



Joint Declaration

13th High-level "2+2" meeting Chişinău, 5 November 2003

The Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Chair, Moldovan Foreign Minister, Nicolae Dudău, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Netherlands Foreign Minister, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, and the Secretaries General of both Organisations, Walter Schwimmer and Jan Kubiš, met in Chişinău on 5 November for the 13th Council of Europe–OSCE high-level meeting.

Participants stressed the commitment of the Council of Europe and OSCE to the consolidation of a Europe without dividing lines and their active contribution to the on-going democratic transition as well as the peaceful and political solution of conflictual situations.

Participants reviewed the situation in the three South Caucasian Republics following the elections held in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia during 2003. Despite considerable pre-electoral assistance from the Council of Europe and OSCE providing an adequate framework for holding democratic elections, the election process in all three countries did not meet international standards due to an apparent lack of political will to guarantee impartial implementation and transparency. This was a setback for overall democratic development and called for joint action by the Council of Europe, the OSCE and EU, to advance both the capacity and the commitment for credible elections in these three member States. This will involve continued support for the improvement of electoral codes and procedures, and efforts to support a renewed commitment of these States to the democratic election process, through activities such as large-scale training programmes for all those involved in the electoral process. Regular engagement on electoral issues and monitoring of the situation will be necessary.

Participants repeated that the continuation of unresolved conflicts in the South Caucasus region were detrimental to the completion of democratic transition, genuine regional cooperation, and further European integration. Hope was expressed that, with elections concluded, new opportunities will be seized upon to bring about lasting solutions.

Participants reiterated their call for a political solution of the conflict in the Chechen Republic (Russian Federation), and an end to the continuing climate of violence and violations of human rights. They agreed to pursue close consultations with each other on the process set in motion with the referendum and adoption of the constitution in March 2003. The purpose of these consultations would be to ensure coordinated and complementary assistance from both Organisations for reconstruction and democratic rehabilitation in Chechnya.

Participants underlined the vital importance of the on-going process of democratic reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro. They also stressed the necessity of close cooperation with the ICTY throughout the region. They welcomed the close cooperation between both Organisations and the EU on numerous issues with regard to these countries.

Participants also discussed the situation in Kosovo and paid tribute to the work of the UN, OSCE, the Council of Europe, and other representatives of the international community present there. They hoped there would be a rapid solution to the continued question of the applicability of Council of Europe conventions, in particular with regard to the protection of human rights.

Participants expressed their full support for a political solution of the Transnistrian conflict, based on the respect of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Moldova. In this context, they also supported the efforts of the three mediators (Russian Federation, Ukraine and the OSCE). They welcomed the initiative of President Voronin to establish a Joint Constitutional Commission to draft a new constitution on a federal basis, and were thankful to the “Venice Commission” for providing legal expertise and advice to the two sides of this forum. They took note with appreciation of the Conference on “Frozen conflicts in Europe”, organised by the Moldovan Chairmanship of the Council of Europe in Chişinău in September 2003. With regard to Moldova’s recently stated policy of increased integration in European structures, participants highlighted the importance for the country continuing its democratic and legal reform process.

When examining developments in Ukraine participants stressed the importance of pursuing the reform process in view of the presidential elections scheduled to take place there in 2004. They advocated full and rapid implementation of the country’s Action Plan on the Media.

On Belarus, participants expressed concern about the continuing restrictive measures by the authorities against NGOs and media activities, and the inadequacies in the legislative framework for elections. They called on the government of Belarus to honour their international commitments and to allow civil society, including the media, to play their vital role in furthering democracy. They endorsed the proposal to reactivate the parliamentary (OSCE/PACE/European Parliament) Troika on Belarus to foster democratic reform in that country.

When discussing measures to curb trafficking in human beings, participants welcomed the Council of Europe’s on-going work to draw up a European Convention on action against trafficking in human beings, based on the Palermo Protocol to the UN Convention against transnational organised crime. They noted the complementarity of these efforts with the recently adopted OSCE’s Action Plan to combat trafficking. They also noted the proposed establishment of a special OSCE mechanism for advocacy and monitoring. They agreed to examine on a continuous basis how both Organisations could work closely together in this field, including awareness-raising about trafficking. They welcomed the close cooperation between the two Organisations on the case of a trafficking victim in Montenegro.

On the fight against terrorism, participants expressed satisfaction with OSCE’s increasing anti-terrorism activities and voiced support for the examination of the possible elaboration by the Council of Europe of a comprehensive European Convention on combating terrorism to complement instruments and principles elaborated by the UN, the Council of Europe and OSCE in this area.

Cooperation between the two Organisations in other regions and other fields of common interest was also discussed. Participants stressed the need to keep each other informed and to work to avoid overlap and duplication. To that end they agreed to evaluate cooperation modalities and to revise accordingly the Common Catalogue of Cooperation Modalities.