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C L O S I N G R E M A R K S

by Dr. Solomon Passy, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of
Bulgaria and Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE

Mr. Chairman of the Organizing Committee,
Mr. President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE,
Your Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Two days of intensive and constructive work of this Ministerial Council
are behind us.

I would like to thank you all for the effort that you have put into
preparing the decisions and declarations that have been adopted, for your
active participation in the work of the Ministerial Council. The fact that
so many foreign ministers have attended this meeting attests to the
importance that we all attach to the OSCE.

Several issues have been high on our agenda over the past two days.

On Ukraine, I believe that a strong collective will to assist that key
member of our OSCE family has been demonstrated. This to me is co-
operative security in action and demonstrates the relevance of the OSCE.
I urge you again to come forward with the necessary resources and
election observers to enable us to have a credible presence that will give
the people of Ukraine added confidence in the integrity of the election
process.

Reform has been another important topic. The Bulgarian Chairmanship
has tried to push the reform agenda this year and I am glad that a number
of decisions have been taken in this spirit.

Let me encourage you to build on the work done in reaching out to our
Partners for Co-operation. The OSCE is clearly highly regarded by its
Partners and by other international actors and we should promote
ourselves and share our expertise. We have a lot to offer.

Yesterday's bomb blasts in Spain and the attack on the US consulate in
Saudi Arabia demonstrate the ever present threat of terrorism. I appreciate
therefore the adoption of additional OSCE decisions on counter-terrorism
at this Ministerial. I know that we stand united in this struggle.

We need to do more to combat intolerance and discrimination. This year was a landmark for the OSCE's work in this area and the challenge for 2005 will be to ensure proper follow-up. I believe that the decision that we have taken here will steer us in the right direction.

Colleagues and friends,

The OSCE has mandates to resolve conflicts and should be supported in its lead role. I welcome the Statement of the Ministerial Council on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In this issue, as well as in Georgia and Moldova, courageous decisions will be required in the months ahead. And the OSCE should continue to assist.

Against the background of complex issues the OSCE is struggling with, full consensus on the Ministerial Declaration turned out to be short of reach. Definitely this outcome is less than what is desired by the Chairman-in-Office and, I believe, also by the participating States. Nevertheless, an important exchange of views has taken place and such dialogue is a testimony to the relevance of the OSCE. We strongly hope that in 2005 our Organization will be capable to act even more resolutely, based on solid common ground.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before concluding I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those involved in making Bulgaria's Chairmanship a success. I would particularly like to thank the Bulgarian Organizing Committee led by the Deputy Prime Minister Plamen Panayotov, the Director of the State Protocol Ivan Dimitrov and the Head of the Co-ordination team for our meeting Svetlan Stoev. I am grateful to Deputy Minister Lyubomir Ivanov and Deputy Minister Ivan Petkov, as well as to Ambassador Ivo Petrov and Ambassador Ivan Naydenov, and to the able staff in Sofia and Vienna for their tireless efforts for the successful running of the Bulgarian Chairmanship. I would also like to express gratitude to all OSCE staff in institutions, field missions and the Secretariat for their dedicated work, and to Ambassador Jan Kubis – who is in Ukraine today – for his valuable advice throughout the year.

I also thank the National Palace of Culture and our interpreters.

Thank you, foreign minister Bernard Bot, for your support throughout the year. And welcome, foreign minister of Belgium Karel De Gucht as the new member of the Troika.

To my good friend Dimitrij Rupel, I pass the torch. Being the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE is an ambitious task, but truly unforgettable. I wish you all the best in your stewardship of this extraordinary Organization during an important anniversary year. We all shall do our best to help the Chairmanship of the Organization to resume the consensus.

Let us build on this meeting to work even harder for peace and security. And let us challenge ourselves and each other to come up with bold initiatives and a vision for the political space from Vancouver to Vladivostock. What is at stake is bigger than the OSCE – it is the future of Europe.