

**ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC,
H.E. KAREL SCHWARZENBERG,
AT THE OSCE MINISTERIAL MEETING, Helsinki, 4 December 2008**

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Secretary General, Distinguished Colleagues,

First, I wish to express my appreciation to the Finnish hosts for the hospitality, effective organization of this meeting and exemplary leadership throughout the year. It is, indeed, my pleasure to participate in this meeting in **the city so much symbolizing the modern paradigms of security in Europe**. More than three decades ago our forerunners made history here in Helsinki. Today, we may find ourselves at an equally important juncture.

However, we are not meeting here to look with pride at how we further consolidated the vision of a Europe free, united and at peace. The August war in Georgia has cast a long, dark shadow over this vision. The most fundamental principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and those of the Helsinki Final Act have been breached in the most severe way. This is a time when our individual and collective political and moral responsibility is tested. So are multilateral institutions empowered to generate security in Europe. This is a critical test for this Organization, too – today we have to reconfirm full and unconditional respect to the principles of territorial integrity, sovereignty, peaceful resolution of disputes and refraining from the threat and use of force. If we fail in doing so unambiguously, this Organization, notwithstanding its respectable history, will be doomed to irrelevance. Deeds, not distracting and misleading theories of double standards and false security perceptions are required. In this sense, we call upon the Russian Federation to fully comply with the ceasefire agreement of 12 August and rescind its unilateral recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. **Restoration of sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia is a fundamental prerequisite for building long-term stability in Georgia and beyond.**

I stated in the beginning that we stand today at an important crossroad for security in Europe and beyond. Here is why I think so - **the key word is trust**. Besides the situation in Georgia, our most imminent task is to make fast progress in settling other protracted conflicts. We have to seek to reinvigorate the deadlocked arms control regimes. We need to ensure due respect for all too often disregarded democratic principles, rule of law and human rights in the OSCE area. Tangible progress in these fields would enormously contribute to rebuilding the climate of mutual trust. Trust today is as a precious commodity as it has ever been since the fall of the Iron Curtain. Trust is what we lack – the trust in common approach and purpose in fulfilling commitments and obligations underpinned by international law. The trust in respecting values being given to this Organization at its birth. This is the only way to enhance security in Europe – let us not fool ourselves that it can be done through new security designs as claimed by some whose respect for these values and principles is questionable. **How can one think of redesigning new Euro-Atlantic security structures without renewing trust in common values that has vanished over the last few years? Without it, the talk about renewal of the Helsinki spirit will remain what it is now – a talk, not a serious perspective.**

Structures, treaties and commitments, and above all, values and principles to govern equal collective security have been in place for years. Let us recommit ourselves to respecting them! History has never rewarded those flouting the most basic principle “*pacta sunt servanda*”.

As a country holding the EU Presidency as of 1 January 2009 we are resolved to constructively contribute to building the climate of trust. We work towards launching a new EU initiative that may have positive effects on the countries in the eastern neighborhood of the European Union. We will seek to heighten energy security in Europe. Transatlantic relations will also be in the forefront of our work. And we will do our utmost to foster the European and Euro-Atlantic integration processes **as we believe that independent and democratic nations of the post-modern 21st century Europe are entitled to decide freely their future.** Their ambitions cannot be captive of obsolete foreign policy concepts and power politics pertaining to the distant past of the 19th century.

Mr. Chairman,

Despite yearlong efforts of the Chairmanship we were unable, due to the opposition of one participating State, to develop and carry out a concept of assistance to Afghanistan as we mandated it in Madrid. It is regretful – my country stood ready to contribute significantly. We will continue our engagement in this partner country through other organizations. However, the OSCE has squandered an opportunity to be useful in a place whose stability really matters for the security in Europe.

In conclusion, I wish to appreciate the longstanding impartial and professional work of the ODIHR in the field of election observation. We commend the ODIHR for widening its geographic coverage and reinforcing its observation methodology and assistance programs. We applaud the ODIHR for the observation of recent US presidential elections that will go down to history as one of the most competitive political endeavor ever. ODIHR’s presence and the course of elections stood in stark contrast to what we witnessed in the beginning of this year in presidential elections of another important OSCE participating state.

Finally, I wish every success to the incoming Greek chairmanship.