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At the request of the Permanent Mission of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia the attached statement made by H.E. Antonio Milososki, Minister of Foreign Affairs, on 5 December 2008 is being distributed to all OSCE delegations.



Address

by

**His Excellency Mr. Antonio Milososki,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Macedonia**

at

The 16th Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council

Helsinki, 4 and 5 December, 2008

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by joining the previous speakers in expressing my great satisfaction to be present here in the beautiful city of Helsinki, birthplace of the founding document of our Organization - the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, the most remarkable point in the history of the OSCE.

Let me also congratulate the Finnish Chairmanship for its successful leadership of our Organization in an extremely turbulent year, in the course of which a number of developments has substantially influenced international politics, global economy and lives of individuals and nations all over the world.

The economic crisis which struck the world this year, and the hardships it has brought, has deeply influenced all the spheres of our societies and our lives. It has also imposed an urgent and immediate need to introduce efficient measures and activities, to reinvigorate the existing mechanisms of cooperation among countries and organizations throughout the world in order to bypass and overcome, to the extent possible, the negative consequences we are all affected by.

On the political level, there were a number of events that require efficient action and cooperation, events that certainly were in the centre of the attention and on the top of the priorities of the OSCE. For the Republic of Macedonia the OSCE remains a delicate political instrument for dealing with the complex, existing and emerging challenges. To respond appropriately to those challenges we need to strengthen our dialogue based on our shared values.

Macedonia strongly supports the significant role that the OSCE, as a principal mechanism for conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation, has played in the aftermath of the Georgian conflict in August this year. It once again shows and proves the unique and efficient nature of its instruments as well as its reputation and well-known style of action in the field. The eruption of the conflict in Ossetia-Georgia last August clearly shows the fragile nature of peace in the so-called "frozen conflict" areas. Macedonia strongly urges all involved parties, especially our Russian and Georgian friends, to proceed with the effective implementation of the peace agreement and to restrain from any kind of activities that might undermine the full restoration of peace, stability and democratic values in the region.

The status of Kosovo and the subsequent proclamation of its independence was also an issue that triggered much debate in the past period. Macedonia, as an immediate neighbor of Kosovo, joined the group of countries which recognized its independence, hoping that this action will further contribute to final stabilization of the region and its shared European and Euro-Atlantic future. At the same time, the maintenance of good neighboring relations with Serbia remains our highest priority.

At this point, we must once again reaffirm our full support for the continuation of the OSCE presence in Kosovo as a substantial contribution to its democratic development and stability.

Mr.Chairman,

I am confident that we all agree about the need to continue to use and constantly upgrade the instruments for strengthening the cooperative and multidimensional approach to security and to work on enhancing the flexibility of our response to any challenges that might occur in the area that our Organization covers. We all share a strategic interest in averting new divisions in the OSCE region. In this context the OSCE's role should be further consolidated as one of the pillars of European security.

We must continue to take advantage of a number of important institutions we jointly created. Let me in this regard mention the irreplaceable role of ODIHR in assisting member states to build functioning democratic institutions and to uphold our commitments in the area of human rights. I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate Ambassador Lenarcic for having been appointed ODIHR Director and to assure him of our full support. The Republic of Macedonia strongly supports the work of OSCE field operations. That is why the Government has proposed Ambassador Zekolli as Head of OSCE Center in Ashgabat, wishing to contribute to this important segment of the work of the OSCE. We have ourselves benefited from the OSCE presence, which in close partnership with the Government, supported our reform efforts. Close partnership in identifying national priorities, I must underline, is key to success of any OSCE field presence. Speaking about the OSCE Mission in Macedonia, let me underscore our expectations about its continued downsizing.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me briefly touch upon an issue of exceptional significance for the Republic of Macedonia, but also for the overall stability of the wider region. You may recall that although the final conclusions of the NATO

Bucharest Summit fully acknowledged the results and achievements of the Republic of Macedonia in fulfilling the criteria and standards for membership, the Summit failed, due to the opposition by one member state on account of a bilateral issue, to extend invitation to the Republic of Macedonia to join the Alliance. Or more specifically, the invitation has been postponed until a mutually acceptable solution over the name issue between the Republic of Macedonia and Greece is reached in the negotiation process led under the United Nations auspices. The outcome of the Summit caused huge disappointment of the Macedonian citizens and authorities.

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia remains strongly committed to the country's membership in the Alliance, being fully aware that its full Euro-Atlantic integration has no alternative. As I have already underlined, it is in the best interest not only for the country but for the stability of the region as well. But we will become a member only in a manner which will respect our dignity as a sovereign nation.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me know revert to the OSCE. The discussions in Helsinki have again demonstrated our commitment to the fundamental values and principals of the OSCE. It is apparent that irrespective of our differences in approach, we share a strong motivation to adequately respond to the present and to the challenges to come. The Finnish chairmanship has achieved substantial results in this regard and we thank them for their perseverance. We trust that our Greek friends and neighbors will carry out the complex tasks ahead of us with strong dedication and skills. In this context, I would like to assure them that Macedonia, as demonstrated when Greece was appointed to perform this important duty, is ready to give all the necessary support to promote multilateralism as an effective tool to deal with the problems of our world and region, as we have done during our General Assembly presidency. The OSCE Chairmanship must not fear to accept the differences and must not fear the feelings of a neighboring nation. Let me conclude by reminding of the historic words of President Roosevelt "The Only Thing We Have to Fear Is Fear Itself".

Thank you.