

**OSCE Head Quarters in Wallnerstrasse, Vienna,
Inauguration 21 November 2007**

**Address by H.E. Dr. Heinz Fischer, Federal President of the
Republic of Austria**

Es gilt das gesprochene Wort!

Check against delivery!

SPERRFRIST: 21.11.2007, 16 Uhr

Your Majesty,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Five years ago the Austrian Federal Government has taken the decision to dedicate this building in the heart of Vienna to the OSCE, and the OSCE in turn has agreed to establish the OSCE headquarters here.

As we officially inaugurate this building today, I would first like to underline how grateful and privileged we are, that His Majesty King Juan Carlos is personally representing the Spanish Chair at our ceremony.

Let me thank at this occasion the 56 Participating States and the two OSCE-Secretary Generals, Jan Kubis and Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, who had the determination to make this major project of new OSCE-Headquarters in Vienna happen. I would equally like to thank the Minister for European and International Affairs, Mrs. Ursula Plassnik and Mr. Martin Bartenstein, Minister for Economics and Labour as well as executive Vienna City Counsellor Andreas Mailaith-Pokorny representing the City of Vienna,

for the support extended to this project by the Government of Austria and the City of Vienna. Last but not least I would like to congratulate the two architects who designed and realized this stunning project of turning the famous Austrian Palais Palffy into a state-of-the-art office building while at the same time preserving its historical substance.

Austria takes its responsibility as a host country for important International Organizations very seriously. We are aware of the fact that all of you, through your initiatives and activities contribute to making this world a safer place. We try to support all the Vienna-based International Organizations wherever and however possible.

Vienna is continuously developing into a genuine competence center of international security in the 21st century, basing this concept on Vienna's tradition as an internationally accepted place for global dialogue.

These new facilities should enable the operational structures and institutions like the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media,

the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings,

the special units dealing with new tasks like police training, border-management, anti-terrorism

as well as the Gender Issues Unit in the Office of the Secretary General to perform their important duties in an appropriate environment.

Austria has always been very committed, first to the CSCE-process, later to the OSCE with its seat in Vienna.

Austria believes in its values, its soft security approach, its ability to adapt to new challenges, its capacity to react rapidly in situations of crisis – in short, we strongly believe in the OSCE and its future.

Let me therefore just mention some important points linked to the activities of the OSCE.

One of the assets of the OSCE is its broad membership encompassing North America, Europe and Central Asia and its consensus-based, multidimensional concept of common, comprehensive and cooperative security. The cross-dimensional dialogue on the basis of commonly accepted values and political commitments lies at the core of the OSCE's concept of security. Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law is an essential part of its agreed values.

Security and stability have to be achieved with political will and endurance. Throughout the years the OSCE's Politico-Military Dimension has developed a tightly-knit network of instruments for conventional arms control and confidence and security building measures. Questions of disarmament and non-proliferation are not issues of the past. We should preserve and build upon the security network we have established.

The OSCE has played an important role to prevent and resolve conflicts in its area. We should not accept the stalemate in so-called frozen conflicts. We highly value the efforts of the Spanish Chair in using the OSCE and its potential fully in continuing efforts to resolve these conflicts.

Austria and its partner States in the EU are working on the development of a European perspective for the Western Balkans region. The Stability Pact for South East Europe, under the auspices of the OSCE, is an excellent example for cooperation in Europe and the progress achieved by common efforts. The OSCE Missions in Southeast Europe play an invaluable part in contributing to the stabilisation of the region.

All OSCE participating states have pledged to respect democratic principles and human rights as a whole and the OSCE has rightly taken up the issues of tolerance and non-discrimination. The High Commissioner on National Minorities is another important tool for early warning and conflict prevention.

Freedom of the media is the oxygen for democracy and must be supported constantly.

The Spanish Chair must be also commended for taking up issues concerning in particular youth and environmental questions.

It is of eminent importance to promote ODIHR as the human rights platform of the entire OSCE area. The OSCE through ODIHR has made an invaluable contribution to the democratic development of countries in transition by elaborating a widely recognised methodology for election observation in order to

assist governments in developing their democratic structures. As no democracy is perfect, I should like to appeal to all countries to make the best possible use of the assistance offered.

As the former head of the Austrian Delegation of Parliamentarians to the OSCE let me stress that I see the holding of regular Winter Meetings in the premises of the OSCE as an important tool for a better cohesion within the Organisation as a whole. These activities also add to the vital role of parliamentarians in forming a dialogue within civil society.

In conclusion let me reiterate my conviction that the OSCE will be a vital instrument in the European security structure, as long as the Organisation stays flexible and maintains its capability to adjust and react swiftly to new phenomena endangering our security- environment. The OSCE will remain relevant in the future to counter those threats and ensure security for generations to come. For its important task I wish the OSCE a good start of its work in the new premises which are opened here today!