

**OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL MEETING
SOFIA 6-7 DECEMBER 2004**

ENGLISH only

**UK STATEMENT BY BARONESS SYMONS OF
VERNHAM DEAN
MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN & COMMONWEALTH
AFFAIRS**

Mr Chairman. May I first convey the best wishes of Jack Straw who regrets that he is unable to join you for this important meeting of the Ministerial Council? The British government appreciates highly your personal commitment, during an arduous year as Chairman in Office, to sustaining the principles and commitments of the OSCE.

Mr Chairman. My Delegation naturally agrees with the statement by the Foreign Minister of the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union.

Mr Chairman. We meet at a time when the events that are unfolding a few hundred miles from here make it transparently clear that the OSCE has never been more important and never been more relevant. The UK did not take sides as between the candidates in the Ukrainian Presidential election. The UK is on the side of the people of Ukraine who want free and fair elections. All of us in this room must surely share that aspiration. We must all therefore be delighted at the excellent work that the OSCE observers, led by the highly respected British Member of Parliament Bruce George, have done. Their expert work has established the extent of electoral malpractice amounting to what has been described as premeditated fraud. It is through them above all that we know that those malpractices resulted in an election which was unsafe in terms of internal and international credibility. The OSCE can therefore take pride in another successful exercise at election monitoring. The UK will be sending 100 monitors for the 26 December elections.

But of course the OSCE is more than that. It was created as a forum for political dialogue and collective decision-making. Its key advantages include its broad membership and comprehensive approach to security, based on the crucial balance between military and political, economic and humanitarian dimensions. It is this balance, this weighing of judgment, which is so important for the OSCE's work.

The OSCE's success is that it has held firm to those original political objectives. And it has played to its comparative advantage in all of them,

not least in election monitoring. It has monitored elections this year in countries east and west of Vienna, from the United States to Russia. My own country expects OSCE observers at elections in the next year or so, and we are in the process of amending our electoral law to that end.

Of course, we are all aware that there are those who perceive a problem of double standards. It is an important point. But we need to discuss it – not simply talk past each other. Most of us drew the conclusion on hearing the clear evidence of wrong doing in the Ukraine elections that something had gone seriously amiss. We in the UK felt, that it was right not to accept the results until the position had clarified. We wanted to look carefully at the facts as presented by the election monitors.

We can learn from each other in this respect. We can exchange views, not as pupils or mentors, but as people of good will and honest intentions seeking to help each other. Election monitoring can and should be carried out effectively to minimize the risk that the assessments of OSCE monitors will be ignored for any reason. Our monitors must be confident that we will listen to their advice. And we must continue to be able to support their judgments in the difficult job we ask of them.

Mr Chairman. We also meet on the threshold of a year of anniversaries:

- the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War and the founding of the United Nations;
- the 30th anniversary of the second summit of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in Paris, which ended the Cold War, the division of Europe.

Moreover, the Charter of Paris defined:

- the vision of a New Europe;
- agreement on the principles and commitments on which it would be based – human rights, the rule of law, free media, good governance, free and fair elections as the cornerstone of democracy;
- European Security architecture.

In this context, Mr Chairman, the British Government hopes that the commitments undertaken by Russia at Istanbul in 1999, in particular regarding Moldova and Georgia, will soon be fulfilled so that the adapted

CFE Treaty can enter into force.

Mr Chairman. The peoples of Europe had inspired the vision, the agreement, and the architecture, in the peaceful revolutions of 1989. In every case, transformation was confirmed by those people in free and fair elections. The institutions of the OSCE, such as the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Representative on the Freedom of the Media, together with the field presences that are the OSCE's unique asset, have played a vital part in implementing the Charter of Paris. You have also rightly emphasized the importance of education.

Mr Chairman. We have witnessed progress in Europe since 1990 that few would have believed possible at Helsinki in 1975. But we have also witnessed setbacks that none of us expected at Paris:

- wars in Former Yugoslavia and the Caucasus;
- manifestations of what has aptly been called aggressive nationalism;
- a resurgence of racism, xenophobia, intolerance and anti-Semitism.

So, I congratulate you Mr Chairman, and all concerned, on the conference on Anti-Semitism in Berlin, possibly the most important OSCE event since the Paris Summit. The UK welcomes your plan to appoint Special Representatives to follow up the Berlin, Paris and Brussels Conferences and the Spanish invitation to Cordoba next year. The UK is committed to combating all manifestations of intolerance. The OSCE has our full support.

Mr Chairman. Of all the threats to security that we face together now, none surpasses terrorism. Acts of the kind that we witnessed in Beslan represent an evil. It is an evil we must all combat.

The sheer horror of what happened in that Beslan school will stick in our minds for many years to come, as 9/11 does. As Bali and Madrid do.

Mr Chairman. Our fight against terrorism is real. So the United Kingdom welcomes the decisions of this Council to strengthen the fight against terrorism. As EU and G8 President next year we should work closely with the OSCE to implement them.

Mr Chairman. What the peoples of all Participating States want, above all,

is government by democratically elected representatives that is honest, uncorrupt, and based on the rule of law. This is the foundation of our comprehensive approach to European security.