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The Netherlands Presidency of the European Union

Reinforced Permanent Council No. 513 01 July 2004

EU Statement

Mr. Chairman, This Reinforced Permanent Council marks the mid point on our route towards the Sofia Ministerial and offers a welcome opportunity to look back at the distance we have covered so far and to scout the terrain that lies ahead of us.

First of all, we note that, with the appointment of a new Representative on Freedom of the Media in April, we have managed to complete unfinished business of Maastricht. Since then, we have witnessed how Mr. Haraszti has immediately immersed himself in the many pressing issues facing his Office, with important reports and new project activities being presented to us. We welcome his engagement and fully support him in his endeavours.

The Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the 21st Century remains a central piece of reference for our work in the years to come. In this context, we underline the importance of the development of a border security and management concept to be completed by the Sofia ministerial.

Under the able leadership of trusted colleagues, work is going on in key areas, such as combating terrorism, developing a border security and management concept, promoting gender equality, identifying additional fields of cooperation and interaction with the OSCE Mediterranean and Asian partners for cooperation for the purpose of enhancing mutual security and the effectiveness of field operations. We have also installed a unit on combating human trafficking and fully support the Special Representative, Ms Helga Konrad. We trust that all concerned will play their part in implementing the Action Plan. The implementation of the Roma and Sinti Action Plan is also underway.

The terrorism related decisions on MANPADS and travel document security have been receiving further elaboration and are gaining increased operational relevance. Last week, the Annual Security Review Conference confirmed that we can envisage more worthwhile initiatives in the coming months.

We also laud the progress which is being made in the Forum for Security Co-operation. We hope that work on important initiatives like those on brokering of Small Arms and Light Weapons, end-user certificates and the destruction of surplus ammunition will be pursued with vigour. We look forward to increasing synergy between the work in the FSC and the Permanent Council.

The European Union attaches great importance to the continuing work in combating aggressive nationalism, racism, chauvinism, xenophobia, anti-semitism, and other forms of discrimination. The Conference on Anti-Semitism in Berlin and the Meeting in Paris on the Relationship between Racist, Xenophobic and anti-Semitic Propaganda on the Internet and Hate Crimes gave the OSCE high visibility and produced important recommendations, which we expect will be supplemented by equally important recommendations at the upcoming Conference in Brussels on Tolerance and the fight against Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination. We are strongly convinced that follow-up measures to the recommendations of these various meetings can best be pursued in conjunction with each other, given common features of the various forms of intolerance and the need to adopt an approach which makes the best possible use of our resources.

The European Union attaches great importance to the OSCE's Economic and Environmental Dimension and to the implementation of our new Strategy Document. The Strategy foresees important work for the OSCE and its participating States together with other international organisations, in strengthening good governance, ensuring sustainable economic and social development and protecting the environment. A priority task for the Co-ordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities, the Economic and Environmental Sub-Committee and the Economic Forum, will be to strengthen the review of implementation of commitments which is an essential step for turning the Strategy into action and realising its potential.

Mr. Chairman, the tragic events in Kosovo of last March serve as a reminder of how closely the promotion of tolerance and the maintenance of peace and security are related. The European Union has set out its views on Kosovo in some detail at last Tuesday's Special Permanent Council. The EU continues to attach the greatest importance to our ongoing efforts to restore peace and security in those parts of the OSCE area where unresolved conflicts hinder societies in finding their way towards stability and prosperity. In this context we wish to underline how highly we value the OSCE's role in conflict prevention and resolution. In Sofia, Ministers will wish to discuss regional issues and to state common views on them.

In some unresolved conflicts the status quo may serve the interest of groups with vested interests, but the vast majority of the population in these countries see their perspectives towards a better life blocked by continuing impasse in these conflicts. The European Union strongly supports the Chairmanship in its efforts towards conflict resolution in Moldova and in the South Caucasus. In this context, we also wish to refer to the EU Presidency statement, which strongly condemned the attacks in Ingushetia on 21-22 June and underlined that these abhorrent attacks must not delay the search for a lasting peace in Chechnya which upholds human rights and commands the support and confidence of the Chechen population.

At the same time, a number of Participating States still suffer from shortcomings in their implementation of internationally-accepted democratic standards. The events in Georgia of late last year and the enthusiasm they generated illustrate this thirst for

democratic reform. We hope to see comparable progress by peaceful means in other areas.

We note the ratification by the Russian State Duma of the Agreement on the Adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE). However, as we have done on previous occasions, we note the links that exist between some of the continuing regional problems and the ratification and entry into force of the Treaty. In this connection we call upon participating States concerned to meet the outstanding commitments contained in the Istanbul Final Act.

The European Union attaches great importance to the political and economic reform process in the Central Asian republics. We welcome the progress that was made in some countries with strengthening democratic structures and practices, but regret that progress was not made elsewhere in the region, particularly in the field of human rights. We urge all of the countries of the region to work for full compliance with their OSCE commitments. The continued involvement of President Ahtisaari in the area is very helpful in assuring continuity in the relations with the Chairmanship. While acknowledging the important differences between individual countries, we remain convinced that there is scope for increased regional co-operation. We strongly support the co-operation between the authorities of these countries and the OSCE Institutions and Centres.

The EU underlines the key importance of the forthcoming elections in Afghanistan, one of OSCE's partners for cooperation. Mindful of the commitment of the 2004 International Conference on Afghanistan to create conditions for free and fair elections we stress the importance of international election observers as an important contribution to the stabilisation of the country. We are pleased that the EU is preparing the deployment of a Democracy and Election Support Mission. We call upon the OSCE with its longstanding experience to make its own specific contribution with regard to the forthcoming elections in Afghanistan.

On the subject of reform, we note that the adaptability and flexibility of the OSCE and the accumulation of tasks which are loaded upon various units and departments have the tendency to overburden its executive capacity. In our view there is scope to rationalise both the tasks given to the Secretariat and its structure in order to improve the way the Organization functions and to provide focussed support to the CiO. We pledge our full and constructive participation in the work of the informal Group of Friends. On a related issue, the European Union reiterates its concern about the fact that we have, so far, been unable to provide the OSCE with proper legal capacity.

When we look at the months ahead, we are concerned that the ongoing discussions on the new scales of contributions should be brought to an early and satisfactory conclusion. We urge the Chairmanship to instigate informal consultations on political solutions to problems which simply cannot be addressed through a technical approach alone. Needless to say, early completion of the work on Financial Regulations is also crucial, and long overdue.

We also attach great importance to an early start up of our search for a new Secretary-General and express our interest in engaging in discussions with regard to both the desirable profile of the new Secretary-General and the selection procedure.

Mr. Chairman, as Minister Passy told us last January, fulfilling the pledge of this Chairmanship to focus on implementation will not be easy. The good work done during the first part of the year provides us with a basis for tackling the many challenges confronting us in the months ahead. The European Union intends to be a reliable and constructive partner in our common work in this endeavour.

The Candidate Countries Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Croatia align themselves with this statement.