

**S T A T E M E N T**

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**Time of Change: Towards a transformed OSCE for the 21st century**

**12<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Ministerial Council of the OSCE**

**Sofia, 6 December 2004**

Your Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

As I look back in time, I recall with emotion that 15 years ago – in 1989, a CSCE Meeting on the Protection of the Environment was held in this same building. The event focused world attention on the totalitarian regime's record of repressing environmental activists. It stimulated open demonstrations by human rights advocates and the Bulgarian Ecoglasnost environmental group, to which I then belonged. That was a clear manifestation of the influence of the Helsinki process on the democratic emancipation of my generation. And this CSCE meeting in Sofia was the strongest catalyst of the democratic processes in Bulgaria. A week later the communist regime collapsed. In October 1989 many of my friends were outside this building. Today they are here in this hall assisting the Bulgarian Chairmanship to fulfil its duties. And I see the finger of destiny in that metaphor. Today I am proud that my country is chairing the OSCE and we are discussing in the same venue the future and way ahead for this great Organization.

For thirty years the CSCE and OSCE have worked hard to overcome divisions that have separated people in Europe. United by shared values, today we have come to the conviction that security increasingly transcends national borders. Present-day geopolitical realities, related to NATO and EU enlargements, along with the dialogue and co-operation between the countries to the East and West of the Black Sea, stress the importance of the OSCE as a bridge of mutual confidence.

The OSCE has a rich history, innovative missions and institutions, an inclusive membership and a dedicated staff. However, if it is to have an impact on the lives of citizens from Vancouver to Vladivostock, it has to stand firmly by its principles and ensure that its institutions and review mechanisms provide implementation of OSCE commitments. Guided by this vision, the Bulgarian Chairmanship has focused on implementation as a main priority this year.

We have also kept continuity with the priorities and work of previous Chairmanships. I was privileged to have the invaluable support of Minister Scheffer and Minister Bot in the OSCE Troika and to draw on their rich experience.

Dear colleagues,

The **scourge of terrorism** is emerging as a most dangerous threat for all of us. Terrorist attacks, most recently in Madrid and Beslan resulted in numerous innocent victims, including children. This evil needs our joint and firm response. During 2004 we have held numerous result-oriented events and adopted concrete measures aimed at countering international terrorism.

This year the OSCE has increased its efforts to achieve a better balance between the politico-military, the economic and human dimensions.

In **the politico-military dimension**, substantial efforts were made on the OSCE Border Security and Management Concept. The follow up to the Ohrid Border Conference resulted in a series of workshops for training border officials from South Eastern Europe. Another important input was provided by the Border Conference jointly organized with the United Nations Office on Drugs

and Crime, which focused on strengthening the co-ordination between relevant international organizations in their activities related to border issues, training and assistance.

It is our conviction that we have to bring the OSCE activities in these areas much closer to those participating States that need them most.

The Bulgarian Chairmanship made an effort to bring the OSCE **economic and environmental activities** in conformity with the commitments agreed to in the Maastricht Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension. The Organization provided and mobilized advice and expertise to develop incentives for small and medium-sized enterprises, foreign and domestic investment and to improve legal frameworks. Special attention was paid to facilitating dialogue between governmental agencies and the business community and to private and public partnership initiatives. The issues of good governance, fight against corruption and money laundering stayed high on the agenda.

The **human dimension** remained crucial in our work this year, and is the backbone of the OSCE. Human rights commitments should be strictly adhered to. One of the priorities of the Bulgarian Chairmanship has been education, particularly in the context of human rights and conflict prevention. It is encouraging that many participating States responded positively to my appeal to support financially the OSCE Academy in Bishkek and an amount of more than 400 000 Euro has already been raised.

The three high-profile OSCE events in Berlin, Paris and Brussels this year on tolerance and non-discrimination reminded us of the danger of being complacent about racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, discrimination against Muslims and other forms of intolerance. We need to do more to prevent these phenomena from causing divisions within our societies. I look forward to appointing three Personal Representatives in this field.

2004 was a busy year for **election monitoring**. The Organization has been involved in observing elections throughout its area - in North America, Europe and Central Asia, which is indicative of the geographical scope of these activities.

The most recent elections in Ukraine, and the events that followed, were a clear manifestation of people power and show the maturity of democracy in this important European country. The victors in Ukraine should be democracy and the rule of law. I am glad that a “made in Ukraine” solution to this crisis is emerging and that the OSCE played a key role in election monitoring and as a facilitator. I hope that by the end of this Ministerial meeting the response of the OSCE in supporting the re-running of the second round of the presidential elections will be clear and generous.

During this year we continued the efforts to finding lasting and viable political solutions to **the existing conflicts** in the OSCE zone.

The Organization rendered essential support for the conduct of the presidential and parliamentary elections in **Georgia**. I am glad that the tensions in and around Ajara were resolved peacefully, with the involvement of our Organization. We welcome the progress recently achieved in the dialogue on a peaceful comprehensive resolution of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict. The measures now in hand to secure the demilitarization of the zone of conflict need to be implemented as rapidly as possible and the focus has to shift to genuine political negotiations.

The OSCE follows closely the developments related to the **Nagorno Karabakh** conflict. The Chairmanship actively supported the efforts of the Co-Chairs of the Minsk group in seeking reinvigoration of the dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan. We note with satisfaction the meetings conducted during this year between the Presidents and the Foreign Ministers of the two countries and hope that the process will be moved forward.

The involvement of the Bulgarian Chairmanship in active search for solutions to the conflicts in the South Caucasus was reconfirmed by the designation of two prominent Bulgarian statesmen – former President Zhelju Zhelev and former Prime Minister Philip Dimitrov, as CiO's envoys respectively for Georgia and Nagorno Karabakh.

The Bulgarian Chairmanship looked actively for solutions in the **Transdnestrian conflict**. The Chairman-in-Office asked former Bulgarian President Petar Stoyanov to act as his envoy for Moldova. President Stoyanov's visit to Chisinau and Tiraspol in September demonstrated the Chairmanship's commitment to seeking an overall settlement of the dispute. However, despite the continuing efforts of the mediators and some positive developments during the first half of the year, there was lack of progress towards comprehensive political settlement. The Chairmanship calls upon the parties to the conflict to establish and strengthen a working dialogue that can lead more effectively towards a lasting solution. Additional efforts are still needed to find a formula for a comprehensive settlement on the basis of strengthening the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova while providing a special status for Transnistria.

In 2004 the **Western Balkans** continued to face complex challenges such as the break out of violence in Kosovo in March. The parliamentary and presidential elections in Serbia and the Macedonian referendum on decentralization were key events in shaping the future development of these countries. Due to the continuous persistent efforts exerted by the OSCE, developments in the region have been forward-leaning. Bosnia and Herzegovina has made progress in achieving interethnic tolerance, in strengthening state institutions and in resolving the problems with returnees and their property. We are pleased to note Albania's commitment to finalize the overall implementation of the electoral reform in order to organize free and democratic elections in 2005. Croatia's performance in fulfilling OSCE commitments also deserves our esteem.

In **Central Asia** the Bulgarian Chairmanship facilitated more co-operation among the participating States, both from in- and outside the region, and the specialized international organizations. All of us in the OSCE welcomed the moratorium on the death penalty introduced by the Parliament of Tajikistan following a proposal by the Tajik President.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This has been a challenging year for the Bulgarian Chairmanship. As I reflect on my time as Chairman-in-Office, I would like to share with you **three convictions**:

First, **solidarity is more needed than ever**. That means no dividing lines. We should not lose sight of the vision of our predecessors who agreed three decades ago to improve and intensify relations among European States and to strive for peace, justice, security, co-operation and rapprochement. This is the imperative of global and regional security and, most of all, serves the interests of the people and their respective countries.

This leads me to my second conviction: the **OSCE should reach out**.

The OSCE's experience, capacities and good practices in preventing inter-ethnic conflicts, election monitoring, confidence-building, arms control and facilitating dialogue could be applied in other parts of the world. In this regard I would like to emphasize that by sending an Election Support Team to Afghanistan for the presidential elections in October – the first out-of-area operation of the OSCE, our Organization demonstrated its capacity to go beyond its original horizons. Mongolia has just become a new Partner for Co-operation. In my view the Mediterranean dimension deserves particular attention and I believe that the OSCE example could have a positive impact on the troubled Middle East. The successful Mediterranean Seminar organized in Sharm El Sheikh in Egypt has highlighted the importance of fostering co-operation and interaction in this region.

My third conviction is that the OSCE should be of **more relevance and practical benefit to the man in the street** and, to that end, try to overcome tendencies towards bureaucratization. Although the Permanent Representatives in Vienna are doing an excellent job, this phenomenon persists, due to insufficient efforts by the respective capitals to make ordinary people feel that the OSCE has a tangible bearing on their lives. It is our responsibility – as Ministers – to play a greater leadership role, to take more initiatives, and to bring knowledge about the OSCE closer to constituencies.

I am confident that people in Bulgaria and around the world deserve to know more about the OSCE and its work. 2005 will be an excellent opportunity to raise our public profile by celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act and the fifteenth anniversary of the Charter of Paris.

These three convictions – solidarity, outreach, and relevance – lead me to the expectation that we will be able to **transform this organization**. The OSCE needs to adapt, evolve and further improve its efficiency. This year witnessed a far-reaching debate on transforming the OSCE to ensure that it is even better suited to deal with these present-day challenges. I am confident that the decision on establishment of a panel of eminent persons on strengthening the effectiveness of the OSCE will provide additional momentum to this process and will contribute to improving the overall capacity of the Organization. The OSCE should be more accessible to its constituents, and seek to engage parliamentarians more actively in its work.

Dear Colleagues,

On the issue of reform I have tried to test the boundaries this year, and to challenge some taboos in the OSCE in order to shake things up for the better. I welcome the fact that others have contributed a number of thought-provoking views on reform. The future of this organization is in our hands: it will be as relevant and as effective as we make it.

I would like to particularly thank the Heads of OSCE Institutions, the Heads of Field Missions and the OSCE Secretariat for their relentless and dedicated efforts throughout 2004. Let us build on this Sofia meeting and 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.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I wish you a fruitful and successful Ministerial Council Meeting.

Thank you.