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Address

by Joschka Fischer,

Minister for Foreign Affairs

of the Federal Republic of Germany,

at the OSCE Ministerial Council

Sofia, 6 and 7 December 2004

Translation of advance text

Mr Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The central question at this OSCE Ministerial Council is: can the OSCE live up to the pressing challenges of the 21st century in the Euro-Atlantic area? Let us not forget that only in the OSCE do all states from Canada to Russia have a seat and voice on an equal footing. Only here can they come together to debate and make decisions on issues concerning their joint security. It would be more than short-sighted if we were not to further develop and improve this instrument.

Germany has an interest in making the OSCE more effective and attractive. We do see ways of improving the OSCE and want to help reform the organization. We are open to any proposals which both renew the OSCE and consolidate and reaffirm its established acquis.

However, we want to further consolidate, not water down, our common values. Mr Chairman, a new dividing-line must not be allowed to develop.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The OSCE has taken on tasks which will continue to be of central importance: reminding its participating states of the commitments they have made to democracy, the rule of law and human rights, as well as to disarmament and arms control and to help them meet these obligations.

The operability of the field missions, which make a valuable contribution towards this work based on partnership, must be further enhanced, not jeopardized. The same applies to OSCE institutions.

And with its election observation missions, the OSCE is doing much to underpin the legitimacy of our parliaments and governments. Anyone who questions the independence of these missions will rock the very foundations of the OSCE.

Especially recent developments in Ukraine have made it clear to us all once more that we in Europe and the OSCE must stand by the principles of democracy.

Elections must not be distorted and honest results must reflect the will of the majority of the people.

We hope that the crisis in Ukraine will be resolved with due regard to the country's territorial integrity on the basis of the ruling by the Supreme Court and the principles of democracy with the early re-run of the second ballot. These elections must be transparent, free and should be held under effective international observation. The OSCE election monitors will play a key role in this. Germany is prepared to send up to 100 election monitors.

Particularly the presence and the professional judgement of the OSCE election monitors were able to help provide a point of reference which was recognized by all sides following the second falsified ballot. The country's Supreme Court confirmed their findings, namely the detection of massive election fraud.

The timely involvement of international mediators was also important. Here we would like to extend our special thanks to the High Representative of the European Union, the Presidents of Poland and Lithuania and the President of the Russian Parliament and wish their missions every success.

The OSCE has had a stabilizing effect on the situation in support of democracy and the true will of the majority of the Ukrainian people.

We can say today that the OSCE's election observation missions have become a mark of quality. This has been shown, not least, by the considerable interest which other countries have shown in them – both in East and West. The OSCE monitored the presidential elections in the US. And now the Afghan Government has asked us following the presidential elections to monitor the parliamentary elections in April 2005. It is vital that we comply with this request so that we can make a key contribution towards the legitimacy of the elections and the country's stabilization.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I also staunchly support another of the OSCE's fields of action, namely its steadfast commitment towards tolerance and against anti-Semitism, xenophobia and racism. The organization is doing pioneering work in this sphere.

At the latest, the conferences in Berlin and Brussels showed this. These conferences sent a clear message that intolerance, anti-Semitism and racism must be ostracized. And the

decisions on fighting anti-Semitism and racism adopted in Berlin and Brussels have attracted much attention throughout the world.

In this connection, I expressly welcome the appointment of three OSCE Special Representatives. The fight against intolerance, the struggle against anti-Semitism, against racism and xenophobia, as well as the discrimination against Muslims have thus been lent both a face and a voice.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Again in 2004, the OSCE has endeavoured to play a constructive and stabilizing role in the so-called frozen conflicts in Moldavia, Georgia and in the Nagorny-Karabakh conflict. Its good services have prevented these unresolved crises from erupting into violence. That has saved lives. Regrettably, however, these conflicts are still not settled.

But here, too, it should be noted that the OSCE has fallen short of its capabilities. Neither the organization's instruments nor its mechanisms have been used amply or constructively enough by the parties to the conflicts. That applies in particular to the Transnistrian conflict.

The immediate fulfilment of the obligations entered into in Istanbul also continues to be a vital contribution towards resolving this conflict. We therefore urge all states involved in this conflict to honour these commitments!

The OSCE's political and military acquis also remains indispensable. It guarantees our cooperative security between Vancouver and Vladivostock. We should not take it for granted. The ratification of the adapted CFE Treaty thus continues to be a priority.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Where do we want to go with the OSCE? And – an even more radical question – do we even need the OSCE anymore? Our answer is a resolute "yes". We are more convinced than ever of its importance.

The OSCE is the only forum for security policy in the pan-European area.

We must therefore vigorously step up our efforts to promote free and fair elections, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, tolerance and the settlement of regional conflicts. We want to reach a consensus on this – not an empty consensus but a solid basis for the

work of this organization on the eve of its 30th anniversary. I fear that otherwise we run the risk of losing the OSCE as an effective instrument and we will need it more urgently than ever in the future.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The preservation and development of the OSCE is in the interests of us all. We must renew the organization and maintain what has been achieved to date. However, we can only master this challenge together. It will require the commitment of us all.

I would like to thank the Bulgarian Chairman, our friend Solomon Passy, for his excellent work and wish the Slovenian Chairmanship good luck and every success for the coming year.

Thank you very much.