

17th OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting
Athens, 1-2 December, 2009

ENGLISH only

Statement by Mr. Urmas Paet, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia

Mr. Chairman, Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by thanking our Greek hosts for the excellent chairmanship during this entire year, including the successful launch of the Corfu process, and wishing Kazakhstan every success in carrying forward the OSCE's work next year.

Like many of you, colleagues, I would first like to address the dialogue on the future of **European security**. It is my firm belief that the **Corfu Process** serves European security best, if it succeeds to re-establish genuine confidence and trust from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

By agreeing that it is timely to bring this dialogue to a new stage, we expect all participating States to reaffirm their commitment to uphold the OSCE's core principles as enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act and other OSCE documents. While fully subscribing to the EU position on this matter, Estonia welcomes the process leading to a stronger and revitalised OSCE and is ready to do its part.

The beginning of the Corfu process has been promising. It is important to stay focused and proceed in a **comprehensive, open-ended, inclusive and transparent manner, without compromising our guiding principles**. It is equally necessary to keep our attention on substance and remain balanced between all three dimensions.

I am certain that our renewed pledge is required for resolving the protracted conflicts still existing in Europe; particularly in the **Georgian** regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia but also in **Transnistria** and **Nagorno-Karabakh**. Here it is evident that **strong political will** is needed in order to translate our commitments into practice. Thus, conflict prevention and resolution as well as post-conflict rehabilitation has to remain a top priority on the OSCE agenda.

We have time and again discussed the necessity of stronger international presence in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Today we have to continue our efforts to establish a meaningful OSCE presence in Georgia. The full and unimpeded access of both international monitoring missions and aid organisations to the areas of South Ossetia and Abkhazia must be ensured without delay.

Once again, I use this opportunity to urge all parties of the conflict to continue the Geneva talks fully respecting the principle of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity recognised by international law.

Mr. Chairman,

A reinforced and cross-dimensional response is needed to meet emerging transnational threats and challenges, particularly climate change, energy security, cyber security, and terrorism. With regard to the enhancement of our anti-terrorism capability, stronger OSCE engagement **with and in Afghanistan** would be a valuable contribution, as complementary activities are much needed there.

In order to more effectively combat **cyber threats**, we should continue to raise awareness of this complex issue. We welcome, that OSCE has already organised several productive workshops on this and we are confident that there is a clear need for further international cooperation.

Only in productive cooperation we can combat the transnational threats, including the **trafficking in human beings**. In this context I would especially like to thank the Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, **Eva Biaudet**, for her valuable contribution in fighting this form of modern-age slavery, particularly for her awareness-raising efforts within the entire OSCE region.

We also appreciate the excellent work carried out by High Commissioner on **National Minorities Knut Vollebæk**, including the elaboration and launching of the Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations on National Minorities in Inter-State Relations. This year we had the honour of co-hosting a Baltic Sea region roundtable on the implementation of these Recommendations in Tallinn. Let me wish Mr. Vollebæk lasting strength in assisting the participating States to bring these conceptual guidelines into practice.

Estonia commends the dedication of the Representative on Freedom of the Media **Miklos Haraszti** in promoting **free and independent media** – a component of the very core of democracy.

Estonia has benefited from the advice and recommendations of ODIHR (the **Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights**) over the years and we applaud the unique election monitoring expertise it has acquired over nearly 20 years. Since by today Estonia has successfully introduced new election technologies, we are especially interested in co-operation regarding this aspect of elections.

It is difficult to overestimate the OSCE's contribution to the enhancement of **rule of law, democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms** across the Euro-Atlantic area over the last 35 years. Responding to future challenges, our fundamental principles must remain.

Thank you!