

**Permanent Council 22 July 2004:
Statement by Mr. Emil Breki Hreggvidsson,
Deputy Head of the Icelandic Mission to the OSCE,
on the Council of Europe**

ENGLISH only

Mr. Chairman,

The Icelandic Delegation would like to welcome Mr. Walter Schwimmer, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, to the Permanent Council and thank him for his comprehensive report.

Iceland attaches high importance to the work of Council of Europe and its key role in the preservation and promotion of human rights, rule of law and pluralist democracy in the member states.

Iceland welcomes the enlargement process of the Council of Europe which is coming near to completion. The enlargement of the Council of Europe is an important contribution to our common political commitment to promote human rights and stability all over Europe, and in particular, in conflict regions.

Iceland welcomes the fact that the Council of Europe is preparing a European Convention against trafficking in human beings, which will provide a complementary legally binding instrument in this area. The fight against trafficking in human beings is firmly on the agenda of both our Organisations. It is clear that much needs to be done to combat this evil, which affects all OSCE participating States.

We agree with the Secretary General that the co-operation between our Organisations at all levels has improved over recent years. We appreciate this and must strive to build further on this basis and ensure the effectiveness and complementarity of our co-operation in the field and between the headquarters. Our focus is and should remain on results oriented co-operation.

In this context, Iceland welcomes the initiative by the Norwegian Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to look into modalities for increased co-operation between our Organisations.

The fight against terrorism is a key priority for both our Organisations and we must ensure close co-operation and co-ordination in this respect. Given that the Council of Europe accepts non-member states acceding to their multilateral agreements, OSCE participating States outside Council of Europe should accede to Council of Europe Conventions. The OSCE in co-operation with Council of Europe should consider offering those states assistance to harmonize their domestic legislation.

As this is Walter Schwimmer's last appearance as Secretary General of the Council of Europe in the Permanent Council, the Icelandic delegation would like to thank him for his dedication and efforts to promote increased co-operation between our Organisations. We are deeply aware and appreciative of what he has done to promote the values of the Council of Europe, during his five year term as Secretary General.

Thank you Mr. Chairman,