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**Statement by Ambassador Aleksi Harkonen
Head of the Delegation of Finland**

12th OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting, Sofia 6-7 December 2004

Mr. Chairman,

Finland aligns itself with the Statement made by Minister Bernard Bot of the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union.

In today's world, questions of international security should be approached from a global perspective. East-West issues in European security landscape have largely been replaced by global problems common to all humankind. The OSCE response should be adapted to the new challenges.

An opportunity for stock-taking will present itself next year with the commemoration of the 30th Anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act. Finland will mark the occasion by arranging a special event in Helsinki.

Mr. Chairman,

Today, Ukraine has captured our attention. Finland welcomes the efforts of the active mediators to overcome the political crisis. We call on the OSCE to continue its engagement and support ODIHR's participation also in the next phase of the electoral process. Our Organization has accumulated considerable expertise in developing democratic institutions, and Ukraine should receive all the support it needs.

This year, some of the regional conflicts have shown worrying signs of heating up. The situation in the Transnistrian region of Moldova as well as in the Abkhazian and South Ossetian regions of Georgia should be resolved peacefully. In this context, compliance with the Istanbul commitments would be the appropriate step to take. Finland reiterates its willingness to assist OSCE-led projects that contribute toward a political settlement.

We commend the efforts to develop an OSCE-wide Border Security and Management Concept, which would help participating States to facilitate legal border crossings and trade while preventing the movement of terrorists, illicit traffickers and other unwanted phenomena. Such demanding tasks can only be entrusted to professional, specialized border services. We hope that the OSCE concept will be finalized in 2005.

The OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons has proven its value in countering illicit trafficking, combating terrorism and strengthening small arms related norms in a regional context. This year the Forum for Security Cooperation has again enhanced the implementation of the Document by adopting three related Decisions .

Finland is pleased that the importance of politico-military projects is increasing in OSCE field missions and operations. We are prepared to consider our support to such projects also in the future.

Mr. Chairman,

The conferences held in Berlin, Paris and Brussels have raised our awareness of the growing problems of intolerance. The activities of the OSCE – old and new - should be mainstreamed. We must remain vigilant against all forms of intolerance, racism and discrimination.

The implementation of the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings has begun successfully. Initiatives concerning child victims and the role of personnel in crisis management operations are welcome steps. Underlining the needs of victims of trafficking, a conference on measures in the receiving countries was organized in Helsinki recently.

Mr. Chairman,

The global nature of security issues compels us to look for cooperation also beyond our region. This year we have identified a number of ways to enhance our cooperation with the Mediterranean and Asian Partner States. The discussions have been open and productive. One of our Partner States, Afghanistan, benefited from OSCE expertise when holding its presidential elections.

Bringing a year of OSCE outreach to a successful completion, Finland is pleased to welcome Mongolia as a new Partner for Co-operation.

Finally, Mr. Chairman,

I wish to congratulate the Bulgarian chairmanship for successfully steering the OSCE in 2004 and welcome Slovenia to the Chair in 2005.