

Statement
by H.E. Mr. Lulzim Basha,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Albania,
at the 16th Ministerial Council Meeting of the OSCE
Helsinki 4-5 December 2008

ENGLISH only

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Mr. Chairman,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of Albania I align myself fully with the words of appreciation extended to the Finnish Chairmanship and Minister Stubb personally, for their warm hospitality and excellent organization of the 16th OSCE Ministerial meeting.

As this Chairmanship draws to a close, we would like to commend Finland for the strong leadership and dedication shown during an unusually difficult year for our Organization. This Ministerial Council comes at a critical moment for the OSCE, when certain events have seriously challenged the founding principles of this Organization, and its crucial role inside the Euro-Atlantic security architecture. Against this backdrop, Albania considers the OSCE a valuable security provider and an essential standard-setter, particularly in the Human and military-political Dimensions of security.

This is the right place to recall that our current OSCE activity is built on the outstanding heritage of the Helsinki process, which for more than three decades has furthered the cause of freedom and democracy across the whole OSCE area. Indeed, democratic change and peaceful transformation in Eastern Europe could not have materialized without the far-reaching contribution of the OSCE.

This undisputable legacy deserves due consideration, especially when assessing the position of the Organization in the overall political and security architecture of Europe, a discussion that has been ongoing as recently as our lunch of yesterday. In this regard one should bear in mind that the OSCE's basic documents from the Helsinki Final Act to the Charter for European Security, enshrine the very principles of the contemporary concept of security; democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, rule of law and territorial integrity. Albania strongly supports the OSCE's activities aimed at fostering these principles and values, including engagement the fight against intolerance and discrimination.

Mr. Chairman,

Our strong and continuous attachment to the values and commitments of the OSCE has led Albania to submit the candidacy for the OSCE Chairmanship in 2012. I take this opportunity to reiterate our readiness to take up the challenges and the responsibilities that the Chairmanship entails.

Albania holds the necessary credentials to carry out such a challenging task in a successful way. In full compliance with the commitments, values and norms of our Organization, the Albanian Chairmanship would draw upon a broad experience matured over years of active and noteworthy participation in important international forums. The chairing of most regional initiatives, membership in ECOSOC and IAEA Board of Governors, BSEC Chairmanship that was just rounded up etc., are only some of the examples that speak for our good and ever increasing capacities in successfully delivering the task of Chairmanship, just as it would be expected from the OSCE participating states.

In our endeavor we would heavily rely on Albania's century long unique tradition of inter religious and inter cultural dialogue and tolerance, mutual respect and understanding, which we believe would provide a genuine contribution to the OSCE and all that our Organization stands for.

Mr. Chairman,

2008 marked a watershed in the future of the Western Balkans. After two years of negotiations Kosova has become independent, while Albania and Croatia are were invited to join NATO and are on track for full membership into this Alliance by the next summit. Yesterday Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro adhered to the Adriatic Partnership Charter, which clearly represents a successful platform for advancing and consolidating peace, stability and security in the region. All the countries of South East Europe are marking substantive progress in their path of full integration into the European Union.

Never in the turbulent history of our region has the promise of lasting peace, stability and prosperity laid so clear in the horizon. It is a promise of freedom in all its dimensions including the freedom of mobility without barriers. It is a promise of full EU membership with all its benefits for those who seek it and are willing to work for it.

Albania is strongly committed and is working hard to materialize that promise within the shortest period of time possible.

While noting that ominous scenarios and predictions of ethnic violence and mass displacement of people following Kosova's declaration of independence have failed to materialize, we are pleased to point out the firm commitment of the Kosovar Government to a democratic state and a multiethnic society, as well as the progress recorded in this direction. 10 months after the independence of Kosova took effect pursuant to and in compliance with the UN commissioned Ahtisari Plan, the region is more stable. In this regard, Kosova's independence represents an opportunity for both Kosova and Serbia to shed the legacy of the past and embrace the promise of the future.

Dear Colleagues,

Albania commends the OSCE's action in response to the recent crisis in Georgia. We will continue to support a continued role for the OSCE on the ground in monitoring the ceasefire and working to restore confidence. In this context Albania, in line with the core principles of our security, strongly supports the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Georgia.

Finally Mr. Chairman, we would like to wish the incoming Greek chairmanship every success in the fulfilment of their priorities. Albania is ready to fully support any initiative coming from the Chairmanship aimed at strengthening the role and effectiveness of the OSCE.

Thank you.