

MC.DEL/12/07
29 November 2007

ENGLISH
Original: SPANISH

**STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND
CO-OPERATION OF SPAIN, CHAIRMAN-IN-OFFICE OF THE OSCE,
AT THE FIFTEENTH MEETING OF THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Madrid, 29 November 2007

Distinguished Ministers and Heads of Delegation,
Mr. Secretary General,
Representatives of the OSCE institutions,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to associate myself with the words spoken by the President of the Government of Spain and offer you all a cordial welcome in Madrid at the fifteenth Ministerial Council Meeting of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. I hope that all Ministers, Heads of Delegation and representatives of various institutions and organizations as well as the delegates themselves will enjoy their stay in the capital of Spain and at the same time I urge them to work together effectively in order to achieve the objectives of our Organization and enhance its prestige and its prominence in the international circuit.

We have covered a lot of ground this year, and I may tell you that assuming and discharging the duties of Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE has been a gratifying challenge for Spanish diplomacy and a continuing apprenticeship. When we assumed the task, my country responded with resolution and determination, inspired as we were by the ideals constituting the very cement of our foreign policy: effective multilateralism, shared security, defence of international legality and human rights, and sustainable development — ideals which embody the spirit and the work of the OSCE.

In order to promote their effective implementation, we have undertaken an enthusiastic programme of work which has been consolidated with our Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation. Spain has done its best to make of the OSCE an organization which is keenly aware of the interests of citizens and States and resolved to assist them. In this context I should like to thank the Belgian Chairmanship, which preceded ours, for their achievements and collaboration, as these were a source of inspiration and generally a great help for the Spanish Chairmanship.

The reality of this year has left us with mixed feelings. We have witnessed disagreements, the occasional intrusion of tensions and conflict situations, and we note that there exist areas of friction and conflicting positions in some important matters. There are also, however, areas of agreement and encouraging prospects which shed a favourable light on our Organization.

In the politico-military field we have encountered certain initiatives and responses that led to concern as well as some disagreement regarding maintenance of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and the need to preserve the relevant arrangements. With regard to human rights, it is essential to guarantee effective application of the commitments made in Paris, Moscow, Copenhagen and Budapest. It may be possible to improve them with a certain amount of critical reflection, but they must not be rejected, nor should we be lax in implementing them.

The hard work done by the Spanish Chairmanship has been aimed at reducing such dissension and tensions as arise between participating States, since under no pretext are we permitted to seek recourse in threats or the use of force. This unacceptable recourse does not contribute to resolving situations which can only be handled in the context of dialogue, mutual accommodation of interests and respect for international legality.

As Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, I confronted the challenge that arose in 2007 with optimism. My trips to the Balkans, the Caucasus and the republics of Central Asia gave me a good understanding of what happens on the ground in the OSCE area and within our Organization itself. In the light of this experience, I should like to share a few thoughts with all of you on the present and the future of the OSCE — matters that should be kept in mind as this Ministerial Council meeting proceeds.

The Helsinki Final Act and, above all, its Ten Fundamental Principles, continue to be of vital importance for us all, although the relevant papers that I have accumulated over three decades require some adaptation to present-day realities, without, of course, eroding the principles of the Organization.

During the first decade of the twenty-first century, new ideas and sensitivities are coming to the fore within the OSCE which influence us fundamentally, just as do the new scenarios and common challenges. To recognize these facts is a matter of political responsibility and a stimulus to confront the future when, as participating States, we will have to display the will to co-ordinate our perceptions and our interests.

The applicability of the Helsinki Final Act lies in the shared commitment to move towards the goals established in 1975, namely peace, prosperity and democracy. For this reason it is essential to renew consensus within our Organization.

This renewal requires us to engage in permanent dialogue and to overcome tensions and obstacles. The values and principles which shape the OSCE bring us together, they do not divide us; this does not imply a completely uniform view of the development of our work, nor does it in any way block the aspirations of the immense majority of participating States.

Legal strengthening of the OSCE is a priority, for there is a genuine and practical need for our Organization to have its own legal personality on the international scene. Furthermore, our mission staff need to have functional immunity in order to perform their tasks with guarantees of success. This being so, I believe we have reason to congratulate ourselves on the draft OSCE Convention, and I plead for flexibility and ambition such that its approval becomes an established fact.

Some participating States plead for the approval of a founding charter or Statute for the OSCE. Spain believes that this charter would be beneficial if it had the effect of bringing

the OSCE's status into line with other multilateral organizations, and provided it did not serve as a pretext for reopening political questions long since resolved. From my experience of acting as Chairman, I conclude that we need to forge a more clearly profiled and identifiable structure — more efficient and flexible — in order to bring our objectives truly to fruition.

The Spanish Chairmanship is inclined to promote both these projects and hopes to meet with a constructive spirit inspired by a desire for dialogue and accommodation. It seems to me absolutely essential that we should equip our Organization to meet with the needs of the twenty-first century and respond to the legitimate aspirations of citizens in respect of security, co-operation, and sustainable development.

At this Ministerial Council in Madrid it will be important to display more political ambition and more ability to compromise, and at the same time we should abandon maximalist positions which delay our shared success and impose a climate of potential victors and losers which can only lead to frustration. Among other things we can improve and refine security and co-operation in the Eurasian area so that our countries can develop in an environment of stability and security.

During this year the Spanish Chairmanship of the OSCE has given priority to a renewal of consensus in matter such as the fight against terrorism — with special attention to the victims thereof — the degradation of soils, desertification and improvements in the management of natural resources as well as activities designed to promote tolerance in our open and multicultural societies.

All these aims have induced the Spanish Chairman-in-Office to devote special efforts to the organization of various forums such as the High-Level Conference on Victims of Terrorism, the Conference on Technology Transfer in Matters of Water Management in Tashkent, the Conference on Discrimination and Promotion of Mutual Respect and Understanding in Bucharest, and the Conference on the Struggle Against Intolerance and Discrimination Against Muslims in Cordoba.

Since the Ministerial Council in Lisbon in 2002, we have not found the necessary agreement to approve a Ministerial Statement. The culture of consensus holds that a Ministerial Statement is an opportunity to meet each other's wishes, not a suitable terrain for violence and tensions in the course of which we abandon compromise and conciliation. You can all count on my assistance and dedication for the framing of a Statement which would reflect a common denominator among participating States in the first Ministerial Declaration for five years which should satisfy the earnest desire of States of make progress on behalf of their citizens.

Our efforts should also be designed to secure the adoption of Regional Statements. The work of the OSCE aimed at the prevention and resolution of conflicts and at building peaceful relationships is one of its most widely recognized capacities. The OSCE is a highly relevant actor on the stage where efforts are being made to resolve persistent conflicts.

The situations in Transdnistria/Molodova, Southern Ossetia and Georgia, as well as Nagorno-Karabakh, reveal a marked willingness to engage in negotiations with a view to securing action consistent with international legality and they are marked also by the patience and perseverance needed to secure a just a lasting peace. In some cases we are very close to

finding solutions. This being so, I appeal to the political will, responsibility and generosity of all concerned so that hundreds of thousands of citizens who are suffering every day the devastating effects of conflict should emerge into a realm of peace and progress.

The OSCE should reinforce its commitment to the Balkans, since some of our missions seem to be achieving their goals with notable success, as in Croatia; this means that it would be desirable to transfer our functions to the local authorities concerned and prepare to reduce our own presence to the essential minimum, which in effect would mean closing down operations. At the same time, it will be important for us to put out favourable signals of normality and permanency as in Kosovo where the OSCE is doing admirable work that should not be ignored or forgotten.

The republics of Central Asia are making their own contribution to the strengthening of security in the entire OSCE area. In order to lend permanency to their success, as well as to that of the Partners for Co-operation, we should approve a Ministerial Council decision underpinning our collaboration with Afghanistan. This will reinforce the efforts of the international community to consolidate the slow progress of the Afghan State and strengthen our own security in relation to terrorism and drug trafficking.

Our security is inseparable from that of our neighbours and allies, and this has been stressed by the Spanish Chairmanship, which has defended a global concept reflecting the interdependence of the international community, highlighting the processes emerging from globalization and the natural extension of our principles. The Helsinki Final Act appeals for indivisible security among participating States and within our geographical area. In this connection, however, we must give more attention where necessary to relations in the Mediterranean space. Spain has, during its chairmanship, succeeded in enhancing the status of the Partners for Co-operation which are involved in the life and work of our Organization. The meeting which has just taken place in Annapolis makes me optimistic about the chances of improving the situation in the Near East. We must strengthen our relationship with the Mediterranean Partners for co-operation while at the same time urging them, from our vantage point, to redouble their efforts to improve relations among themselves and institute a process of normalization.

The Ministerial decisions of the OSCE possess the moral force and political legitimacy of the consensus in which they originated. The decisions which we adopt at this Ministerial Council meeting will give fresh impetus to the OSCE and Madrid can and should accordingly mark an important stage of the fight against terrorism within the framework of our Organization. Spain, which during the last few decades has experienced the scourge of terrorism, would favour the approval of a set of measures designed to combat terrorism with a view to renewing and strengthening our commitment in the battle against brutal and indiscriminate violence and to promoting recognition and support for the victims of brutality.

It depends on us to approve a statement from Madrid on the OSCE strategy with respect to environmental security, involving in particular a draft decision on water management throughout the territory of the OSCE. I am pleased to announce that this is the first Ministerial Council completely free of carbon dioxide (CO²) and I invite you to impart this precedent to participants at all meetings of our Organization. Today the OSCE is purer and greener than it was a year ago. It is also more sensitive in relation to sustainable development and the preservation of ecological balance.

The human dimension in our Organization has made of us one of the stalwarts defending the rule of law and the effective application of human rights. The Ministerial Council meeting in Madrid is a propitious occasion for continuing our collaboration in the battle against trafficking in human beings, the execrable practice of sexual exploitation and crimes using the Internet, but also for promoting tolerance and dialogue.

Our Chairmanship has vigorously defended the discussion of matters such as effective participation in democratic societies, the defence of human rights and commitments with regard to the observation of elections. In this context, we have confronted a number of attitudes which must be regarded as intransigent in relation to dialogue and the very concept of negotiating the transparency of democratic processes.

It is clear that election observation, using recognized and accepted mechanisms and institutions, is one of the great successes of the OSCE. I ask for consideration of and respect for the commitments assumed and urge everyone to show good faith when it comes to practical implementation of commitments. This does not imply that our activities should be subject to no criticism; constructive dialogue designed to improve the efficiency of the systems we have introduced should be welcomed.

In view of the complex challenges still pending, notably their considerable scope, I am happy to put success in the hands of the Finnish Chairmanship of the OSCE, offering Finland the co-operation of Spain and wishing them good results and a lot of luck.

It is also important to note that the decision we must adopt at this Council meeting on the next three OSCE chairmanships — for the years 2009, 2010 and 2011 — will be crucial for our Organization. The OSCE is based on the sovereign equality of all participating States and it is essential that the chairmanship should be exercised in a way which clearly recognizes its values and its institutions. For all these reasons, I welcome the requests of Greece, Kazakhstan and Lithuania to preside over the Organization and hope that their aspirations are satisfied.

My experience with the leadership of the OSCE indicates that we have reached a difficult crossroad, at a time when our Organization continues to be indispensable as a forum for regular dialogue and, if I may say so, also as a forum for dealing with all the things about which we disagree.

The multidimensional security architecture is irreplaceable today, and I hope that the States Parties to the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe will continue their discussions to avoid a misunderstanding that would cast shadows of uncertainty on the security of our continent and indeed the whole northern hemisphere. The differences are not insuperable, so here too we need fortitude and the political courage enshrined in the agreement.

The last Summit of Heads of State and Government held at Istanbul in 1999 already seems far off because so many changes — fast-moving changes in fact — have taken place. As the poet Pablo Neruda says, we who once were are no longer the same. For that reason I ask you to reflect on the appropriateness of another Summit Meeting of Heads of State and Government in the near future.

I hope and I desire that at this Ministerial Council meeting we will be able to mark out the path we need to take in order to strengthen the legal position of the OSCE — and able, also, to overcome our persistent conflicts. The Summit is the appropriate instrument for approving the achievements already realized and for showing the world that we are able to adapt ourselves to the requirements of the twenty-first century.

Thank you very much.