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Delegation

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**13th Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council, Ljubljana
5 – 6 December 2005**

**Statement by Ian Pearson
Minister of State for Human Rights
on behalf of the European Union**

Mr Chairman,

1. On behalf of the European Union, I am delighted to address this the 13th Ministerial Council of the OSCE. I should like to congratulate you, Minister Rupel, on a first class Chairmanship and express our thanks for the excellent Slovenian hospitality.
2. Thirty years ago Heads of State and Government recognised at Helsinki that the rights of each individual were an essential component of security and that questions of human rights, democracy, the rule of law and fundamental freedoms were of legitimate concern to others. Fifteen years ago we cemented these achievements in the Charter of Paris.
3. The EU is a firm supporter of and major contributor to the OSCE and has embraced the Helsinki principles. The organisation's close institutional relationships with the EU, the UN, Council of Europe and NATO enable it to work to its comparative advantages. This corresponds with the EU's vision of an effective and co-operative multilateral system and a rule-based international order, supported by democratic institutions working within pluralistic societies. In this context, the EU also values the OSCE's co-operation with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.
4. Our vision is of the OSCE as a strong, proactive organisation, able to respond to the prevailing security environment, while maintaining its integrity and principles. We are committed to revitalising the organisation in all three dimensions, reaffirming consensus around OSCE principles and commitments. These values are the bedrock of our organisation and cannot be compromised or renegotiated. Our 55 states remain accountable to our citizens, as well as to each other.

5. We face challenges from terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts, state failure, organised crime, trafficking, intolerance and discrimination. The values, commitments, and principles of the OSCE remain relevant to these challenges.

6. The OSCE's comprehensive approach to conflict prevention, its broad membership and fora for open dialogue, backed by an effective network of field presences and institutions, equip it to address old and new threats to security. One of these is terrorism. The OSCE has the potential to contribute to further initiatives in this area.

7. The Panel of Eminent Persons informed our deliberations on strengthening confidence in the Organisation. We should take these forward with the roadmap decision. We will strive in a spirit of partnership for an effective, sustainable, flexible and transparent organisation - an organisation of which we have common ownership. The process of change should not divert energy from existing tasks. But let there be no doubt: the EU is committed to genuine strengthening of the OSCE.

8. At the heart of the organisation's work is the promotion of core principles of democracy, human rights, rule of law and good governance. Human dimension work is integral to our efforts on conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation. Terrorism and other security threats cannot be tackled effectively when human rights and fundamental freedoms continue to be flouted.

9. The EU supports ODIHR's contribution. Its professional and impartial work on elections is vital. We must not compromise on ODIHR's autonomy, it is essential to its ability to carry out its work. We are of course open to considering how to improve the geographical balance of election observers. We also recognise ODIHR's valuable contribution to work on tolerance and non-discrimination.

10. We attach great value to the work of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Representative on Freedom of the Media, and the Special Representative in Combating Trafficking in Human beings. Their efforts embody the core principles of our organisation.

11. The EU has expressed profound concerns about the events that took place in Andijan last May. We reiterate our call to the Government of Uzbekistan to allow an independent international inquiry into these events and to comply fully with OSCE commitments. We support the Chairman-in-Office's call on Uzbekistan to allow international observers access to the new trials. This is even more pertinent now that 25 more defendants have been sentenced, following trials behind close doors.

12. The European Council expressed concern on 7 November about developments in Belarus, a neighbour of the EU. We again call upon Belarus to live up to its OSCE commitments in the human dimension. We urge Belarus to issue timely invitations to ODIHR for the presidential elections.

13. The EU continues to have serious concerns about the human rights situation in Turkmenistan. We call on Turkmenistan to implement fully its OSCE commitments.

Mr Chairman,

14. The Political-Military dimension has yielded significant achievements on arms control, confidence and security building measures and non-proliferation. We should strengthen respect for our Code of Conduct on the democratic control of armed forces. This work contributes to the fight against terrorism by addressing the risks posed by illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons (SALW), by ammunition stockpiles, and of course the risks posed by the persistence of frozen conflicts.

15. We attach importance to strengthening the Economic and Environmental Dimension. Its work through field missions can be a catalyst for change. Promoting prosperous, sustainable economies, underpinned by good governance, is key to establishing security and stability. We should reinforce efforts to implement the strategy agreed at Maastricht 2 years ago. This year's efforts on migration and preparatory work on transportation for the 2006 Economic Forum are welcome contributions.

16. Nowhere is progress on post-conflict reconciliation and reform more evident than South Eastern Europe. We value OSCE's role in promoting the region's rapprochement with the EU. Close co-operation will become even more important given the critical period ahead for Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo.

17. The EU remains concerned about the ongoing conflicts in the Republics of Georgia and Moldova, as well as settlement of the unresolved Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. We urge all parties involved to search for ways to bring an end to these conflicts. Fulfilment of the remaining commitments on the Republics of Georgia and Moldova, made at the OSCE's Istanbul Summit in 1999 and reflected in the CFE Final Act, remains key. The EU welcomes the progress achieved by the Russian Federation and the Republic of Georgia in their Joint Statement of 30 May 2005 on issues related to the withdrawal of Russian forces in the Republic of Georgia and looks forward to resolution of the remaining issues. We note with regret the continued lack of progress on withdrawal of Russian military forces and equipment from the Republic of Moldova and we call upon the Russian Federation to resume and complete this process as soon as possible.

Mr Chairman,

18. Security does not begin and end with the external borders of the OSCE. The EU is keen to build on our good relations with Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation, based on the core values and principles of the OSCE.

19. Finally, the European Union looks forward with optimism to 2006. As the baton passes from one of its newest members to one of its founders. We wish the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belgium, Karel de Gucht, the very best of luck for his Chairmanship.