a particular challenge for the OSCE, which has a broad mandate for activities in the country. As to the irregular "referendum" and "presidential elections" which took place in the South Ossetian region of Georgia last month, Iceland would like to stress that it fully aligns itself with the position of the European Union and others to the effect that these events conflict with Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders and, furthermore, does not contribute to peaceful conflict resolution.

Finally, let me stress the key role of the OSCE Field Missions. The Field Missions are one of the defining features of the OSCE.

I should like to thank you, Minister De Gucht, for the excellent conduct of this meeting and you and your able team for the good work during your presidency.

I would also like to wish the incoming Spanish Chairman in Office every success in tackling the challenging agenda of the OSCE in 2007.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.