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Statement by H.E. Ambassador Fernando d'Oliveira Neves
Secretary of State for European Affairs of Portugal at the Thirteenth Ministerial Council
of the Organization for security and Cooperation in Europe
Ljubljana, 5-6 December 2005

Mr. Chairman
Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me to start by congratulating Slovenia for an excellent Chairmanship and for its tireless efforts in implementing a most difficult agenda.

This year we celebrate three important milestones in the history of the organization – the 30th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, the 15th anniversary of the Paris Charter and the 10th anniversary of the institutionalization of the OSCE. Through its comprehensive approach to security, its inclusive and participatory nature, the OSCE has played a central role in the shaping of European history.

It is now up to the OSCE to build upon the success of three decades of dialogue and cooperation, notably by reaffirming its values and commitments and by revitalizing its sense of common purpose, ensuring that no dividing lines emerge in the OSCE region.

Mr Chairman

We are faced with an ever evolving international context, we are confronted with a new security paradigm: to retain its added value, the OSCE has to adapt to new realities while preserving its values.

By adapting, by improving its working methods and further rebalancing its three dimensions, by focusing its activities in the areas where it enjoys comparative advantages and specific expertise and experience, the OSCE will strengthen its capacity to respond to the threats and challenges of the Twenty-first Century in a consistent and coherent manner;

By preserving its thirty year *acquis*, its values and commitments as well as the role of its Institutions and Field Operations, the OSCE will continue to ensure that the path towards a whole, free and united Europe remains based on the fundamental principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

And let me say that it is our understanding that these ambitious goals and difficult challenges can only be met through a cooperative stance reflecting the common political will of all its Participating States.

Mr. Chairman

In our view, the OSCE's cross-dimensional, comprehensive and cooperative approach to security makes it particularly suited to address successfully the diversity and transnational nature of today's challenges.

This also means that this approach should not be limited to the Organization's boundaries; on the contrary, it should be pro-actively pursued to further strengthen our relations with neighbouring States, notably by sharing the Organization's *acquis* and expertise with our Mediterranean and Asian partners.

Furthermore, cooperation with other international Organizations and actors, especially the U.N, the E.U., NATO and the Council of Europe, has proved to be most successful in dealing with all aspects of present day threats and conflict situations, through concerted and mutually reinforcing efforts.

Mr. Chairman

Terrorism continues to threaten peace and freedom indiscriminately, reaping the lives of innocents, regardless of race or creed.

Since early on, the OSCE has sought to address the fight against terrorism in complementarity with other International Organizations. The OSCE can assist both Participating States and Cooperation Partners in fighting this ordeal, while simultaneously ensuring full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Mr Chairman

In spite of its undeniable successes, most recognize that the OSCE is in need of adapting its structures and working methods.

In this context, I would like to underline my country's appreciation for the work undertaken by the Panel of Eminent Persons, which has provided us with a comprehensive and detailed Report that should, in our view, form the basis of our reform strategy. Portugal supports the strengthening of the effectiveness of the OSCE in a way which preserves its unique *acquis* and principles while enabling it to meet the challenges ahead.

Before I conclude, let me express my best wishes to Belgium, the incoming Chairmanship in Office of the OSCE. We wish Minister de Gucht all the best in his endeavours and is ready to cooperate fully with you.

My final words, Mr Chairman, are once again addressed to you and to your team, to reiterate my congratulations on your Chairmanship and also to convey our thanks for the excellent organization of this meeting and for the warm hospitality that the Slovene people have extended to us.