

**Statement by Bernard Bot, Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Kingdom of the Netherlands,
at the Thirteenth Ministerial Council
of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
Ljubljana, 5 - 6 December 2005**

Mr Chairman, dear Dimitrij, Mr Secretary General, distinguished colleagues and friends,

Let me first thank the Chairman-in-Office and his team for the most cordial welcome they have provided for us in the beautiful city of Ljubljana.

Last year, in my intervention on behalf of the European Union, I said that the OSCE was standing firm in the midst of change, but must continue to adapt in order to retain its relevance in the changing environments of the new Europe. This statement still holds true.

In Sofia, the Chairman-in-Office decided to establish a Panel of Eminent Persons, on which one of my predecessors, Hans van den Broek, played an active role. The Panel has provided us with useful recommendations and conclusions to improve the effectiveness of the organisation.

Reform efforts can help restore confidence in the OSCE as an inclusive security organisation, which helps participating States, both west and east of Vienna, to fully meet their OSCE commitments.

Therefore, I sincerely hope that we will not lose the momentum in our debates on reform. And I hope we will be able to agree on a road map for substantive reform measures by the end of the Belgian Chairmanship.

These efforts should, however, not detract us from the work at hand in all three dimensions of the OSCE. After all, security and stability are of continuous concern to both states and individuals across the OSCE area.

I would like to stress the need for concrete results in four particular areas.

First, we need to make a more effective effort to resolve the frozen conflicts. We have seen hopeful developments in both Georgia and Moldova with regard to the political settlement process. We have also seen some positive developments with regard to the withdrawal of the remaining Russian military bases from Georgia. Unfortunately, no such progress was made in the case of Moldova. We stress the need for the fulfillment of all Istanbul commitments.

Second, we have to intensify our efforts to address the global threat of terrorism. While acknowledging the leading role of the UN, we should stress the importance of regional commitments. The OSCE has a pertinent role to play, also with regard to the rule of law and human rights. I welcome the many decisions proposed on this subject.

Third, a new challenge has presented itself ever more urgently. We are all confronted by problems of racism, intolerance and discrimination. They underline the need to integrate minorities into our societies, with full respect for their cultural and religious identities. The Slovenian Chairmanship has rightly made this a top priority for the OSCE over the past year and we welcome the cross-dimensional approach taken by the Chairmanship. I hope that we will continue and expand these debates in the OSCE and implement the recommendations agreed at earlier meetings.

Fourth, we need a constructive debate on our commitments to meet election standards and to lend assistance in monitoring and upholding those standards. These commitments are essential to our organisation, and we should always keep in mind the reason we made them: namely, to provide transparency in the electoral process and build confidence among voters that the outcome really reflects the will of the people. Another important

aspect in this regard concerns the conduct of observers themselves, since their objectivity and professionalism is an important element in building confidence.

Mr Chairman,

Let me conclude by underlining our willingness to do our utmost, in co-operation with all our partners, to make the OSCE a more effective organisation, to produce concrete results that help to underscore that this is truly our collective security organisation for the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian area.

I would like to thank our Chairman-in-Office Dimitrij Rupel for all his efforts over the past year. Leading a large and diverse organisation is an enormous challenge and you have lived up to our high expectations. Congratulations on a job well done. We wish the incoming Chairman Karel de Gucht all the best in what promises to be an equally challenging year ahead.

Thank you.