

OSCE Ministerial Council, Sofia, 6/7 December 2004

**National Statement on behalf of Ireland, delivered by Mr Noel Treacy, TD,
Minister of State for European Affairs at the Department of Foreign Affairs.**

Mr Chairman

I would like to thank you for the excellent organisation and warm hospitality which you have shown to us all on the occasion of this important meeting. I would also like to congratulate you on the successful conduct of the very difficult task of Chairman-in-Office, during the past year.

In the first instance, I would like to associate Ireland with the statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, Mr. Bot, delivered on behalf of the entire European Union.

Mr Chairman

As its name makes clear, this organisation is about security and cooperation.

As regards security – the first elements of the organisation's title - I echo the sentiment that the OSCE needs to adapt itself to new challenges to security which confront us.

These are not the threats of the Cold War era, during which the organisation's predecessor, the CSCE, was founded. These new challenges are many, varied and multifaceted. They need to be addressed in a holistic manner.

This organisation, which is synonymous with a comprehensive concept of Security, is the ideal Forum to address the confluence of these threats in the OSCE Region. In this regard, we want to see a more coherent approach across dimensions, and to have this reflected in the ways in which the institutions, offices and most importantly, field operations, do their work.

We must focus strongly also on countering security threats, arising from ethnic tensions, denial of human rights, the use of force for political ends, excessive disparities in income and opportunity, to name only the more obvious ones.

As regards cooperation – the second element in the OSCE's title – we should seek to work together, as a group of countries committed to peaceful coexistence and common values. We no longer operate on a bloc to bloc basis and we should never go back to doing so.

The OSCE region has a very broad geographical reach, going beyond Europe. A goal should be to ensure that our entire region is a zone of peace, freedom and prosperity. To achieve this we need to see that sufficient attention is paid to those parts of our region where these goals are still some way from realisation. Ireland is also conscious of the importance of cooperation between OSCE and our Partners for Cooperation in the Mediterranean and Asia. I should like to join those welcoming Mongolia as our newest Partner and to welcome the application of Palestine, which Ireland warmly supports.

Like all other Participating States, Ireland is gravely concerned by the current situation in Ukraine. That this complicated and tense situation has so far been addressed without recourse to violence, demonstrates the maturity of the Ukrainian political culture. We are grateful to the representatives of Ukraine in this and other international organizations, for continuing to provide balanced and factual information about developments in their country. Ireland will send observers to the rerun of the Ukrainian elections, on 26 December, as requested by ODIHR, and I would urge all Participating States to strongly support the rerun of the Election. A solution, which must be achieved without violence, has to reflect the democratic will of the Ukrainian people and preserve the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Ireland has always given priority to the OSCE and actively supported it, both financially and in secondment of personnel. We will continue to do so. We were

pleased to be able to host a seminar in the economic and environmental dimension earlier this year to prepare for the Economic Forum.

The OSCE is doing very important work in its core areas of conflict prevention and rehabilitation, economic security, the promotion of human rights, the rule of law and good governance. But if the organisation is to be able to perform its tasks as effectively as possible in the future, it will be important for the OSCE to sharpen its focus and concentrate on areas where it has a comparative advantage vis-à-vis other organisations and where it can complement their efforts. This is particularly important as regards the relationship between the Council of Europe and the OSCE.

The issue of specialisation is one which I suggest should be considered in the context of the Council of Europe Summit next year. We commend the proposal to appoint a Committee of Eminent Persons, to consider what sort of reform of the organisation is needed and how it might be achieved.

The OSCE has been particularly active in the fields of racism, intolerance and anti-discrimination, during the past year. This is as it should be: historically, racism and intolerance have been among the greatest threats to security and causes of conflict in our region; they retain the potential to threaten security in the future. It is important that we actively follow up and implement the Recommendations and Decisions taken in Berlin, Paris and Brussels and in this respect I welcome the proposal of the Chairman-in-Office, to appoint Personal Representatives on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination.

I also welcome the generous offer by Spain, to host a conference in Cordoba next year on anti-Semitism and other forms of Intolerance which will provide an opportunity to review progress in implementing the decisions that we have taken in this sensitive area.

Mr Chairman

Whatever work the organisation is to do, it must be properly funded for this purpose. In this respect, we have followed with great interest the discussion on scales of

Assessment. We have noted that this discussion has tended in the direction of developing a budgetary process, with a closer relationship between assessed contributions and capacity to pay and we welcome this positive development. For our part, we are prepared to be flexible in finding a solution to this question, and we echo the call by the EU Presidency on all others to do the same.

Mr. Chairman,

Before turning to the question of terrorism I must take this opportunity to condemn today's attack on the United States Consulate, in Jeddah. I extend my condolences to the families of the victims of this attack. In relation to terrorism, we support the OSCE's active involvement in this area and welcome the draft decisions which are before this conference for adoption. We attach importance to solidarity with the victims of terrorism which was the subject of a Permanent Council Decision earlier this year. We believe that all anti-terrorist actions must comply with the high standards on human rights which have been the hallmark of the OSCE. It would do a great disservice to the OSCE's efforts to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law, if we were to abandon these standards in the face of the undoubted terrorist threats, which do exist.

Furthermore, while there can be no excuse for terrorism, frustration born of poverty and alienation can be instrumental in leading some to support the terrorist way, and leave them open to exploitation by those for whom it has become a way of life. This is an area on which greater cross-dimensional coherence would be desirable. We should bear this in mind in all of our deliberations.

We were pleased last year to support the creation of a mechanism to implement the Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings and we note the appointment during this year, of Dr Helga Konrad as Special Representative for this purpose. We were pleased to welcome Dr Konrad to Dublin, on her recent visit.

Mr Chairman

Like other participating States, we have been disappointed at the lack of progress which has been reported in the several regional conflicts which continue to threaten our collective security. We can only call on all those concerned to redouble their

efforts to find solutions. We should not resign ourselves to acceptance that conflicts cannot be resolved.

Finally, Mr Chairman, in thanking you once again for your conduct of the Chairmanship in Office during the past year, we wish our Slovenian Colleagues every success in carrying out this onerous task, during the coming year.