

STATEMENT BY H.E. THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF CYPRUS
MR. GEORGE IACOVOU
BEFORE THE 12th MEETING OF THE OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL
SOFIA, 6 – 7 DECEMBER 2004

Mr. Chairman,

I wish at the outset to outgoing Chairman congratulate you on the completion of a very successful chairmanship as well as for the warm hospitality the Bulgarian Government has extended to us.

Let me first say that, as a European Union member-state, Cyprus fully concurs with the statement made by the EU Presidency.

Dear Colleagues,

We are meeting here in Sofia at a time of profound changes in both Europe and the OSCE. Next year we will mark the 30th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act and the 15th Anniversary of the Charter of Paris. It will provide us with the opportunity to reinforce OSCE's contribution to the security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area by promoting dialogue, democracy and the rule of law. At the same time we shall address the new threats and challenges of the 21st century.

To meet today's challenges the OSCE needs to adhere strictly to its values and principles by maintaining a careful balance regarding its three core dimensions:

- the politico-military
- the economic and environmental
- and the human dimension

Terrorism is a key security issue for all of us and therefore we must focus on increasing our efforts and cooperation to combat this menace. In this fight, we must always adhere to the legal framework provided by the relevant United Nations resolutions and other legal instruments.

Another issue of great concern is the crime of human trafficking particularly that of women and children. Apart from the necessary legal framework Cyprus has already adopted a national plan for combating racism, discrimination and xenophobia, and has reaffirmed its commitment to do its utmost to combat this transnational crime.

My government supports the OSCE's approach and activities on the peaceful resolution of the so-called frozen conflicts (Georgia, Moldova and Nagorno Karabakh). At the same time, Cyprus will continue to support the OSCE Field Missions as they play an important role in conflict prevention and conflict resolution. The edicts of the rule of law and the UN Charter provide the necessary framework for addressing these issues.

Cyprus's accession to the European Union on 1st May 2004 has improved our sense of security. The underlying problem of foreign occupation persists together with continuing colonization and secessionist activities. It is certainly the aim of the Republic of Cyprus to seek the normalization of relations with the Republic of Turkey, constructively utilizing the opportunities presented by December 17th. We are convinced that a process of normalization will engender further positive developments for all concerned. In this context we hope that Turkey will terminate its opposition towards Cyprus's accession to the Open Skies Treaty. At the same time, we remain committed to seeking, the soonest possible, a comprehensive negotiated settlement of the Cyprus problem consistent with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and the principles and values upon which the EU is founded.

While the multilateral context is the best way to promote security and cooperation, we should also do what we can on our own to build confidence.

I am pleased to announce that Cyprus has already commenced the destruction of all its stockpiles of anti-personnel landmines, in fulfillment of its obligations under the Ottawa Convention. Furthermore, in a unilateral step designed to enhance confidence, we are proceeding, in cooperation with the UN, in the demining of the UN controlled buffer zone. I would like to thank the EU and also particularly the Governments of Slovenia and Canada for their generous contribution towards the implementation of this project. We expect Turkey to mirror image these activities in the near future.

I finally warmly welcome the enhancement and intensification of the dialogue for cooperation with our Mediterranean and Asian Partners which we believe contributes to our common goals and aspirations.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I would like to wish every success for the fruitful results of the incoming Slovenian Chairmanship.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.