



Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union

686th Meeting of the Reinforced Permanent Council

8th November 2007

Statement of the European Union in Response to
Ambassador Carlos Sánchez de Boado

The European Union welcomes the opening statement of Ambassador Carlos Sánchez de Boado, setting the tone for deliberations at today's Reinforced meeting of the Permanent Council. We appreciate this opportunity to assess the progress made and prepare for the Ministerial Council meeting in Madrid.

We would like to commend the Chairmanship-in-Office for its tireless efforts in guiding the Organisation's activities and carefully implementing decisions taken at the Brussels Ministerial Council.

In today's agenda we find several items that have taken an important place in our daily deliberations and are indeed of major importance for the future of this Organisation. In this context, a Ministerial Declaration in Madrid would demonstrate the vitality of the OSCE.

The text of the draft Ministerial Declaration has been under consideration for some time and we believe its current content and format to be a good basis for such a declaration, which the EU would like to be balanced and well focused.

Deciding on the Organisation's future chairmanships is a matter of priority. The EU reiterates its support to the CiO's efforts in finding a consensual solution and would support a compromise acceptable to all parties concerned based on a sequence of three Chairmanships-in-Office: 2009, 2010 and 2011.

Last year's work on "Strengthening the Effectiveness of the OSCE" was a time and resource-consuming process, which was essentially brought to a conclusion at the last Ministerial Council in Brussels. It resulted in an improvement in participation and transparency of the organisation. It is now time to make full use of the potential of the strengthened OSCE.

Recalling Ministerial Decision 16/06, the EU would like to commend the work of the Informal Working Group on Legal Personality, Legal Capacity and Privileges and Immunities and in particular of its Chairperson, the Ambassador of the Netherlands. The EU would therefore like to support a Decision by the Ministerial Council in Madrid that would adopt the text of the Convention. We believe that this Convention, when adopted, will improve considerably the functioning of the OSCE, including its field operations.

The EU recalls its position, expressed at the time of the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons and repeated at the Prepcom meeting on 24 July 2007, that we also see merit in devising a Statute or Charter for the OSCE, as long as this does not re-open existing commitments. We would be willing to consider working on such a Statute or Charter on the basis of modalities that would need to be agreed.

The EU would like co-operation and dialogue with our Partners for Co-operation on areas of common concern to be improved. In this regard, we welcome the proposal to establish a Partnership Fund. We also welcome the ongoing negotiations on OSCE engagement in border security and management with Afghanistan.

Regarding election observation, allow me to reiterate our well-known position, namely that the EU is not prepared to accept a weakening of the standards and commitments contained in the Copenhagen 1990 Document and further developed since then, nor any action that could undermine ODIHR's autonomous position in election observation. The EU also encourages continued partnership between ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, on the basis of the 1997 Cooperation Agreement, as has been demonstrated on a number of occasions this year.

The EU would like to reiterate the participating State's commitments to fully support the OSCE's election observation activities. Therefore, it urges participating States to cooperate fully with ODIHR before, during and after elections, and to follow-up on ODIHR's recommendations on the improvement of their respective electoral systems. It is in this spirit that the European Union has tabled a draft Decision on improving electoral commitments.

We consider the OSCE as a primary instrument for early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management, conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation. With its existing documents and mechanisms the OSCE has played a very constructive role in efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts in its area. We stress that the resolution of conflicts must remain a priority. There are still unresolved conflicts in the OSCE area and some of them are showing disquieting developments.

The EU believes that we should use the OSCE and its potential fully in continuing efforts to resolve these conflicts. We should also strive to diminish the threat of potential conflicts to escalate and work for the peaceful solution of security problems and threats, old and new.

Implementation of commitments in all three dimensions of the Organisation will continue to provide the essential basis for our discussions.

Finally, the EU would like to reiterate its full support to the Chair in preparing the Madrid Ministerial Council, with the aim of securing a successful outcome for the OSCE.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia, EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Armenia align themselves with this statement.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.