

MC.DEL/51/04
7 December 2004

ENGLISH only



DELEGATION OF GREECE

Sofia, 6 December 2004

*12th OSCE Ministerial Council
Sofia, 6-7 December 2004*

*Statement by H.E. Dr. Yannis Valinakis
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece*

Mr. Chairman, Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to begin with a particular praise for our Bulgarian hosts, friends and neighbours for their very constructive and professional work at the Presidency of our Organization. Minister Solomon Passy has done a wonderful job as Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE. He and his dedicated staff deserve our warmest congratulations.

Greece fully subscribes to the statement delivered by the Foreign Minister of the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union. I wish, however, to address a number of points of particular interest to my country.

One of the greatest challenges confronting our nations, our world, our civilization and our common values is the threat of terrorism. We have most unfortunately witnessed this year the horror of the bombing attacks in Madrid, the unspeakable cruelty displayed in Beslan and many other heinous and contemptible acts. We strongly condemn today's terrorist attack on the US Consulate General in Jeddah. We must all unite in the common struggle for a safer and fairer world, in which such barbarity would have no place. My country has suffered for years from this scourge and has recently succeeded in eradicating it. During the Olympic and Paraolympic Games in Athens, we have successfully mounted the largest ever single preventive antiterrorist operation, in close cooperation with many of our partners.

But the Athens Games have been much more than that. The participants, representing all nations of the world, have sent us a bright message of hope, courage, determination and optimism.

During the coming year, we will celebrate the anniversaries of the end of the Second World War and of the signing of the Helsinki documents. These events have marked the history of the 20th century and must be duly commemorated.

Mr. Chairman,

Greece has given a very high priority to the struggle against xenophobia, racism, intolerance, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and all forms of discrimination. Accordingly, my country has actively participated in the three events organized this year by the OSCE in Berlin, Paris and Brussels and strongly supports the appropriate implementation of their results during the coming year and beyond. We are proud of our record in this area and of the absence of any significant occurrences of such unacceptable phenomena in our country. Greece is looking forward to the appointment of three Personal Representatives of the Chairman-in-Office to combat all forms of intolerance.

Following the adoption of the Integrated Action Programme for the Roma people, the Greek Government has undertaken numerous measures for their socio-economic integration and the amelioration of their living conditions. An Inter-Ministerial Committee has the general overview of the implementation of the above-mentioned programme and closely monitors the progress achieved in every possible field e.g. housing and infrastructure, health and education conditions and integration in the society.

With regard to trafficking in human beings, Greece has developed a comprehensive policy to combat and eradicate this problem and has initiated a set of preventive steps to alleviate it, bearing in mind the plight of human beings that suffer under harsh conditions in their host countries.

Mr. Chairman,

The election of Greece as one of the non-permanent members of the UN Security Council for the term 2005-2006 is a great responsibility for my country. Greece, during her mandate, will have the opportunity to cooperate in a constructive manner with other members of the Security Council with the view of contributing to resolving pending international issues included in the Security Council's agenda. As a South-Eastern European country, we will also have the opportunity, to express our views on various aspects on the current political conditions in this region. Furthermore, as a member of the European Union, Greece, having recently held the Presidency of the EU, is ready to contribute to efforts to combat the new international threats and challenges such as terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, issues which are included in the priorities of the Security Council for the years ahead.

OSCE's role in the field of democratization, institution-building and reform in

the Western Balkans has been particularly useful and valuable. However, more work lies ahead. Democratization should cover the executive, legislative and judicial authorities and encourage the engagement of civil society in public life. Emphasis should be given not only to the holding of fair, free and peaceful elections but also to the follow-up to ODIHR's recommendations as well as to promoting good governance across all sectors.

Particular emphasis has to be attached to the rights of minorities, especially in the fields of education, property and access to the media. Furthermore, OSCE's leading role in running free and fair elections in the Western Balkans should focus on areas where national minorities live.

Mr. Chairman,

We note with satisfaction the continued successful implementation of the Treaty on Open Skies. We view it as a very important instrument in the effort to enhance transparency and stability in the OSCE area. In this respect, we welcome the ongoing process of enlargement of the Treaty and regret that the candidature of Cyprus, which is obstructed, for reasons irrelevant to the Treaty itself, still remains on the Agenda of the Open Skies Consultative Commission.

On the CFE Treaty, we believe that remaining issues should be resolved, thus allowing a rapid entry into force of the Agreement on Adaptation.

On CSBMs, we express our satisfaction that the Forum for Security Cooperation has continued its substantial work. We are looking forward to the further development of the FSC's work, especially on the implementation of issues related to the OSCE Strategy to address threats to Stability and Security in the 21st Century. Important decisions this year on MANPADS and export controls of SALW prove the continuing commitment of the Forum in this direction.

Mr. le Président,

La Grèce attribue une très haute priorité à la promotion de la sécurité et de la coopération dans la région Méditerranéenne. Dès le début du Dialogue Méditerranéen, elle lui a accordé son appui inconditionnel, parce qu'elle est convaincue de l'importance d'une approche concertée pour affronter des défis communs. En ce sens, mon pays a toujours encouragé nos Partenaires Méditerranéens pour la Coopération à faire le meilleur emploi possible de la volonté de l' OSCE de mettre à leur disposition sa vaste expérience dans toutes ses trois dimensions. Nous comptons sur la participation de tous les pays Méditerranéens à cet important mécanisme. De plus, mon pays a contribué activement à l'effort entrepris cette année, en vue d'explorer de nouvelles voies d'interaction avec tous nos Partenaires pour la Coopération, dans le but de ren-

forcer notre sécurité mutuelle.

Before I conclude, I would like to pay tribute to the excellent work of our outgoing Secretary General, Mr. Jan Kubis, as well as to the endeavours of the Secretariat, the Institutions and the Field Missions for the advancement of our common values and principles.

Finally, I wish all success to the incoming Slovenian Chair, to which we pledge our full support and cooperation, and congratulate Spain on their successful bid for the OSCE Chairmanship of 2007.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.