

**UK STATEMENT BY THE RT HON GEOFF HOON, MP,
MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN & COMMONWEALTH
AFFAIRS - OSCE MINISTERIAL - 4 DECEMBER 2006**

Mr Chairman, Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen

I would first like to convey my warm appreciation for Foreign Minister De Gucht's personal commitment as Chairman in Office. The Minister and his team have made an important contribution to taking forward work on implementation of our commitments. We wish Spain well as they take on this influential role.

The UK fully supports the statement given by the Foreign Minister of Finland on behalf of the European Union.

Last year was the 30th Anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act. It is now time to look forward from this.

Here in Brussels we should conclude the tasks agreed at Ljubljana to strengthen the organisation. New and emerging threats require an operational and technical framework equipped to address these security challenges. But this framework must be firmly set in the foundations of the established norms, principles and commitments of the OSCE, as enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris.

The strength of the OSCE lies in our common ownership, our common purpose, and our common responsibility.

Firstly, common ownership:

There is real strength in the OSCE's wide geographic participation. We cover 56 countries. This year we welcome the Republic of Montenegro. The OSCE reaches out to the Mediterranean and Asian partners. It is a unique political arena.

Driving this ownership is a sense of common purpose, enshrined in our commitments. We should be a real partnership. If any one of us is failing, then the organisation as a whole still has work to do.

Common ownership brings duties. Common purpose involves accountability to each other.

Common responsibility means being open to scrutiny. Implementation requires political will. We should not be tempted to move the goal posts - changing the rules or unpicking the OSCE's core principles. When political will is lacking, we should not simply blame the operational or institutional framework. This particularly applies to democracy. Politically motivated meddling in elections is always unacceptable. Allowing alternative interpretations of agreed commitments would truly be a double standard.

Common responsibility requires a direct approach. We should celebrate success and offer encouragement to those who genuinely embrace change. But, when this advice falls on deaf ears, we need to be resolute in persuading our partners to step up to the mark.

The United Kingdom has demonstrated this. The OSCE made some constructive criticism of our election procedures. We listened and we took action. There is absolutely no reason why other participating States should not react in a similar way.

This year has however seen many successes:

The work of the High Commissioner on National Minorities on policing and integration.

The work of the Three Personal representatives on Tolerance and the Personal Representative of Freedom of the Media.

More than 400 NGOs participated in a productive Human Dimension Implementation Meeting.

There was progress on the implementation of elections commitments in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Ukraine - albeit in stark contrast to the flawed process in Belarus and Tajikistan. The Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) continues to offer comprehensive assistance to participating States on fulfilling their election-related commitments. But success largely depends on the political will of all of us.

Joint endeavours in the political-military dimension saw the development of a constructive new dialogue on addressing security concerns, and the 3rd CFE review conference. We also welcome the initiatives taken on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and on the implementation of UNSCR 1540 on Weapons of Mass Destruction. All evidence of our commitment to enhancing co-operative security in our region.

In the Economic and Environment Dimension, the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) will be enriched by the widened partnership with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the Regional Environmental Centres.

However, we cannot be complacent. The Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) has presented an objective analysis of progress on human dimension commitments. Some OSCE states are found lacking.

Human rights abuses; autocracy; harassment of NGOs, independent media and opposition parties; extra-judicial detention and killings. These still take place in our region.

The murders of those that defend our human rights are stark reminders of continuing insecurities for some of our citizens. Some OSCE field missions face obstacles in their vital work with civil society and NGOs.

Stability cannot therefore be taken for granted. We strive for the peaceful resolution of the frozen conflicts within Georgia and Moldova, and between Azerbaijan and Armenia. In this context, while welcoming progress made in withdrawing heavy equipment from Georgia, the UK calls again for full implementation by Russia of its commitments regarding Moldova and Georgia, undertaken at Istanbul in 1999, so that the adapted CFE Treaty – which we all want - can enter into force.

The OSCE is not alone. It works closely with the UN, NATO, the EU, and the Council of Europe partners. We should strengthen this synergy.

Because the OSCE still has work to do. This is a common endeavour. Together we are striving for stability, democracy and sustainable growth. This is not only achievable, it is our common responsibility.