

**STATEMENT BY DR. SOLOMON PASSY,
CHAIRMAN-IN-OFFICE OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY
AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE, AT THE CLOSING PLENARY
OF THE 12th MEETING OF THE OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Sofia, 7 December, 2004

1. The Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the OSCE participating States, met in Sofia at a time of momentous change in Europe. This change has created new opportunities and challenges. At the same time they stressed that participating States face common threats to their security. The Ministers expressed their resolve to remain united and promote security for States and individuals through co-operation. This unity would give the strength to meet the challenges identified in the OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century, to adopt collective responses and innovative approaches, and to improve the ability of participating States to uphold common principles.
2. Recalling that the CSCE was created to overcome deep divisions in Europe, and that the Helsinki process contributed significantly to promoting security and co-operation from Vancouver to Vladivostok, the Ministers remain committed to creating a common and indivisible OSCE area free of dividing lines and zones with different levels of security.
3. The Ministers recognised the need to build on common ground in order to provide a strategic orientation for the OSCE area in the years to come. They confirmed that they will spare no effort to ensure that the OSCE and its operational instruments remain relevant to the needs and interests of all participating States taking note of the different views on the means and ways to accomplish this task.
4. 2005 will mark the thirtieth anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act and the fifteenth anniversary of the Charter of Paris. This will provide a useful opportunity to recall the important role of the CSCE/OSCE for promoting dialogue and confidence-building, democracy, rule of law and market economy. The Ministers stated that this would give a chance to reinforce the common commitment made in Paris in 1990 to create a Europe whole and free.
5. The Ministers adopted a Declaration on the Sixtieth Anniversary of the End of World War Two in order to solemnly mark this event in 2005. This will be a time to recall the horrors of war, the dangers of extremism and all forms of intolerance, and the need to constantly work for peace and security in order not to repeat the suffering and destruction of the past. The conviction was expressed that the observance of the norms of international law, the aims and principles of the United Nations Charter as well as the principles to which participating States have all subscribed within the OSCE are the best way to save the present and future generations from the scourge of war and violence.

6. A strong bond that unites the OSCE participating States is consensus on common goals, principles and commitments. These are the foundation of relations between participating States, between people and their governments, as well as between the organizations of which participating States are members. The Ministers stated that they remain committed to their equal and unbiased application across the entire OSCE area and that they value the OSCE assistance in their implementation, including through the important contribution of its institutions and field activities.

7. The Ministers underlined their commitment to the protection of human rights. All participating States will intensify efforts to strengthen pluralist democracy, civil society and the rule of law, and ensure full respect and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Ministers underlined the importance of free and fair elections. They reaffirmed the commitment to free and independent media. They call upon the participating States to undertake further steps to effectively protect the rights of persons belonging to national minorities in accordance with international commitments and obligations in order to sustain efforts at ensuring equal opportunities for persons belonging to national minorities.

8. Most Ministers welcomed the will of the Ukrainian people to live in free, open and democratic society. Developments in Ukraine highlight its role in building a secure and stable Europe, based upon democratic values.

Most Ministers appealed to all parties and institutions in Ukraine to co-operate fully in the implementation of the December 3, 2004 decision of the Supreme Court and to ensure that the rerunning of the second round of the presidential elections reflects the will of the Ukrainian people. They praised the commitment of all sides to avoid violence. They noted the valuable assistance provided by the international facilitators and called upon all parties of the Round Table to fully implement agreements reached with their participation. They encouraged the participating States to provide OSCE/ODIHR with all necessary resources for the forthcoming voting in the presidential elections. They noted with appreciation the continuous close co-operation between the Government of Ukraine and the OSCE Election Observation Mission. They reiterated their support of the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of frontiers of Ukraine and objected any attempts to interfere into its internal affairs.

9. The Ministers stated they value the OSCE's increasing expertise and operational capacity in addressing new threats and challenges to security, *inter alia*, in counter-terrorism, policing, anti-trafficking, border management and security as well as the increased attention being paid to the politico-military and economic and environmental dimensions. They underlined the importance of a cross-dimensional approach to the OSCE's work in these fields.

10. The Ministers pledged to further enhance OSCE counter-terrorism efforts. Terrorist attacks in the OSCE area grimly confirm that terrorism remains a real and immediate threat to all participating States. Ministers were committed to intensify practical and effective action, including in the framework of the Action against Terrorism Unit. The Ministers have adopted a Statement on Preventing and Combating Terrorism and an extensive package of practical decisions that not only deepen counter-terrorism efforts, but strengthen collaboration with other international, regional and sub-regional

organizations in the process. They pledged that efforts to fight terrorism will be in accordance with obligations under international law, in particular international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law.

11. The Ministers recognized that combating intolerance and discrimination in the whole OSCE area was an integral part of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security and was vital for integrating diversity. They were therefore resolved to promote inter-cultural, inter-ethnic and inter-religious dialogue, respect and mutual understanding, and to combat hate crimes, including manifestations of aggressive nationalism, racism, chauvinism, xenophobia, discrimination, anti-Semitism, intolerance and discrimination against Christians, Muslims and members of other faiths, as well as other forms of intolerance. They were resolved to build on the successful outcome of the OSCE events in Berlin, Paris and Brussels held in 2004. They welcomed the intention of the Chairman-in-Office to appoint three personal representatives as part of the overall fight of the OSCE in combating discrimination and promoting tolerance and also welcome ODIHR's increased activities in implementing its new tasks in the area of tolerance and non-discrimination, and look forward to the OSCE Conference on Anti-Semitism and on Other Forms of Intolerance in Cordoba, Spain, in June 2005.

12. The Ministers reaffirmed their strong commitment to preventing and combating trafficking in human beings. Trafficking is a heinous crime. The Ministers pledged to do their utmost to actively implement the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings based on co-ordination and co-operation between countries of origin, transit and destination working together with the Special Representative in an alliance against trafficking. They recognized the special needs for protection and assistance of child victims of trafficking, and had decided to task the Permanent Council to elaborate an addendum to the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, contributing to its implementation.

13. The Ministers reiterated their commitment to promote open and secure borders, *inter alia*, through the elaboration of an OSCE Border Security and Management Concept, recognizing the need to address, among others, the threats stemming from cross border movements related to terrorist and other criminal activities. They therefore welcomed the work carried out by the informal Working Group of the Permanent Council on Borders in 2004 and the Decision on the Elaboration of an OSCE Border Security and Management Concept.

14. Policing provides a key link between security and human rights. The Ministers encouraged the further development of OSCE police-related activities for the purpose of capacity- and institution-building to help participating States, upon their request, to strengthen the rule of law.

15. The Ministers regard migration as related to the core OSCE work in human rights, freedom of movement, borders, integration and economic dimension. They declared their intention to further develop activities in this field, including combating the smuggling of migrants.

16. The Ministers reconfirmed their commitments in the field of arms control and confidence- and security- building measures, as reflected in the OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century, adopted in December 2003 and other agreed OSCE documents. They welcomed the decisions of the Forum for Security Co-operation on Small Arms and Light Weapons, establishing principles for controlling brokering, improving export controls of MANPADS and setting standard elements for end-user certificates. These are a valuable contribution to preventing terrorism. They also welcomed the Forum's decisions to improve information exchange on Anti-personnel Mines and Explosive Remnants of War. They stated that requests from participating States under the OSCE documents on Small Arms and Light Weapons and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition for assistance in carrying out their responsibilities in these areas will continue to be addressed.

17. The Ministers welcomed the continued successful implementation of the Treaty of Open Skies and recognized its contribution to promoting openness, transparency and stability in the OSCE area. They also welcomed the accession to the Treaty of a number of OSCE participating States, and took note that the applications of others have already been approved, or were on the agenda of the Open Skies Consultative Commission. They look forward to the forthcoming First Review Conference of the Treaty of Open Skies from 14 to 16 February 2005.

18. Arms control and confidence- and security-building measures remain indispensable for a comprehensive approach to security. The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) continues to make a significant contribution to security and stability and remains a cornerstone of European security. Most Ministers recalled that some of the commitments made at the 1999 Istanbul Summit on Georgia and Moldova have not yet been fulfilled. Their fulfillment without further delay, would, in their view, create the conditions for States Parties to move forward on ratification of the adapted CFE Treaty.

19. The Ministers welcomed the increased activities in the economic and environmental dimension. These activities should aim at the full implementation of the OSCE Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension in order to enhance co-operation, good governance, sustainable development and protection of the environment. They expressed their commitment to further improve the effectiveness of the Economic Forum.

20. As a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, the OSCE is a key instrument for early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation in its region. Ministers remain concerned over the persistence of conflicts in various regions in the OSCE area that threaten the observance of the OSCE principles and have an impact on peace and stability. Ministers expressed resolve to redouble efforts to promote negotiated solutions to these conflicts based on norms and principles of international law particularly those enshrined in the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act as well as other OSCE documents.

21. Most Ministers stand ready to give a fresh impulse towards a political settlement of the Transdnestrian problem in the Republic of Moldova. They condemned Transdnestrian actions on freedom of movement, on the Moldovan railways and against

the Moldovan schools teaching in the Latin script, and commended the efforts by the OSCE Mission to resolve these issues. Above all, they called upon the two sides, with the increased support of the international community, to undertake additional efforts to resume a working dialogue in all available negotiation frameworks. The Ministers urged further steps under the auspices of the OSCE towards stability, security and a lasting political settlement fully respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova while providing a special status for Transdnistria. Most Ministers supported the further development of the OSCE initiative on Border and Customs Monitoring at the Moldovan-Ukrainian border.

22. The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia. Most Ministers highly appreciated recent OSCE efforts to defuse tensions in the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia and welcomed the recent meeting of the parties' high level representatives in Sochi. The agreement on a phased demilitarization of the region, to be carried under the active monitoring by the Joint Peacekeeping Force and the OSCE Mission in Georgia, should be conducive to re-establishing confidence. Most Ministers encouraged reinforcement of the OSCE team of observers in this context. They expressed hope that the agreement of the Joint Control Commission to conduct a high level meeting, with the assistance of the international community, will give a new impetus to a lasting peaceful resolution of this conflict in Georgia. Most Ministers acknowledged the very significant contribution to stability and confidence in the region made by the Border Monitoring Operation and urged extension of its mandate. Further cooperation between the OSCE and the United Nations on the UN-led conflict settlement process on Abkhazia (Georgia) was strongly recommended.

23. The Ministers commended the OSCE's significant and long-standing engagement in Kosovo/Serbia and Montenegro and underlined the importance of the OSCE's role as an integral part of the UN-led effort to create a democratic multi-ethnic society in Kosovo/Serbia and Montenegro in accordance with UNSCR 1244, particularly through capacity building. The principles of democratic and multi-ethnic life embodied in the "Standards for Kosovo" have and will continue to guide the OSCE work as an important pillar of UNMIK.

24. The Ministers expressed their awareness of the necessity of a broad and thorough debate on strengthening the role of the OSCE. They expressed their believe that the OSCE could be more effective. They have decided to establish a Panel of Eminent Persons on Strengthening the Effectiveness of the OSCE to be followed by specially convened High Level OSCE Consultations in 2005 in order to provide strategic vision for the Organization in the twenty-first century.

25. The Ministers welcomed the discussion on reforming the OSCE and tasked the Permanent Council to continue the process of reform by reviewing and improving the functioning of the Organization, the effectiveness of field missions, and inter-institutional co-operation. They took a decision on the role of the Secretary General. In order to diversify venues for OSCE meetings across the OSCE area, participating States will hold one of the human dimension meetings in 2005 in Georgia, responding to the invitation of the Government of Georgia to hold the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Tbilisi. Ministers also look forward to hold in the future the OSCE Economic Forum in

sites other than Prague, and welcome to this end the invitations extended by Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

26. The Ministers commended the increasingly important role of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, which also enhances the visibility of our Organization. They welcomed the close interaction with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly that has developed in recent years.

27. The Ministers endorsed the 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality. They recognized that achieving gender equality through gender-mainstreaming was of crucial importance in order to make full use of the human capital in the OSCE area. A gender perspective should be taken into account in the OSCE activities in order to achieve gender equality for the Organization.

28. The Ministers reaffirmed that OSCE's interaction with other international organizations and institutions is based on the Platform for Co-operative Security and the Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century. They encouraged a broadening of contacts and a further dialogue between the OSCE and international, regional and sub-regional organizations in order to share information, exchange ideas, and benefit from each other's experience and capabilities.

29. The Ministers acknowledged the importance of the multifaceted co-operation with the Council of Europe and endorsed the decision to enhance this co-operation in order for our two organizations to complement and reinforce each other in pursuing the strategic objective of building a continent without dividing lines.

30. The Ministers welcomed the valuable contribution that non-governmental organizations were making to the work of the OSCE's three dimensions.

31. The Ministers valued relations with the Partners for Co-operation and expressed appreciation for the report on "The OSCE and its Partners for Co-operation" concerning the implementation of Permanent Council Decision No. 571. Participating States will continue to promote closer dialogue and co-operation with Partners for Co-operation in the politico-military, economic and environmental, and human dimensions of the OSCE. The support the OSCE provided to the presidential election in Afghanistan was welcomed as contributing to this country's stability. Ministers are looking forward to further co-operation with this partner in building democratic Afghanistan. The Ministers welcomed Mongolia as a new Partner for Co-operation.