

To the President of the House of  
Representatives of the States General  
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The Hague

OSCE Task Force  
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*Re* Preliminary review of the Dutch  
chairmanship of the OSCE in 2003

#### Foreword

In 2003 the Netherlands will assume the chairmanship of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). This letter contains a preliminary review of the Dutch chairmanship. After examining the current state of the OSCE, it looks at the substantive and organisational preparations for the chairmanship, with reference to (a) continuity and process monitoring, (b) the agenda for the Dutch chairmanship, (c) key issues, (d) countries and regions, (e) the organisation of the OSCE, (f) coherence between the various Dutch chairmanships/presidencies and (g) further action. This is followed by a discussion of certain financial aspects and the involvement of the House of Representatives and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and finally activities of relevance to the chairmanship of the OSCE. The letter also refers briefly to the advisory report by the Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV) entitled *Nederland en de Organisatie voor Veiligheid en Samenwerking in Europa in 2003: rol en richting* ("The Netherlands and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe in 2003: role and direction"). The Government's full response to this report will be submitted to the House of Representatives separately.

This letter is the first in a series that will keep you informed about the Dutch chairmanship of the OSCE in 2003.

## The OSCE: how things stand

The OSCE is at a crossroads in its history. Born in the days of East-West confrontation, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) - the forerunner of the OSCE - played an important part in reducing the tensions that then existed between the two blocs and ultimately in bringing the Cold War to an end. Following the Helsinki Final Act (1975), which laid down ten important basic principles for relations between countries and between governments and citizens (the Helsinki Principles), and the revolutions of 1989-1991 (from the fall of the Berlin Wall to the collapse of the Eastern bloc and eventually the Soviet Union itself), the CSCE became the organisation in which major changes in political relations in Europe were enshrined, particularly in the Paris Charter (1990) and, with regard to the human dimension, the Documents of the conferences in Copenhagen (1990) and Moscow (1991). The CSCE (which became the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe on 1 January 1995) can look back with justified satisfaction on what was achieved during this period, especially in matters of security policy and above all arms control (the CFE Treaty and the Vienna Document). The work of the OSCE and the political developments that accompanied it were politically and socially anchored in the activities of numerous groups and organisations, including the Helsinki Committees which, in Central and Eastern Europe as elsewhere, began calling for greater attention to be paid to political, civil and other human rights even while the Cold War was still going on.

With the end of the Cold War, the number of states participating in the OSCE swelled and, more importantly, the nature of the issues addressed within the organisation changed substantially. The substantive agenda and the practical work of the OSCE evolved accordingly in the course of the 1990s, and among other things this led to the creation of institutions to deal with minorities, democratisation and elections and the media, as well as numerous OSCE field missions. Following a period of standard-setting, implementation of the agreed principles and other agreements has now become increasingly important. The OSCE helps to ensure implementation and monitoring through its field missions, project activities and regular talks on the fulfilment of commitments and agreements.

In a sense, the OSCE is a victim of its own success. In this respect the Government endorses the analysis by the AIV in its May 2002 report entitled *Nederland en de Organisatie voor Veiligheid en Samenwerking in Europa in 2003: rol en richting* ("The Netherlands and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe in 2003: role and direction"). With the enlargement of the EU and NATO, the OSCE is no longer the place where East and West meet. Even countries that have not yet joined NATO or the EU (or even applied to do so) now tend to talk to these organisations rather than the OSCE. At the same time, frequent contacts between the United States and the Russian Federation, particularly in the NATO-Russia Council, are reducing the importance of the OSCE as a European platform for security talks between the two countries.

Although the OSCE can look back with justified satisfaction on what has been achieved, its work is far from over. Security issues, the role of economic factors in destabilisation and insecurity, human rights and democratisation still all require close attention, among other things in order to prevent both national and international conflict. Problems from the recent past continue to affect countries in the OSCE area. Examples include not only the Balkans and Belarus, but also the "frozen" conflicts and confrontations in and around Transnistria (Moldova), South Ossetia and Abkhazia (Georgia) and Nagorno-Karabakh (a face-off between Armenia and Azerbaijan) - all legacies of the collapse of the former Soviet Union. These conflicts still require close attention and involvement on the part of the OSCE. The same applies to the situation in Chechnya, which continues to give grounds for concern. The Netherlands therefore supports efforts by the current Portuguese chairmanship to extend the OSCE presence there beyond 2002.

The OSCE and its participating states are also faced with a number of more recent issues and problems. Examples include peacebuilding activities in the aftermath of armed conflict, the position of minorities, ethnic discrimination and intolerance, the fight against terrorism, promotion of the rule of law, and efforts to combat organised crime, corruption, illegal migration and trafficking in human beings. In this connection it is important to focus on "pockets of lawlessness" - "black holes" in the network of national and international law enforcement within the OSCE area, where governments do not (or cannot) impose their authority. Such pockets of lawlessness may become sanctuaries for criminals and terrorists. OSCE efforts to promote stability and security could help to counteract such lawlessness.

However, it is important to put these developments in perspective by recalling the OSCE's strengths. The organisation comprises 55 participating states, spanning the globe from Vancouver to Vladivostok. Not only the European countries but also the United States, Canada and the states of Central Asia are engaged in permanent talks in Vienna about security and military cooperation, the economic and environmental aspects of security, and human rights. Moreover, links are being established between these three dimensions of OSCE activity - security policy, economics and human rights - on the basis of a "comprehensive security concept". According to this concept, security means more than just military security: economic, environmental and human rights issues are also part of it. All three dimensions are vital to the pursuit of security and stability. The fact that so many countries are now involved in continual talks on the subject is unique in the history of European politics. The talks take place on the basis of "peer reviews", in which issues arising between or within countries are discussed jointly.

The OSCE has a wide array of instruments - missions and other field activities, as well as institutions - with which to carry out its tasks. It currently has missions in 19 countries where conflicts were imminent or confrontations were threatening to get out of hand, or in countries undergoing transition to a democratic political system and a market economy. The main task of these missions is to help create a secure, stable environment. Among other things, they are designed to support democratisation, promote the rule of law, encourage political dialogue and build peace. Through its missions the OSCE

acquires first-hand knowledge and information about developments in the countries or regions concerned. The organisation's institutions include the High Commissioner on National Minorities in The Hague, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in Warsaw and the Representative on Freedom of the Media, based in Vienna. The institutions each have their own mandates, but their central task may be described as promoting and monitoring compliance with OSCE standards and agreements. The OSCE missions and institutions pass on a great deal of information to the parent organisation in Vienna. This constant flow of information feeds the talks between the 55 OSCE countries, making the organisation an important political and diplomatic hub.

It thus seems likely that the OSCE will still have the capacity to perform a key role even in the changed political circumstances that now prevail in Europe. However, as the AIV report has emphasised, its activities need to be reviewed and streamlined. This will be discussed in greater detail below.

There has been some criticism regarding the scope of OSCE activities. So far, talks have mainly focused on issues in the Balkans, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus or Central Asia, and by far the greater part of OSCE activities are aimed at countries to the east of Vienna. Anywhere west of Vienna appears to be *terra incognita* as far as the organisation is concerned. This has led to complaints that the OSCE is geographically unbalanced. A related complaint - from Russia, among other countries - is that the organisation is thematically unbalanced, in other words that the relationship between its three dimensions has become distorted. According to this view, there is a disproportionate amount of emphasis on the human dimension, and too little emphasis on the economy and the environment.

Another important issue is that the OSCE does not function internally as well as it might - perhaps not surprising in an organisation that has expanded to a total of 55 participating states in such a relatively short time. Although the OSCE is officially an organisation, it still displays many of the features of a conference, and this adversely affects its decision-making processes (including the speed of decision-making) as well as the coherence and consistency of its actions.

### Preparations for the Dutch chairmanship of the OSCE in 2003

#### *Continuity and process monitoring*

The chairmanship of the OSCE is the axis on which the organisation turns. The OSCE is still largely a conference, and has relatively few standard procedures and rules. It also has a large number of components that operate relatively independently of one another, such as the aforementioned field missions (each with its own Head of Mission) and the institutions. Since the OSCE Secretariat is not in a position to assume this task, responsibility for the day-to-day running of the organisation lies with the Chairman-in-Office (CiO), who supervises policy coordination and continuity and action by the OSCE. Apart from responding to international developments and further developing

OSCE policy (both substantively and organisationally), the chairmanship of the OSCE entails a great deal of practical work. The chairmanship therefore requires a considerable investment of time and effort by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Dutch Permanent Mission to the OSCE in Vienna.

The main task of the chairmanship is to seek agreement between the 55 participating states, bringing them together so that they can adopt a joint decision and/or position. This is because the OSCE operates on the basis of consensus. Only thus can the OSCE countries cooperate constructively and can efforts be made to increase the organisation's effectiveness. An important part of the CiO's role is to monitor the process of consensus and stimulate it by means of proposals and suggestions. Unlike the role of a participating state, the chairmanship requires the Netherlands to be proactive, constantly sounding out the positions of other participating states in an effort to achieve consensus. Since the CiO is expected to play a unifying, mediating role, the scope for promoting his or her own country's foreign or other policy interests and priorities is limited.

During the preparatory phase the Netherlands has naturally consulted countries that have recently held the chairmanship, and in this way has obtained a good deal of practical information. Membership of the "troika" (the incoming, current and outgoing chairmanships) has also helped the Netherlands gain an idea of the type and amount of work that the 2003 chairmanship will involve. On 1 January 2002 the Ministry set up an OSCE Task Force, which became fully operational on 1 September of this year, and the Dutch Permanent Mission to the OSCE in Vienna has also been considerably strengthened.

#### *The agenda of the Dutch chairmanship of the OSCE in 2003*

The agenda of the Dutch chairmanship will be largely determined by three factors: (1) unforeseen international developments, (2) the continuity of the organisation's work and involvement under successive chairmanships (the results of the OSCE Ministerial Council to be held in Oporto on 6-7 December 2002 under the auspices of the current Portuguese chairmanship will partly determine the topics to be addressed by the Dutch chairmanship in 2003), and (3) issues on which the Dutch chairmanship itself chooses to focus.

The agenda of the Dutch chairmanship may to some extent be determined by unforeseen international developments and acute crises. In 1999, for example, the Norwegian chairmanship mostly had to deal with the crisis in and around Kosovo, and the Romanian chairmanship in 2001 coincided with the crisis in Macedonia.

As things now stand, it seems likely that the forthcoming Ministerial Council in Oporto will discuss a variety of issues. The Council is expected to adopt a charter against terrorism which will most probably need to be implemented in detail during the Dutch chairmanship in 2003. The current Portuguese chairmanship has also asked the United States and the Russian Federation to draw up a document on new threats and challenges

for the twenty-first century. The other OSCE countries will then be able to comment on the document. It seems reasonable to assume that the agenda of the Dutch chairmanship will to some extent be determined by the results of this debate. There is also an American proposal to hold an annual security review conference which would monitor the extent to which the 55 participating states are fulfilling OSCE commitments and agreements regarding security. In addition, there are Russian proposals aimed at strengthening OSCE's economic dimension. If adopted at the Oporto meeting, these proposals may improve the balance between the three dimensions of the OSCE. The House of Representatives will be informed of the results of the Council when it is over.

The CiO's role as a seeker of consensus, the possibility of unforeseen international developments, the results of the Oporto meeting and the need to maintain continuity within the OSCE mean that the Dutch chairmanship is already assured of a full and substantial agenda. In particular, the Netherlands will have to respond proactively and appropriately to international developments both within and outside the OSCE. However, there will still be some latitude for new policy initiatives which are needed in a number of areas. As things now stand, it seems likely that at least the issues referred to below will come to the fore during the Dutch chairmanship in 2003.

### *Issues*

The chairmanship serves the OSCE as a whole, as well as its 55 participating states. Some countries have expressed dissatisfaction at the way in which the organisation operates, claiming (as mentioned earlier) that it is geographically and thematically unbalanced. The Dutch chairmanship will welcome proposals to step up talks and activities within the security and economic dimensions to the level of those within the human dimension. Naturally, such proposals will also have to be assessed on their substantive and political merits. Especially given the importance of US and Russian involvement, it is encouraging to see that, as indicated above, the two countries are working together to identify the new threats and challenges that will face the OSCE in the twenty-first century.

The political and military dimension of the OSCE is mainly dealt with by its Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC). The FSC has its own mandate and a separate chairmanship cycle. The chairmanship revolves every three months. At the OSCE Ministerial Council in Bucharest in 2001 it was decided to strengthen links between the Permanent Council and the FSC. In this connection it was agreed that the Permanent Council could ask the FSC to address issues that required further attention for political and military reasons. The Netherlands intends to move ahead with the Bucharest decision and endeavour to coordinate the security dimension more fully with other OSCE activities so that security issues can be placed in a clearer political context. Given the importance of substantive coordination between the issues addressed by the Permanent Council and the FSC, the Netherlands intends to play an active, stimulating role in this area. An initial step in this direction is the Dutch-French initiative on surplus stocks of ammunition in the OSCE area, which was submitted to the FSC in July.

At the OSCE summit in Istanbul in 1999, the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty was adapted to the post-Cold-War situation. Before the adapted CFE Treaty can enter into force, it must be ratified by all 30 parties. Once it has entered into force, OSCE countries that are not yet parties to the Treaty will be able to accede to it (currently only countries that were once members of the Warsaw Pact or are still members of NATO - or their successor states - are parties to the Treaty). The revised Treaty - to which there may be more parties - will continue to be a cornerstone of European security in the future. Before it can enter into force, however, the problems with the Russian Federation over the withdrawal of troops, weapons and ammunition from Moldova and the closure of military bases in Georgia must be satisfactorily resolved. As the depositary of the CFE Treaty and holder of the OSCE chairmanship, the Netherlands intends to take action on this.

Trafficking is an important issue as far as the Dutch chairmanship is concerned. The national and international economic impact of trafficking has now been adopted by the 55 OSCE countries as a subject for the annual Economic Forum. This is the main annual meeting within the economic dimension, at which major current issues are discussed at the proposal of the CiO, with the consent of the other participating states. The Economic Forum to discuss the fight against trafficking will be held in May 2003. The Forum will be preceded by three preparatory seminars: one on trafficking in small arms (to be held in Sofia, Bulgaria, in November of this year), another on trafficking in human beings (to be held in Greece in February 2003), with particular emphasis on trafficking in women and trafficking in and exploitation of children, and a final one on drug trafficking (to be held in Uzbekistan in March 2003). The Netherlands has decided to focus attention on this issue because it appears to constitute a growing threat to stability and security in the OSCE area and because each of these types of trafficking is a cause of human distress and social dislocation in its own right. At the same time, this focus on trafficking will increase emphasis on the economic dimension and so improve the balance between the three dimensions of the OSCE. Moreover, it is a matter of concern throughout the OSCE area. The intention is to discuss, with reference to all three types of trafficking, issues such as the economic causes of trafficking, trading networks, financial flows, trafficking-related corruption and money laundering, and the impact of trafficking on the economies of countries of origin, transit and destination. All the relevant international organisations will, of course, be involved as closely as possible in the substantive organisation and design of the preparatory seminars and the Forum, as well as any follow-up activities.

The OSCE is also active in the field of the environment. A case in point is the joint Environmental Security in Southeast Europe and Central Asia project, which was recently initiated by the OSCE, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and is designed to identify and tackle environmental problems that may be a threat to security and stability. The first results will be discussed at the ministerial Environment for Europe meeting, to be held in Kyiv in May 2003.

The Netherlands has traditionally focused on monitoring and observance of human rights. Ever since the Netherlands became an active member of the OSCE, close attention has always been paid to the human dimension and human rights. During its chairmanship the Netherlands will continue to take an active stance, especially as these are issues that must certainly not be neglected in the heat of the battle against terrorism. Gender will also remain a key issue for the Netherlands during its chairmanship, with particular emphasis on developments in OSCE countries and measures to combat trafficking. Freedom of religion and belief will also continue to be a central issue.

Interest in measures to promote the rule of law has been growing within the OSCE. This is reflected in specific activities such as training of police officers and judges, improvement of prison services, border controls and the fight against crime (organised and otherwise). Partly owing to its widespread presence in the field, the OSCE pays considerable attention to the rule of law and has been very active in this area in the course of its missions. The Netherlands intends to continue encouraging such activities during its chairmanship.

#### *Countries and regions*

The Dutch chairmanship in 2003 may be confronted with developments that have implications for the entire OSCE area. Developments in the organisation's traditional main areas of interest - the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia - seem likely to predominate. There are currently OSCE missions in all three regions. In the interests of continuity and consistency of approach, the Dutch chairmanship will examine the possibility of a strategic region-by-region framework for OSCE involvement and activities, although sufficient room must be left for the diversity that exists between countries. The OSCE has had a presence in the Balkans since the early 1990s and over the years it has acquired considerable experience, especially in observing and in some cases organising elections, promoting the rule of law (through such things as police training) and helping to build up democratic institutions.

The Dutch chairmanship will do what it can to help resolve at least one of the aforementioned "frozen" conflicts. Whether it succeeds will largely depend on factors that are beyond the Netherlands' control. The main focus will be on Transnistria (Moldova), since talks appeared to be making some progress earlier this year. In the Caucasus, too, prospects of resolving frozen conflicts in which the OSCE has a part to play will very much depend on factors that the Netherlands cannot influence, such as the repeated outbreaks of tension between the Russian Federation and Georgia and political developments in and between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Nevertheless, the Netherlands will remain alert to any possible ways of promoting solutions (or partial solutions) and will immediately respond to developments that appear to be heading in the right direction.

Especially since 11 September 2001, Central Asia has become the focus of increased international political attention. As a result, greater attention has also been paid to the



challenges facing these countries, whether domestic, regional or international. Action by the OSCE may prove useful here, particularly as regards consolidating democracy and the rule of law, transparent government and the emergence of civil society. The long-term benefits to these countries of measures to boost political and economic reforms will be considerable. Trafficking is currently a major issue in Central Asian countries and its choice as a subject for the Economic Forum has been welcomed in the region. As already mentioned, one of the preparatory seminars for the Forum will be held in Uzbekistan.

### *Organisation of the OSCE*

Sufficient attention must be paid to the international organisation and effectiveness of the OSCE during the Dutch chairmanship in 2003. As regards the organisation's missions and institutions, the main focus will be on opportunities to improve coordination of policy and activities, which may make OSCE involvement more effective. In particular, there appears to be room for improvement not only in the organisation of field missions, but also in operational and financial accountability for the implementation of programmes and projects. Improved reporting on activities would be a good start. As regards the institutions, efforts will be made to improve coordination of activities, while respecting the differing mandates of the various institutions.

The scale and geographic range of the missions must also be constantly assessed in order to ensure efficient use of manpower and resources. NATO and the European Union are of increasing importance in the Balkans. Although the OSCE still has more missions there than anywhere else, it now appears that the organisation's involvement in the region can be gradually reduced, allowing its resources to be used elsewhere if necessary.

The Government endorses the AIV's view that the OSCE needs to evaluate its involvement and activities. Independent evaluation of activities may help to identify the strengths and weaknesses of OSCE involvement, especially the missions. The Dutch chairmanship intends to launch a debate on the subject within the organisation in 2003, and in preparation for this it has instructed the Clingendael Institute to evaluate a number of missions. The first results are expected in November 2002.

In the past, the chairmanship's "special representative" instrument has repeatedly been used to deal with specific issues and areas. This has been done rather too often, and there is a risk of overlap with OSCE missions and other international organisations. The Netherlands intends to be more selective in its use of special representatives. Should it prove necessary to resort to them, they will be given clear mandates for limited periods of time.

### *Coherence between chairmanships/presidencies*

The Dutch chairmanship of the OSCE marks the start of a period in which the Netherlands will hold three different chairmanships/presidencies. In addition to its chairmanship of the OSCE throughout 2003, it will assume the chairmanship of the Council of Europe from November 2003 to April 2004 and the presidency of the European Union in the second half of 2004. Although these successive functions are different in nature, the similarities that do exist between them could be used to focus attention on shared topics such as human rights and common European values. The Dutch chairmanship's main emphasis here will be on democracy, the rule of law, political pluriformity and open government. The OSCE chairmanship will focus on "human security": citizens must be able to feel safe in Europe and throughout the OSCE area - safe not only from the threat of terrorism and organised crime, but also from persecution and excessive interference or influence by governments.

However, it needs to be recognised that OSCE activities in general support or complement those of other international organisations. More generally, close cooperation between the OSCE and the European Union, NATO, the Council of Europe and the United Nations will continue to be vital in 2003. The Dutch chairmanship will encourage such cooperation. Since the OSCE and the EU are both active in numerous regions and countries, further coordination of their efforts makes sense.

#### *Further action during the chairmanship*

In order to ensure the continuity of OSCE's involvement and activities, the Netherlands intends to make appropriate use of the troika. There is a fair chance that Bulgaria will assume the chairmanship of the organisation in 2004 (a decision will be made on this in Oporto). Talks are already taking place with Bulgaria on how that country can be involved in the work of the Dutch chairmanship. The first result is the decision to hold the first preparatory seminar for the Economic Forum in Sofia. As the incoming CiO, the Netherlands has helped draw up a budget and programme cycle for the OSCE budget within the OSCE's Interim Financial Committee, in order to improve the financial management of the organisation and make it easier to supervise. The Netherlands also organised and chaired the seminar for the OSCE's Mediterranean partners in early November. The theme of the seminar was *The media and new technologies: implications for governments, international organisations and civil society*.

During the OSCE chairmanship, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will maintain close contact with other ministries, especially (given the importance of the first dimension and arms control and the deployment of troops for OSCE missions) the Ministry of Defence. It also seems likely that cooperation with, among others, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of the Interior & Kingdom Relations and the Ministry of Economic Affairs will increase in 2003, since the OSCE is carrying out more and more activities designed to promote the rule of law and since trafficking (which has been chosen as the theme of the Economic Forum at the instigation of the Netherlands) also requires close cooperation. The intention is also to involve civil society closely in the OSCE chairmanship in 2003, at both international and national level. This is in keeping with the recognition within the

OSCE of the importance of civil-society organisations, and above all the Helsinki Committees. Particularly in Eastern Europe, the latter have played - and some cases are still playing - a part in building up or reconstructing civil society, with support from their Western counterparts. Particularly in countries with weak state structures and limited administrative capacity, liaison with local NGOs is essential. The intention is to step up contacts with a number of well-known international NGOs such as the International Helsinki Federation, Human Rights Watch, the International Crisis Group, Amnesty International, etc. The purpose of this is to exchange experience and information and so increase the quality and effectiveness of OSCE involvement. At local level, local NGOs will be involved wherever possible.

In the Netherlands there are regular talks with the Netherlands Helsinki Committee (NHC) to ensure cooperation in preparing and organising conferences and certain operational OSCE activities. Another reason for involving civil society so closely is to increase public support for the OSCE.

#### Financial aspects

A total of EUR 12.7 million has been earmarked for the OSCE chairmanship, broken down as follows: EUR 2.3 million in 2002, EUR 9.1 million in 2003 and EUR 1.3 million in 2004. Among other things, this will be used to cover the cost of staffing, logistics, the organisation of the ministerial meeting and public information and publicity, both in The Hague and at the Permanent Mission to the OSCE in Vienna.

Experience has shown that a great deal of money will also be needed during the year of the chairmanship for programmes and projects, whether or not directly implemented by the OSCE, that are connected with the chairmanship in one way or another (i.e. programmes and projects that the chairmanship is expected to make some contribution to). This will include not only minor contributions to OSCE seminars or other small-scale OSCE field activities, but also larger contributions to long-term development cooperation projects in the field of conflict prevention. These needs will be met from existing sources of funding such as the Homogeneous Budget for International Cooperation, including ODA resources.

#### Parliamentary involvement

During the Dutch chairmanship of the OSCE, the relationship with the Senate and the House of Representatives of the States General will be an unusual one. As CiO, the Netherlands will be responsible for the OSCE's operational and policy-related activities. As already mentioned, it will also represent the 55 participating states and act on behalf of the OSCE community. In this capacity, the Minister of Foreign Affairs or his alternate will be accountable to the OSCE community (the Ministerial Council and/or the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna). At the same time, the Minister will naturally always be accountable to the House of Representatives on OSCE matters. It is intended that the House of Representatives will be periodically informed of how the work of the Dutch

chairmanship is progressing, in the first instance by means of quarterly reports. After the Ministerial Council in Oporto, a follow-up letter reviewing the meeting and discussing its implications for the Dutch chairmanship and its agenda will be sent to the House of Representatives.

Another important body in this connection is the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. This comprises 300 members from the national parliaments of the participating states. The Assembly was originally set up to increase national parliaments' commitment to the OSCE, and it is the intention that it should be closely involved in the OSCE chairmanship. Among other things, the Dutch chairmanship's approach will (if requested) be explained to the members of the Assembly as early as possible in 2003. The chairmanship is also prepared to report to the Assembly on the results achieved towards the end of 2003 or in early 2004. In addition, there are plans to invite prominent members of the Assembly, including the president and the chairs of the various committees, to visit The Hague. In this connection it should be noted that the Assembly's July 2003 summer session will be in Rotterdam. Finally, there will be particularly close contact with the Dutch members of the Assembly.

#### Activities

In the week of 12 January 2003, the Netherlands will present its chairmanship internationally in Vienna, explaining its strategy for the chairmanship to representatives of the OSCE's delegations, institutions and field missions. Throughout the year of the chairmanship there will also be a cultural programme, designed to focus attention on the OSCE and its work by means of a photographic exhibition and other cultural events.

A successful chairmanship depends on close liaison with the participating states. As the holder of the chairmanship, the Netherlands must hold regular consultations to determine whether positions on major topics have changed and whether issues need to be raised or initiatives launched. What this means in practice is that I will be spending a great deal of time on the OSCE chairmanship in 2003. On the eve of the chairmanship, the OSCE is now always on my agenda during bilateral talks. There are also plans for a number of fact-finding trips in preparation for and in connection with the chairmanship. There has already been contact with the Russian Federation and the USA. Since the presidency of the European Union will be held by Greece and Italy in 2003, and given the importance of coordination between the OSCE and the EU, visits to both these countries are also planned. In addition, there will be further meetings with European Commissioner Christopher Patten and the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), Javier Solana. Visits to Portugal (which currently holds the chairmanship of the OSCE) and Bulgaria (which has applied to do so in 2004) are also scheduled.

An OSCE chairmanship traditionally concludes with a ministerial conference. In 2003 the question arises whether the OSCE should hold a summit conference. The last OSCE summit was held three years ago (in Istanbul in 1999) and the previous one three years before that (in Lisbon). The Netherlands is only prepared to consider holding a summit if

there are enough substantive items on the agenda. It will therefore consult closely with other participating states in the coming months to determine whether or not they want a summit conference to be held.

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