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BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. SVEN ALKALAJ,
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

**OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL
HELSINKI, 4 - 5 December 2008**

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, allow me to express my gratitude and appreciation to our host and friend, Minister Alexander Stub, for the excellent organization, warm hospitality regardless of weather.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the process of open and frank negotiations for a better European future has come back home to Helsinki, where everything started over three decades ago.

We all know that the OSCE process has had its ups and downs; nevertheless, it is imperative to vigorously move the whole process forward for the benefit of all of us.

In this regard, I would like to assure you that Bosnia and Herzegovina has the utmost interest in strengthening, building upon and streamlining the existing OSCE mechanisms and instruments for the sake of security and stability of the area covered by OSCE.

Joining the Euro-Atlantic integration together with other countries in the region would bring more stability even to this part of Europe.

Therefore, our goals for the next year are in that direction - the European Union candidacy status, Membership Action Plan for full integration into the North Atlantic Alliance, a liberalized visa regime with the EU, in order to facilitate free movement of goods, people, capital, and services.

In terms of the European security, we have made major steps in increasing the subregional and regional security arrangements by implementing the disarmament provisions, establishing and upgrading the confidence and security building measures with our neighbors, as provided for by the Dayton Peace Agreement, with the assistance provided by the OSCE itself.

Bilateral and regional cooperation, which is the stated priority of our foreign and security policies, has been responsibly pursued in implementing other global security instruments binding on all countries in the region of the Western Balkans.

Post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation aimed at the restoration of confidence among all countries that were involved in the hostilities during the 1990s is precondition for our future and faster integration into Euro-Atlantic politico-security structures.

In that sense, involvement of the OSCE through its Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina has helped us a lot in strengthening democratic society, restoring stability, and reinforcing the respect for individual human right and fundamental freedoms.

This has enabled us to shift from the status of assistance beneficiary to active contributor to peace, stability and protection of human rights throughout the OSCE area.

We are also aware that ensuring security and stability in the South-East Europe is the best way for the countries in the region to contribute to the security of Europe as a whole and to thus become credible and reliable partner in the European community of democratic nations.

As far as our integration in the North Atlantic Alliance is concerned, I am pleased to announce that Bosnia and Herzegovina has become, along with Montenegro, a new partner in the Adriatic Charter.

By signing the Adriatic Charter today, on the sidelines of the OSCE Ministerial Council, Bosnia and Herzegovina has made yet another stride toward its full NATO Membership through improving bilateral, regional, multilateral, political, economic and security cooperation, as stipulated in the Charter.

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies,

Let me once again assure our partners in this Organization that Bosnia and Herzegovina will continue to play a constructive role in preserving the regional stability.

The sooner my country joins the Euro-Atlantic political and security structures and institutions, the better for the whole of Europe, and especially the volatile region of the Western Balkans, because they will undoubtedly become more secure and stable.

Last but not least, we wish all the best to the incoming Chair of the Organization in 2009 – Greece. Our Greek friends can count on our full support.

Thank you for your attention.