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The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe works for stability, prosperity and democracy in 56 States through political dialogue about shared values and through practical work that makes a lasting difference.

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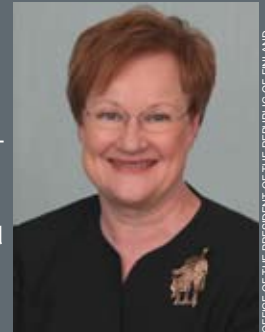
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## Message from President Tarja Halonen of Finland

Every year, tens of thousands of women, children and men around the world fall victim to human trafficking. This present-day form of slavery knows no geographical boundaries and affects us all. It is a serious criminal activity and a gross violation of human rights, and it poses a grave threat to international security.



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FINLAND

The OSCE, whose participating States adopted an action plan on trafficking in 2003, is in an excellent position to combat this phenomenon, as described in this issue of the *OSCE Magazine*. However, we need to co-operate more closely with the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the European Union to turn various regional and global agreements into practical action. This calls for considerable financial resources and expertise and a genuine willingness to pool efforts.

Human rights offences, violence, discrimination, poverty, hunger and unemployment increase people's risk of becoming victims of human trafficking. And unfortunately, because women and children are particularly vulnerable to these adversities, there are so many of them among the victims.

Work-related human trafficking should also be actively prevented; we need to ensure that everyone's right to decent work is fulfilled. A better framework for cross-border movement of people is required to make it a truly positive force — for people themselves and for countries of origin and destination.

Another crucial measure is increasing public awareness of the different forms of human trafficking. We in Finland, for example, had thought some years ago that we were being spared the problem of trafficking. We were wrong. There is no area too remote for international organized crime. We adopted our first national action plan against trafficking in human beings in 2005 and we introduced some improvements to it in 2007.

But national responses alone are not sufficient. Countries of origin, transit and destination will also have to work together and draw in NGOs, since they are closest to the realities of the everyday life of individuals.

I am pleased to see that the OSCE participating States are determined to accelerate their action to prevent and fight human trafficking. The high-level anti-trafficking conference that was jointly organized by the OSCE and the Finnish Chairmanship in Helsinki in September was an encouraging step because we were able to focus on the rights of victims during the investigation and prosecution process in human trafficking cases.

I look forward to many more such initiatives to help bring about the kind of world we are all striving for: one that is safe, secure and just.

Tarja Halonen  
Helsinki, December 2008



United Nations, New York, 26 September. OSCE Chairman-in-Office Alexander Stubb takes questions from journalists after his address to the UN Security Council. He said the OSCE was re-energizing its work on conflict resolution and crisis management. Photo: Magdalena Herrgard/Consulate General of Finland (New York)

# Rediscovering the spirit of Helsinki

BY ALEXANDER STUBB

The Sixteenth Meeting of the Ministerial Council on 4 and 5 December is not the first occasion on which the OSCE participating States are convening in Helsinki to discuss wide-ranging matters concerning stability, security and co-operation in Europe and beyond.

In the early 1970s, it was in the Finnish capital that a process was launched which was to play a significant role in overcoming differences and finding common ground between erstwhile adversaries. Two decades later, in 1992, Helsinki served as the backdrop for another historic gathering marking the dawn of a new era — one that would erase dividing lines and foster genuine common security.

As the year 2008 draws to a close, we are coming together once again in the same city, this time presented with a fresh opportunity to renew the spirit of Helsinki.

By this time, we all know what the spirit of Helsinki represents: It is the spirit of change, the desire to seek change peacefully guided by shared principles and shared values.

Although the transatlantic and Eurasian landscapes have changed dramatically since 1975, and although much has been achieved, we have not yet realized the common vision that we have been pursuing for so long — a vision of security, stability and prosperity between our States and within our societies. Indeed, long-standing conflicts remain unresolved and new threats have emerged that call for firm collective responses. Sadly, military confrontation and unilateralism have found their way back into the toolbox of State policy.

## NEW DIALOGUE

Still, I believe that now is not the time to assign blame for recent developments. On the

contrary, now is the ideal time to strengthen our sense of common purpose and the OSCE itself. It is a time for reflecting on how to put the achievements of the past to good use and adapt them to today's new global and regional context. It is a time for reaffirming the commitments that we have assumed within the OSCE framework. And it is a time for reinvigorating the way we implement these commitments.

This is why I envisage the Ministerial Council meeting in Helsinki as the start of a new dialogue.

The events of August 2008 served as a painful reminder that there is no such thing as a "frozen conflict" and that we need to act quickly and do our utmost to settle the remaining conflicts in the region. This year, the OSCE, through the work of Special Envoy Heikki Talvitie and many others, has intensified the efforts being deployed to consolidate negotiations concerning the Transnistrian conflict.

Finland has also thrown its full support behind the work of the Minsk Group, which spearheads the OSCE's search for a political solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The aim of the Minsk Group's Co-Chairmen and Andrzej Kasprzyk, the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, is to encourage Armenia and Azerbaijan to give serious consideration to the proposal drawn up by the Co-Chairs themselves in Madrid last year, laying out basic principles for resolving the conflict. I am pleased to see that the Presidents of Azerbaijan, Armenia and the Russian Federation have confirmed the continued importance of the mediation by the Minsk Group.

As for the aftermath of the war in Georgia, I have been pursuing a two-pronged objective: to promote the implementation of the cease-fire agreement and humanitarian efforts in the region, and to solidify the basis for long-term stability and security.

Neither of these goals can be achieved overnight, but the OSCE owes it to the region — after it played such a vital role in bringing about an immediate ceasefire — to maintain the momentum by continuing to bring to bear the Organization's ability to act rapidly and flexibly.

The impact of the fighting permeated every dimension of security. We saw the faces of refugees and displaced people, both in Vladikavkaz and in Gori. The medium- to long-term impact on the environment and the economy has also been immense: Farmers lost a whole year's agricultural production as a result of forest fires and direct bombing. Confidence-building activities have come to a standstill, with demining now the top priority in many villages.

The Organization's response has had to be strategically targeted to diverse needs. At my



request, two OSCE institutions, the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, jointly assessed the human rights situation in and around the conflict areas. The OSCE's Office of the Co-ordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities led a joint mission with the UN Environment Programme to examine the ecological damage caused by the conflict and to draw up recommendations for action.

In keeping with the wish of the participating States, the OSCE will continue being a key player in the area. During these uncertain times, the Organization's inclusive approach and its role as an instrument for permanent dialogue and as a platform for action are more valuable than ever.

The solutions we offer — in South Ossetia, where the OSCE has the lead role, and in Abkhazia, which is managed within the UN framework — will have to be as comprehensive as possible. This was the concept behind the joint initiative recently launched in Geneva by the UN, the OSCE and the EU using a new platform. The process is off to a good start. It now needs all sides to give further impetus to these international discussions, both on security and stability arrangements in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and on the plight of refugees and internally displaced persons.

#### **TIRELESS ENGAGEMENT**

Let me now turn to the host of challenges that we have been tackling throughout the year.

The new threats to security are complex and know no borders. I am pleased that, under the Finnish Chairmanship, the OSCE has spared no effort to co-operate with various partners in fighting terrorism, the spread of small arms and light weapons, and cybercrime. Inter-State co-operation on border issues, a crucial economic and security matter, has also been high on the agenda.

**New York, 23 September.** On the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, Chairman-in-Office Alexander Stubb invited foreign ministers holding OSCE chairmanships from 2007 to 2011 and the OSCE Secretary General to discuss ways to strengthen the OSCE's action in Georgia.

Left to right: Miguel Ángel Moratinos of Spain (2007), Dora Bakoyannis of Greece (2009), Alexander Stubb of Finland (2008), OSCE Secretary General Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, Marat Tazhin of Kazakhstan (2010) and Petras Vaitiekunas of Lithuania (2011).



United Nations, Geneva, 14 October. Top officials of the UN, the OSCE and the EU met ahead of diplomatic-level discussions on stability and security in Georgia and the region. Shown at a press conference are (left to right):

Benita Ferrero-Waldner, European Commissioner for External Relations; Javier Solana, High Representative for the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy and Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union; UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon; Bernard Kouchner, Foreign Minister of France; Alexander Stubb, OSCE Chairman-in-Office and Foreign Minister of Finland; and Antonio Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees. UN Photo by Jean-Marc Ferré

The Finnish Chairmanship has also sought to bolster the OSCE's role in promoting security, transparency and dialogue in the politico-military arena across the width and breadth of Europe. Finland's Chairmanship of the Forum for Security and Co-operation during the last four months of 2008 is proving to be a window of opportunity to co-ordinate the Forum's agenda with that of the Permanent Council and build synergy.

The dialogue on economic and environmental issues has also been a prime task. The focus of the Economic and Environmental Forum on matters concerning maritime and inland waterways highlighted the links between security, the economy and the environment. The Finnish Chairmanship also took up climate change and its security implications, a crucial theme that the OSCE needs to address too in the future.

In the human dimension, the OSCE made considerable progress in implementing three priority areas of the Finnish Chairmanship: combating trafficking in human beings; promoting tolerance and non-discrimination, especially as concerns the Roma and Sinti people; and integrating gender matters into the mainstream of all OSCE activities. I was also glad to see that discussions have moved forward on the principles underlying democratic elections and the needs of election observation.

On the subject of field operations I would like to underscore the vital role that the OSCE Mission in Kosovo has been playing on the ground. An essential pillar of the UN Mission in Kosovo established under UN Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), the OSCE Mission has been helping to create sound and strong local

institutions, promoting democratic values at the grass-roots level and protecting the interests of all communities. I am gratified to see that, despite the diverging views of the participating States, the OSCE has been able to continue this important work.

Just a year ago, at their meeting in Madrid, the OSCE foreign ministers agreed to intensify the OSCE's engagement with Afghanistan, an important Partner for Co-operation. Emphasis was to be placed on such activities as helping to secure the borders between the country and its Central Asian neighbours, and providing support in areas related to policing and the fight against drug trafficking.

We expect to unveil a number of projects soon, including the establishment of a border management staff college in Dushanbe. The fact that the OSCE's Asian Partners for Co-operation held their meeting in Kabul in November also demonstrated our wish to stand firmly behind Afghanistan.

Finally, I found it satisfying to have been able to foster a sense of continuity in the Organization through informal meetings of future and past Chairmanships in the "quintet" format. I believe everyone agrees that this has been helpful for longer-term planning.

This past year has revealed how the strengths of the OSCE enabled it to stand up to the multifaceted challenges that came its way. Let's seize the opportunity to reinvigorate the spirit of Helsinki.

**Alexander Stubb is the Foreign Minister of Finland and outgoing Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE.**