



*Check against delivery*

**ADDRESS BY THE STATE SECRETARY AT THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA, MS. DRAGOLJUBA BENČINA, AT  
THE OSCE MINISTERIAL MEETING, Helsinki, 4 December 2008**

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me join all the previous speakers in thanking the Finnish Chairmanship for the highly dedicated work and successful cooperation during our EU Presidency, as well as the generous hospitality we are enjoying here in Helsinki.

The OSCE is a unique forum in which participating States with different historical and cultural backgrounds and political pasts, overcome their differences through dialogue and commitment to common democratic values. All three dimensions of the Organization call for our attention at the highest level, and part of deliberations should also take up the various reflections and considerations on a new ways to strengthen security across the OSCE area. Slovenia firmly believes that if there is a discussion on the future security of Europe, which would be a more accurate reflection of the developments, threats and opportunities of our times, it should be conducted in the spirit of adding value to the existing structures. New ideas should principally be examined in a way that would not interfere with the existing and well functioning forums and agreements. Among them, the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty remains the cornerstone of the European Security.

The August conflict in Georgia is a stark reminder how sensitive protracted conflicts are. We need to ensure that the OSCE Mission continues to be present in Georgia and that its work is based on the principle of respecting Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The OSCE Mission and its observers must be provided with the necessary support and conditions enabling them to carry out their mandate without limiting the area of operation. Improved humanitarian situation, the implementation of confidence building measures and the OSCE Economic Rehabilitation Programme are crucial to a continued and sustainable stabilisation

process. Slovenia is actively involved in contributing to humanitarian relief in Georgia. In addition to humanitarian assistance, the Slovenia-based International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance will assist in demining the areas of conflict and organising demining activities in Georgia.

At this point, let me encourage all parties involved in protracted conflicts in Transnistria and Nagorno-Karabakh to continue negotiations for a peaceful settlement of the conflict.

When talking about the OSCE's role and its stabilisation endeavours, we should stress its successful engagement in the Western Balkans: the OSCE played an important role in ensuring that today the region is stable and well on its way towards the European integration. The OSCE's continued presence in the region goes hand in hand with the goals of the EU in the enlargement process, whereby greater attention is devoted not only to fundamental freedoms but also to the quality of domestic political dialogue, free and fair elections and inter-ethnic relations. In particular, the OSCE has been playing a significant role in Kosovo and we should use its expertise in the current process of the reconfiguration of the international presence there, in which the EU is to take on the leading role.

The OSCE activities in Central Asia are of great importance as well. We welcome further strengthening of cooperation with Afghanistan. In this regard, we would like to reiterate the significance of the OSCE Border Security and Management Concept adopted in Ljubljana in 2005.

Mr Chairman,

Slovenia fully supports the work of both the OSCE and its institutions and structures. We attach particular importance to the work of the ODIHR, the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Representative on Freedom of the Media. I would like to point out the importance of the OSCE's activities in election observation. It should take place in the form of partnership between the ODIHR and OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, based on the decision of the Ministerial Council no. 19/06 and on the basis of the 1997 Co-operation Agreement. We believe only true partnership can greatly enhance the OSCE election observation efforts.

At this point, I would like to mention the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the most important document in the human rights area: the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. What needs to be highlighted on this occasion is the importance of all those who defend

human rights or in any other way fight, on a daily basis, for the promotion of these principles and beliefs within the civil society. Slovenia will uphold these principles also in the capacity of the Chair of the Council of Europe next year.

In a globalised world of economic change and environmental challenges, the OSCE economic and environmental dimension is becoming increasingly important in early warning, protection against conflicts and their management as well as in post-conflict rehabilitation. In this context, let me welcome the decision of the OSCE's next Chairman-in-Office, Greece, to select migration as the main topic of the 17<sup>th</sup> Economic Forum, and thus to build on the foundations laid by Slovenia's OSCE Chairmanship.

Mr Chairman,

The OSCE is facing many challenges related to the functioning of the Organization itself. We cannot ignore the fact that the Organization has no recognised international legal personality. Slovenia supports the adoption of the Convention on the International Legal Personality, Legal Capacity, and Privileges and Immunities of the OSCE, which would ensure its more effective functioning of the Organization.

The times are critical, and the idea that after 10 years the OSCE leaders would reconvene at the Summit, deserves our consideration. The issues are diverse and a great deal of political will is needed to find new answers to demanding contemporary challenges.

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me congratulate and thank Finland once again for its successful OSCE Chairmanship. We look forward to cooperating with Greece and follow Kazakhstan's preparations for its 2010 Chairmanship with great interest.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.