

MC.DEL/70/06
5 December 2006

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ENGLISH only



Statement

by

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at

**The 14th Ministerial Council of the
Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe**

Brussels, 4-5 December 2006

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Colleagues,

At the outset, I would like to join others in expressing my delegation's appreciation for the hospitality extended by the Government of Belgium and to congratulate our hosts for their excellent organizational arrangements for this 14th OSCE Ministerial Council.

Belgium also deserves our sincere appreciation for its total commitment as Chair, leaving no path unexplored in its determination to broker consensus on the array of issues now before us. One augurs that the results of this meeting do justice to the tremendous efforts invested in this process. I am confident that under the incoming Spanish Chairmanship, the OSCE shall continue to build on the momentum for further achievement.

Malta aligns itself with the statement delivered by Finland on behalf of the European Union yesterday – there are however, some particular issues I wish to address.

Mr. Chairman,

Malta has consistently argued that security in Europe and security in the Mediterranean are directly and closely linked. The same notion applies today with the emergence of new security threats, or hybrids thereof, in our current, constantly evolving *milieu*.

Awareness of such increasing threats in the region requires our collective response, the effectiveness of which is dependant on the valued dialogue between the OSCE and the Mediterranean Partner States. The grave and serious issues involved make it necessary to enrich and upgrade this dialogue and, more importantly, to ensure the committed participation of all parties involved.

The impact of globalisation is felt in the Euro-Mediterranean region with the same full force that it is felt elsewhere. The lowering of barriers to trade has not only opened up markets in this region, but has also generated new opportunities and possibilities for dangerous activities, related to different forms of trafficking.

The OSCE Partner dimension thus comes to assume greater significance in our common fight on the different fronts opened up by polymorphous, trans-border

criminal networks that sow insecurity within our communities, and generate a multitude of victims.

Inclusiveness is key to the success of our effort. Hence, the time has perhaps come for the OSCE to consider opening further its Partnership programme for potential candidates. We need and must engage with the political forces of moderation as a means of securing stability and peace in Europe and its neighbours.

Also within this perspective, Malta views as most positive the establishment of the Partnership Fund, which, regrettably, has been on our table for far too long.

Mr Chairman,

During the past years, from our vantage point at heart of the Mediterranean, we have been forced to witness and to suffer the consequences of the never ending flow of illegal migrants who, originating from the Horn of Africa and sub Sahara Africa, taking off from the North African coast, attempt to cross the Mediterranean in their effort to reach Europe.

Hundreds lose their lives in these death trips, notwithstanding that Malta continues to shoulder its responsibilities - search and rescue operations, the induction of persons granted humanitarian protection or refugees status and the hosting of thousands of illegal migrants awaiting resettlement or repatriation.

We shoulder these demanding responsibilities with dignity, as befits circumstances of great humanitarian concern, notwithstanding our great difficulty in carrying a burden that is disproportionate for the size of our country and its population. Hence, our appeal for solidarity from our European partners and our joint initiative with Libya within the Western Mediterranean Forum - the 5+5 dialogue - to have illegal migration addressed in a comprehensive manner by the states of origin, transit and destination.

In this regard, it is with great satisfaction that we note the vital first steps registered two weeks ago by the Africa-EU Conference on Migration and Development held in Tripoli.

Mr. Chairman,

Illegal migration is of concern to us not only because of the heavy burden that we, like others in this hall, shoulder in hosting thousands of illegal migrants awaiting resettlement or repatriation, but also because of its inherent security related risks.

Illegal migrant traffic is run and managed by international organised criminal networks. It often overlaps or is interwoven with other equally sinister criminal activities that range from, drug, arms or human trafficking, to logistic support to the movement of terrorists or persons wanted for crimes against humanity in conflict zones. The tens of thousands travelling without any documentation provide good cover for those who want to hide from justice.

The security, human and economic aspects of illegal migration are embedded in all three OSCE dimensions. Hence, Malta views the OSCE's role in combating illegal migration as vital.

With this in mind, earlier this year, Malta supported and participated in the OSCE Mediterranean Seminar with Partners, held in Sharm-El-Sheik. Proposals at that meeting included the establishment of an OSCE Working Group on Migration and the translation of the OSCE Handbook on Migration into Arabic. Malta looks forward to the early realization of these proposals. Malta also strongly supports the Ministerial statement on Migration together with the report on the OSCE activities on Migration.

More recently, in mid-November, Malta hosted the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly 2006 Autumn Meeting where problems related to the different aspects of migration, including the need to combat illegal migration, were probed in depth.

Malta welcomes this intense political engagement. We firmly believe that greater cooperation in combating the criminal networks that manage the illegal migrant traffic can help stem the flow. More importantly, our collective engagement in resolving conflicts, nurturing good governance and promoting economic opportunity, is essential in addressing the root causes of the movement of peoples.

Mr. Chairman,

During this year, terrorism continued to haunt us and to claim more victims in our midst. Unequivocal in condemning terrorism in all its forms, Malta is committed to the International Community's joint efforts in combating terror including the relentless pursuit of terrorists.

Malta equally supports the International Community's efforts to address those situations and conditions prone to be exploited by whoever is intent on breeding and nurturing extremism and terrorism through the manipulation of the most vulnerable.

The OSCE is well placed to participate effectively in this fight for the common good. Its fundamental notions of comprehensive security based on confidence-building, democratisation, respect for human rights, promotion of tolerance and dialogue and its determined stand in combating all forms of extremism, anti-Semitism, Islam phobia, antichristian stance and xenophobia in general, remain guiding lights within the International Community.

Mr. Chairman,

The time for decision on the future status of Kosovo has come. Whatever the outcome, Malta believes that the OSCE has had and continues to have an extremely important role in sustaining and strengthening the institutions in Kosovo.

Malta continues to hope for the peaceful resolution of the so-called 'Frozen Conflicts'. We believe that the people of these conflict regions have suffered needlessly for far too long. In this regard, we see crucial the implementation of the Istanbul Commitments.

Mr. Chairman,

As mandated by the Ljubljana Ministerial, we have embarked on a soul-searching exercise in a bid to strengthen the OSCE and render it more effective. We have invested countless hours deliberating on this process.

We feel that now the time has come to take the decisions necessary to consolidate the OSCE's role within the broader architecture of European security organizations.

My delegation would also like to commend ODIHR for the comprehensive report it submitted in the run-up to this Ministerial Meeting.

In conclusion, allow me to express my delegation's full support to the important role that the OSCE continues to play as a regional arrangement in terms of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. Our support is inspired not merely by Malta's

key role in having this notion adopted by the CSCE Summit at the end of the IV Follow-up Meeting in July 1992, but because Malta believes in its continued great relevance.

The provisions of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter still provide opportunity for greater OSCE engagement in the maintenance of international peace and security as are appropriate for regional action.

Mr Chairman,

When the CSCE declared itself a regional arrangement in terms of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter in 1992, we were then speaking of the Challenges of Change.

During the past fourteen years, apart from responding to these enormous tests, we have had to adjust our action to challenges that emerge and evolve with rapidity hitherto unequalled. We are convinced that the OSCE retains the same capacity to respond to these changing challenges as it had in responding to the Challenges of Change.

Thank you.