

Statement by Bernard Bot, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the
Kingdom of the Netherlands, at the Fourteenth Ministerial Council of
the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Brussels, 4-
5 December 2006

Mr Chairman, Mr Secretary General, distinguished colleagues and friends,

Let me first thank the Chairman-in-Office, Karel de Gucht, and his team for the very warm welcome they have given us. Over the years, I have come to know Brussels so well that it is almost like a second home to me.

Last year, I said in my intervention that I sincerely hoped we would be able to agree on substantive reform measures by the end of the Belgian Chairmanship.

Thanks to the Chairmanship's untiring efforts some good progress has been made. We sincerely hope that in the course of today consensus can be reached on still outstanding measures to further enhance the effectiveness of our Organisation.

Let me emphasise that the Netherlands continues to attach great importance to the OSCE as a comprehensive security organisation uniting participating States "west and east of Vienna", which is based on firm commitments to which we all voluntarily subscribe.

I very much welcome the report ODIHR has presented to us, as requested by the Ljubljana Ministerial Council. This Report rightly highlights how important it still is for all participating States to fully honour our mutual commitments.

It also very clearly shows how ODIHR can help us best and how it can do so most effectively.

I sincerely hope that at this meeting we will be able to find consensus on concrete measures and on the way forward, along the lines that the Belgian Chairmanship has set out in the draft decision on "Strengthening the Effectiveness of the OSCE".

Mr Chairman, in my view further efforts will be required in the course of next year, especially on the legal status of the Organisation and on the improvements and recommendations as mentioned in the ODIHR report.

In Ljubljana we clearly expressed our determination to foster a sense of ownership among all participating States. This is still needed in order to bridge the different views on the continuing relevance of the OSCE.

I especially see a need for a stronger sense of ownership in three other, more specific areas.

First, we must take more effective steps to find a solution for the unresolved conflicts in the OSCE area. In the past year we have still not managed to reach a breakthrough either on Georgia and Moldova or on the conflict around Nagorno-Karabakh. We need to ease further the tensions in the OSCE area.

We recall that fulfilment of the remaining Istanbul commitments will create the conditions for all States Parties to move forward on ratification of the Adapted CFE Treaty.

Second, the OSCE must press forward with its work in the Central Asian region, where other international organisations are clearly emerging and playing a growing role. It is also with this in mind that the Netherlands looks forward to an OSCE Chairmanship from that region in the near future.

Third, the OSCE must mount an effective response to the new challenges facing the international community. One clear example is the need to integrate new minorities into our societies, with full respect for their cultural and religious identities.

We welcome the efforts of the three Personal Representatives of the Chairman-in-Office on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination, as well as the work of the High Commissioner on National Minorities in this field. We hope that agreement can be reached on an evaluation of the mechanism of the three Personal Representatives in the course of 2007.

Mr Chairman,

Let me say that the Netherlands is prepared to continue working with all our partners on every effort needed to make the OSCE a more effective security organisation.

And let me conclude by underlining the need for greater recognition, among Participating States, that we can only achieve this aim if the OSCE remains *the* comprehensive security organisation in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian area, to which we all feel committed.

Finally, I would like to thank our Chairman-in-Office, Karel de Gucht, for all his efforts over the past year. This was truly a job well done.

I would also like to extend to his successor, Miguel Moratinos, my very best wishes as he continues this endeavour. In particular, I very much welcome his initiative to aim for the adoption of an OSCE strategy on environmental security at the next Ministerial Council in Madrid.

Let me end by wishing the incoming Spanish Chairmanship every success.
Thank you.