

Thirteenth Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council

Ljubljana, 5 and 6 December 2005

Address by H.E. Geir H. Haarde

Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland

Mr. Chairman, Minister Rupel,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset let me congratulate you, Mr. Chairman for the dynamism and commitment you have brought to your year in Office. We know that your task has not been easy. In particular, I would like to congratulate you on achieving a consensus on the difficult issue of scales of contributions, following the excellent work by the Bulgarian presidency.

Reform has been much on this year's agenda. I would like to thank *The Panel of Eminent Persons* for its very useful report. Iceland has made it clear that dynamism and flexibility are important qualities for an organisation such as OSCE - this implies a readiness to review and, where necessary, reform. At the same time it is important not to lose sight of the fundamentals of this organisation and, in identifying any weak points, not to overlook its considerable strengths.

The OSCE provides a cooperative forum for countries across much of the Euro-Atlantic area to discuss and address issues of importance to stability and security in Europe. But seeking consensus must not lead us to inactivity and indecision. The guiding principles and aims of the Organisation established in the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris give us a clear basis on which to make and implement effective decisions on human rights, democracy and security.

Central to the OSCE's effectiveness in the area of democracy building and human rights is the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. The success already achieved is to a large extent the result of its independence and integrity. The autonomy of the Office must not be compromised - the member states should avoid any attempt at micromanagement. At the same time we remain open to innovative ideas with regard to election monitoring, where they have added value.

We strongly appreciate the important work which the OSCE is undertaking to prevent and combat terrorism, one of the greatest threats to international security. No effort should be spared for this effort.

The appointment of the OSCE Special Representative on Trafficking early last year has helped in raising the political profile of this important issue which Iceland has strongly supported. Combating trafficking of human beings remains an issue of utmost urgency. OSCE participating States, whether they be countries of origin, transit or destination, must join in uprooting this appalling activity, which moreover fuels organised crime.

Mr. Chairman,

The OSCE is a forum in which cooperation can be discussed and managed between our varied group of member states. The OSCE remains highly relevant today, notwithstanding changes in Europe and elsewhere in recent years, in particular the enlargement of the European Union and NATO. We should continue to foster the OSCE's relations with these organisations, as well as the United Nations and the Council of Europe. In the UN context the role of regional organisations was again underlined by world leaders at the New York Summit in September and also in this year's United Nations Security Council Resolution 1631 on Cooperation between the UN and regional organizations in maintaining international peace and security. At the same time I welcome the Declaration of Co-operation between the OSCE and the Council of Europe, two organisations which have human rights, fundamental freedoms and democracy very much on their agenda.

Finally, Mr. Chairman,

Six years have now passed since the Istanbul summit. We remain committed to the CFE Treaty (Conventional Forces Europe) and reaffirm our attachment to the early entry into force of the Adapted Treaty. The full implementation of the outstanding Istanbul commitments on Georgia and Moldova must remain the basis of our common efforts.

I should like to thank you, Minister Rupel, for the excellent conduct of this meeting and you and your able team for the good work during your presidency.

I take this opportunity to wish the incoming Belgian Chairman in Office every success in tackling the challenging agenda of the OSCE in 2006. Belgium may be assured of our full support and co-operation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman