



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Foreign Minister of Greece

Ms. Dora Bakoyannis

Closing Remarks

16th Ministerial Council

December 5th, 2008

Helsinki

Mr Chairman,
Distinguished Ministers,
Mr Secretary General,

I wish to express my sincere thanks to Minister Alex Stubb, and the whole Finnish Chairmanship team, for the leadership that you have provided to the OSCE in difficult moments this year.

I think that I can say on behalf of all those present that we leave the Finnish capital inspired **by the tremendous determination you have shown to renewing the spirit of Helsinki.**

Embodied in the Final Act, this spirit still guides the 56 participating States. This spirit brings us together on a permanent basis in Vienna to discuss difficult questions and to find common ground against shared threats. This same spirit is embodied in our cooperation with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and in the activities of the OSCE Institutions, the ODIHR, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Representative on the Freedom of the Media, the Secretariat and the 19 Field Operations.

At the heart of the OSCE remains the principle that security starts with the 'inherent dignity of the human person'. Security requires politico-military co-operation between States, the development of healthy economic and environmental governance, and the protection of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms. This cross-dimensional approach is the OSCE's signature strength. There is no stronger foundation for us to build on. Our comprehensive approach to security has been tried and tested for over 35 years. It has been severely tried and tested this year, and even in the last few days – despite this, it remains as relevant and as vibrant as ever.

Mr Chairman,
The debate at the Ministerial Working Lunch on the future of European security was especially stimulating. Our exchanges show that the OSCE remains a unique and indispensable forum – a forum where all actors of the Euro-Atlantic area come together within a framework of shared values, guided by their commitment to indivisible security.

The discussions we have started in Helsinki should be taken further. As the incoming Chairmanship, Greece stands ready to take forward proposals to continue our high-level dialogue on Euro-Atlantic security, perhaps through the convening a special meeting to deepen the debate and to clarify the questions that remain.

The 16th Ministerial Council has seen important discussions on issues across the three OSCE Dimensions. And I note with great satisfaction that consensus has been reached on, for example, the Ministerial Declarations on the occasion “of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights”, as well as on “the 60th anniversary of the Convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime of Genocide”. The same applies for the consensus on the decision “on the OSCE contribution to the implementation phase of the Alliance of Civilisations Initiative”.

We have not agreed on all issues, and this is to be expected. We should be pleased that the spirit of constructive dialogue has been strengthened.

I wish to praise Alex Stubb for his personal efforts to secure consensus on a Political Declaration. We are deeply concerned by the failure of these efforts. As we take forward the spirit of Helsinki, we must mine all the reserves of goodwill and flexibility that exist. Without these, constructive dialogue on cooperative security may falter. We should try everything to prevent this. Rest assured that Greece will do everything it can as incoming Chairmanship.

Mr Chairman,

2008 has been a challenging year for the OSCE, one in which we witnessed war return to Europe. During the crisis in Georgia, lives were tragically lost, and persons were and remain displaced from their homes.

Mr Chairman, you have reminded us that every crisis is an opportunity also – an opportunity to recommit ourselves to the vision of a unified and indivisible Europe, whole, free and at peace with itself.

Such a crisis, which helped to attract so many Ministers here to Helsinki, can also serve as a wake-up call, showing us the opportunities we still have, to deepen OSCE engagement in Georgia and the region, to bolster our activities for comprehensive security, to build synergy with other international organisations on the ground, and to maintain as ever our commitment to protecting the ‘human dignity’ of every person in the OSCE area.

The OSCE plays a vital role in Georgia and should continue to do so. Let us work together to preserve this role and enhance it.

Mr Chairman,
Excellencies,

The incoming Greek Chairmanship, and I personally as your future Chairperson-in-Office, look forward to working with all participating States and Partners throughout 2009.

We have but one aspiration: To serve as an honest broker for all participating States, helping us to bring the spirit of Helsinki closer to reality.

I look forward to working with all of you and appreciate your support as we take on this challenge. In Greece, we know something about the passing of torches, and as we take hold of the flame of the OSCE Chairmanship, we are grateful that Finland and Minister Stubb – a runner of great renown – has taken it so far.