

**Address by H.E. Dr. Dimitrij Rupel,  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia  
at the OSCE Ministerial Council 2006**

ENGLISH only

Mr. Chairman,  
Excellencies,  
Ministers,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Aligning ourselves with the EU statement, let me thank the Belgium hosts and express appreciation to the Chairman-in-Office Karel De Gucht and his teams in Vienna and in Brussels for dedicated work and leadership in 2006.

We reiterate our strong support for the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security, especially in providing the framework for dialogue and co-operation.

**Promotion of human rights, tolerance and non-discrimination** has been the focus of the OSCE in the recent years and we welcome the efforts to put an even greater stress on the implementation of the OSCE principles and values, democracy, rule of law and human rights. Constant and meaningful dialogue with civil society and non-governmental organizations should continue, thus further developing their role of our valuable partners.

The OSCE also represents a valuable forum for **dialogue on migration and integration**, which is becoming a more diverse and complex phenomenon, and therefore needs to be addressed in a comprehensive manner. What is needed is a cross-dimensional approach at the national, regional and international levels, which the OSCE certainly can offer. These issues appeared high on the agenda during the Slovenian OSCE Chairmanship and we encourage the continuation of the Organisation's efforts in the future, since they can yield very positive results.

As our societies become increasingly multi-cultural, we should not be afraid of "otherness". Nor should we merely "tolerate" each other. We should celebrate the richness of diversity, and ensure the protection and promotion of minority rights and identities. We should not say "no" to integration, but we should say "no" to division and disintegration. We strongly believe that the promotion of **intercultural and interfaith dialogue** is an indispensable tool to create bridges between cultures and respect for each other, and the OSCE can contribute meaningfully to this end.

Slovenia pursues issues such as interfaith and intercultural dialogue, also as a Chair of the Human Security Network, and the issue will be high on our agenda during Slovenia's EU presidency in 2008.

Mr. Chairman,

**Free and fair elections**, which reflect the will of the people, are the best litmus test of democracy. We appreciate the election monitoring work by the Office of Democratic Institutions

and Human Rights (ODIHR). Their assistance provided to the participating States is invaluable in implementing their election related commitments. Special praise deserves the ODIHR's recent report titled "Common Responsibility".

We appreciate the role of parliamentarians in election monitoring, and call on ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to continue their cooperation on the basis of the 1997 agreement on election observation.

Bearing in mind the OSCE's role as a comprehensive security Organization, we continue to support the work done in the economic and environmental dimension of the OSCE and welcome the intention of Spain to put more focus on the **environmental aspects of security**.

On the basis of the recommendations of the Panel of Eminent Persons the Ministerial Council in Ljubljana agreed on a roadmap to guide our work in 2006 on strengthening **the effectiveness of the OSCE**. One year has passed and we should evaluate what has been done in the meantime. We welcome the adoption of the Rules of Procedure and hope that we will be able to reach decisions that will benefit the Organization in line with the recommendations and make it more effective in the future.

Mr. Chairman,

Supporting the Organization's active involvement in combating **organized crime and the fight against terrorism**, we welcome the adoption of the OSCE work programme for 2007 on preventing and combating terrorism.

The implementation of the projects on **destruction of small arms and light weapons (SALW)** and stockpiles of conventional ammunition in Central Asia as well as rockets fuel component "melange" remains an important area of our work in the politico-military dimension and we commend the work done. Slovenia is very committed to the implementation of these projects through financial and technical support.

Mr. Chairman,

While focusing on old and new challenges to our security, we must not lose our focus on the **conflicts in the OSCE region** that are still unresolved, although some developments are positive.

In the **Western Balkans**, we welcome the new 56<sup>th</sup> participating State Montenegro in the OSCE family. I wish in particular to commend Montenegro the rising star of Western Balkans for the way in which it achieved independence. Also, we should acknowledge the positive developments in the region in general. The threat of armed conflict is gone, peaceful and democratic elections have become a norm, countries of the region are engaged in intensive regional co-operation and the economic situation is improving. Nevertheless, the Western Balkans continues to be a region of a high priority and attention to it must not diminish. We hope that the Euro-Atlantic integration process will continue to provide the appropriate vehicle for stabilization of the countries in this region.

As we are heading towards a new future of **Kosovo**, we should pay special attention to Serbia, which has a great potential for the region. Whatever the future status of Kosovo will be, it should reinforce the stability of Kosovo, Serbia and the rest of the region. We will definitely have to watch out for possible spill-over effects in the neighbouring countries. As far as the Kosovo process itself is concerned, I regret very much that it was not possible to reach a common ground in the future status talks and that the Kosovo Serbs chose not to engage. Nevertheless, we think it is important that legitimate expectations and grievances of Kosovo Serbs are addressed. The new International Civil Mission (ICM) will have, together with the authorities of Kosovo, a complex and demanding task of implementing the settlement proposal. I am confident that the ICM will be able to build on the OSCE expertise in the field of institution and democracy building, human rights and the rule of law, and will take advantage of its extensive field presence. The OSCE should continue its long-term engagement in Kosovo.

We welcome the OSCE-led environmental assessment mission to the fire affected territories in and around **Nagorno-Karabakh** in October this year. Despite great expectations, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict unfortunately could not be resolved in 2006.

We remain to be concerned about the situation and the ongoing conflicts in **Georgia and Moldova** and urge all parties involved to search for ways to bring an end to these conflicts and to fulfil all obligations and OSCE commitments as soon as possible.

In our opinion the OSCE should continue supporting efforts of the **Central Asian states** to achieve standards and commitments in all fields. We welcome Kazakhstan's bid for the OSCE Chairmanship in the nearest possible future, possibly in 2009.

The OSCE engagement with **Partners for Co-operation** is another very important element of our work. As the Chair of the Asian Contact Group this year, Slovenia has exerted considerable efforts to give a new impetus to our relations. We are pleased that the Asian Partners could participate in some main events of the OSCE, enhancing thereby the comprehensive cooperative security dialogue in all three dimensions.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me conclude by wishing Spain, and Minister Moratinos personally, a successful OSCE Chairmanship in 2007.

Thank you.