

ENGLISH only

**686th Meeting of the Reinforced Permanent Council
8th November 2007**

**Statement by Margit Waestfelt,
Permanent representative of Austria to the OSCE**

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

The Austrian Delegation welcomes your opening statement and appreciates this opportunity to assess the progress made towards the Ministerial Council meeting in Madrid.

Let me reinforce two points made by the EU Presidency in its statement which we of course fully support:

Regarding the legal framework of the OSCE Austria as the host country of the OSCE pays special attention to the issue and pays particular tribute to the successful work of the Dutch Head of Mission in Vienna who managed to reach consensus over a common text within 9 months. It should now be our firsthand priority to ensure official endorsement of this document. We hope to start discussions on the different proposals to finalize the convention-project. We will support the Spanish Chair in achieving a consensus on this issue in Madrid.

Mr Chairman,

We must strongly oppose any attempt to renegotiate or weaken existing commitments in the human dimension. This is especially true in the field of election observation where the OSCE, through ODIHR, has developed a first class methodology, widely considered a reference by other international election monitoring bodies. We must resist any attempt to challenge ODIHR's autonomy or negotiate its methodology. Having said that, we are willing to consider examining additional commitments in other areas especially on the basis of the EU-draft proposal on improving electoral commitments circulated early this week. We must not let election observation, this important instrument for democratic development degenerate to a mere formality.