

ACTIVITY REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN-IN-OFFICE (26 to 31 January 2006)

BAKU, 25 January- After his meetings in Armenia, Chairman-in-Office Karel De Gucht met Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev for an exchange of views on the prospects for a settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

BAKU, 25 January- Chairman-in-Office Karel De Gucht met Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov to discuss prospects for resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

BAKU, 25 January- Chairman-in-Office Karel De Gucht met the representative of the Azerbaijani community in Nagorno-Karabakh, Nizami Bahmanov, for an exchange of views on the prospects for settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

MOSCOW, 26 January – Chairman-in-Office Karel De Gucht met Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov after his visit to the southern Caucasus. Minister De Gucht briefed the Russian Minister on his talks with the Armenian and Azerbaijani authorities.

Minister De Gucht said he had detected signs of willingness on the part of both his Azerbaijani and Armenian dialogue partners. He shares Minister Lavrov's hopes for an early solution to this conflict through the OSCE's ongoing mediation via the Minsk Group, which is co-chaired by Russia (together with France and the United States).

BRUSSELS, 27 January – The Special Envoy of the chairmanship participated in the commemorative ceremony for victims of the Holocaust, held at Egmont Palace. During the ceremony, "Guidelines on preparing Holocaust Memorial Days for Educators" were made public. This document is designed to help educators prepare activities and projects related to Holocaust Memorial Days so as to impart meaningfully the memory of the Holocaust to future generations. The document is a joint project of the ODIHR and Yad Vashem (The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority-Israel). ODIHR Director Christian Strohal took part in the commemoration.

BRUSSELS, 30 January – Chairman-in-Office Karel De Gucht participated in the 15th Council of Europe–OSCE High-level meeting. Organised in a "3+3" format, the meeting made possible a discussion between OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Belgian Foreign Minister Karel De Gucht, the Chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, Romanian Foreign Minister Mihai-Razvan Ungureanu, and the Secretaries General of the two Organisations, Terry Davis and Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, as well as the President of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly René van der Linden, and the Secretary General of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Spencer Oliver. The key issues on the agendas of the two organisations were reviewed, with the aim of identifying potential synergies. The idea is to build greater complementarity between the actions of the OSCE and the Council of Europe, taking into account their respective fields of excellence.

BRUSSELS, 31 January – Chairman-in-Office Karel De Gucht took part in the High-level Conference marking the opening of the Belgian Chairmanship of the OSCE.

The conference, entitled "OSCE: Security through Dialogue and Cooperation", was organised by the Belgian Chairmanship with the support of the Royal Institute for International Relations.

Minister De Gucht stressed the crucial mission of the OSCE, namely conflict prevention and settlement, a priority task not only for the Chairmanship, but also for the Permanent Council. The Chairman-in-Office added that the Permanent Council's debates had to identify ways of strengthening the OSCE's political weight in order to resolve protracted conflicts.

BRUSSELS, 31 January – Chairman-in-Office Karel De Gucht met Moldova's Foreign Minister Stratian to discuss the prospects for a peaceful settlement of the conflict over Transnistria.

BRUSSELS, 31 January – Chairman-in-Office Karel De Gucht met Ukraine's Foreign Minister Taraschiuk for an exchange of views on the outlook for settlement of the conflict over Transnistria. The two leaders also discussed the upcoming legislative elections in Ukraine and the role to be played by the ODIHR.