

**OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL MEETING**

ENGLISH only

**MADRID 29-30 November 28, 2007**

**UK STATEMENT BY JIM MURPHY, MP,**

**MINISTER FOR EUROPE, FOREIGN & COMMONWEALTH OFFICE**

Mr Chairman, Ministers, Ambassadors, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would first like to convey our warm appreciation to Foreign Minister Moratinos for his extraordinary endeavours as Chairman in Office and to thank our Spanish hosts for their excellent organisation and hospitality at this Ministerial meeting. I fully endorse the statement given by my colleague, the Foreign Minister of Portugal, on behalf of the European Union.

I should like to stress that for the UK the OSCE remains a key component of the security structure stretching from Vladivostok to Vancouver. Its unique comprehensive and co-operative approach has been an important contributor to stability and democracy in Europe. The UK remains committed to the OSCE's core principles and commitments in all three Dimensions.

In particular the UK values the important role being played by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo in helping to develop a multi-ethnic and tolerant society. We appreciate its invaluable assistance in organising the recent elections. But the Mission's work is not yet complete. The OSCE has to continue its engagement in Kosovo, irrespective of the outcome of the negotiations on Kosovo's status. The OSCE's extensive field presence remains vital for security and stability throughout Kosovo, including the well-being of all communities. So we fully support the extension of OMIK's mandate for another year.

The OSCE can be proud that its framework of electoral commitments, coupled with ODIHR's globally respected election observation methodology, has helped ensure that the will of the people increasingly serves as the basis for the authority of government in the OSCE region. We strongly support the election observation activities of ODIHR. It is vital that we preserve the integrity of ODIHR and its established methodology as an indispensable instrument for the consolidation of democracy in the OSCE region.

Mr Chairman. This should not be watered down. There can be no substitute for their established methodology.

We therefore regret that ODIHR has recently faced a number of unprecedented restrictions and bureaucratic obstacles to observing the Russian Duma elections. We should remember that States have not only undertaken to invite ODIHR to observe their elections, but have also agreed that ODIHR should play an enhanced role in election monitoring before, during and after election processes. We welcome the full co-operation being shown towards ODIHR by a number of countries currently organising their elections. We hope that all States will honour their commitments and enable

ODIHR to observe upcoming elections in full accordance with OSCE commitments and established practice, including by enabling long term observation if ODIHR judges that to be appropriate.

As a values – based organisation, the OSCE has been at the forefront of efforts to root out all forms of intolerance, including anti-Semitism, that is still tragically common in Europe. In particular we stand ready to share the experience of our recent Parliamentary Inquiry into anti-Semitism with other parliamentarians. We welcomed the OSCE Tolerance Conference in Bucharest and the Chairmanship's conference on Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims in Cordoba.

The United Kingdom also rightly remains committed to the CFE regime and to its core principles. We recognise and value the enormous contribution it has made to European security, and the transparency and stability that it brings. We continue fully to comply with our obligations under the CFE Treaty. Our shared goal remains the early entry into force of the Adapted CFE Treaty. The UK is determined to play an effective and important role.

However, the CFE regime is facing a difficult period. After many years of successful and co-operative implementation, this year the continuation of the CFE regime has been placed in jeopardy. We support the US parallel action proposals, a constructive package which offers a real opportunity for a positive outcome. We hope the negotiations under way will soon lead to agreement on a way forward, allowing early entry into force of the Adapted CFE Treaty consistent with the core principle of host nation consent. This would represent a major achievement, for which all involved could take considerable credit.

While negotiations continue, we call upon the Russian Federation to continue to honour its treaty obligations, and in particular not to take unilateral action which would undermine the current regime or make the entry into force of the Adapted CFE Treaty more difficult.

Your Excellencies, the OSCE does face serious challenges today. We regret the differences that have opened up between the majority of participating States and a minority who appear to be seeking to undermine existing commitments and practices. We believe that the OSCE's core values of human rights, fundamental freedoms and democratic advancement are as vital for an effective security framework today as they were over thirty years ago at the start of the Helsinki Process. It is the common responsibility of all participating States to ensure that the OSCE continues to make a positive contribution to our common future together.