

## **ACTIVITY REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN-IN-OFFICE (1 to 17 January)**

### **Belgium takes up the OSCE Chairmanship**

BRUSSELS – Belgian Foreign Minister Karel De Gucht has succeeded his colleague Dimitrij Rupel as OSCE Chairman-in-Office for the year 2006.

On this first day of the year, Karel De Gucht spoke of the importance of this Chairmanship for Belgium.

The Chairman-in-Office also announced that he would be assisted in his role by Senator Pierre Chevalier, appointed by the government as Special Envoy of the Chairman-in-Office.

### **Chairman-in-Office voices concerns over tension between Russian Federation and Ukraine on gas supply**

BRUSSELS – Chairman-in-Office Karel De Gucht stressed on 2 January the importance of guaranteeing a high level of energy security in the OSCE, insisting on the need for agreements based on foreseeable energy supplies and prices ultimately reflecting world market prices, in accordance with WTO principles.

The Chairman-in-Office also refloated an idea already raised in the OSCE, namely of organising a conference on energy security.

### **Chairman-in-Office welcomes agreement between Russian Federation and Ukraine on gas supply**

BRUSSELS – Chairman-in-Office Karel De Gucht welcomed on 4 January the agreement reached by the Russian Federation and Ukraine, highlighting the important role in Europe's energy supply played by the two countries, as supplier and country of transit.

### **Chairman-in-Office holds a press conference in Brussels for the Belgian and international press**

BRUSSELS – On 11 January, Chairman-in-Office Karel De Gucht met the Belgian and international press at Egmont Palace. Accompanied by Pierre Chevalier, Special Envoy of the CiO, Karel De Gucht outlined the priorities of the Belgian Chairmanship. He then went on to answer the many questions raised by Belgian and international journalists on the different items on the OSCE agenda: i.a Kosovo, frozen conflicts, the upcoming elections in Belarus and Ukraine.

### **Opening speech of Chairman-in-Office before OSCE Permanent Council**

VIENNA – Addressing the Permanent Council on 12 January for the first time as OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Foreign Minister Karel De Gucht said "frozen" conflicts and combating organised crime would be the main priorities of the coming year. The new Chairman-in-Office also wishes to promote greater balance among the three dimensions of the OSCE by giving new impetus to economic and environmental activities, in particular in the field of transport.

Thanking his predecessor, Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel, the CiO said "the OSCE is in better shape today than at the beginning of 2005". Karel De Gucht also applauded the outcome of the Ministerial Council in Ljubljana, which will lead to further reform of the organisation. The Chairman-in-Office announced that he would appoint a high level representative of the chair to work closely with the OSCE institutions, including ODIHR, as well as with capitals, on institutional reforms.



The OSCE Chairman-in-Office asked also Belarus to "invite the ODIHR to observe the upcoming presidential elections."

### **Chairman-in-Office meets Austrian Foreign Minister and President of the EU Council of Ministers, Mrs Ursula Plassnik**

VIENNA – OSCE Chairman-in-Office Karel De Gucht met Austrian Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik on 12 January to discuss relations between the OSCE and the EU. Minister Plassnik remarked that "the EU and the OSCE have many common interests and we will work together closely in the coming months."

### **Chairman-in-Office meets heads of OSCE missions and Directors of the Organisation's institutions and other bodies**

VIENNA – Karel De Gucht met on 12 January all the heads of OSCE missions, as well as the Directors of OSCE institutions and other bodies. The officials shared their views with the Chairman-in-Office on the priorities and activities for the year 2006.

### **OSCE Ministerial Troika meets**

VIENNA – The Chairman-in-Office met on 13 January his Slovene and Spanish counterparts, Ministers Rupel and Moratinos. The Troika discussed the main items on the OSCE's political agenda: election monitoring missions, Belarus, Kosovo and the settlement of protracted conflicts.

### **Chairman-in-Office meets the Personal Representatives on Tolerance and non-discrimination**

VIENNA – On 13 January, the Chairman-in-Office met his three Personal Representatives for the fight against intolerance. Amb. Orhun, Prof. Weisskirchen and Mrs Crickley presented their main priorities and the activities planned for the coming year under their respective mandates. ODIHR Director Christian Strohal participated in the meeting.

### **Chairman-in-Office meets NGO representatives**

VIENNA – On 13 January, Karel De Gucht listened to the concerns voiced by several representatives of international NGOs active in the human dimension. He then went on to answer questions raised by these NGOs. ODIHR Director Christian Strohal participated in the meeting.

### **Chairman-in-Office addresses United Nations Security Council**

NEW YORK – In his capacity as Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, Karel De Gucht addressed the United Nations Security Council on 16 January. He outlined the priorities of the Belgian Chairmanship of the OSCE for 2006.

### **Chairman-in-Office meets UN Secretary General**

NEW YORK – On 16 January, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office met United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan for an exchange of views on the OSCE priorities.

### **Chairman-in-Office meets US Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice**

WASHINGTON – The OSCE Chairman-in-Office met US Secretary of State on 17 January to discuss OSCE issues and the Belgian priorities for 2006. Karel De Gucht also participated in the meeting between Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt and President Bush at the White House.