

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

**Statement by Secretary of State  
Ms. Teija Tiilikainen**

**7<sup>th</sup> Winter Meeting  
OSCE Parliamentary Assembly  
Vienna, 21-22 February 2008**

Mr. President,  
Members of the Parliamentary Assembly,  
Secretary General,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to speak before the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in the name of the OSCE Chairman in Office Minister Ilkka Kanerva.

Since its creation in 1990, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has worked to reflect the aspirations of the peoples across the OSCE area. It has also consistently driven forward the debate among participating States. The parliamentary dimension has become vital for the good health of the OSCE.

I am very pleased, therefore, to start with words of thanks from the Chairmanship for the cooperation and support of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

I wish to explore two themes with you. First, in accordance with the tradition of this occasion, I will briefly address some of the priorities of the Finnish Chairmanship. Second, I wish to focus on some of the urgent questions that the OSCE participating States face today.

Mr President,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The starting point of the Finnish Chairmanship is that the common goal of building a Europe that is stable and free from any type of conflict has not yet been attained. Since the participating States met in Helsinki in 1975, Europe has been transformed for the better. Divisions that once seemed permanent have been swept away, and liberty has been restored to entire regions and societies. Nonetheless, we still have much work to do.

While the front lines of the Cold War have been banished, there is the risk of new divisions taking hold in the OSCE area. Old threats have taken a new shape, longstanding conflicts remain unresolved and new challenges stand before us.

The Finnish Chairmanship however perceives these challenges as an opportunity for all of us to recommit to our shared vision of security based on co-operation. These challenges give us the chance to demonstrate the strength and vitality of the basic OSCE values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

The priorities of the Finnish Chairmanship have been set with these challenges in mind.

Finland will stress the importance of continuity in OSCE work. In spite of the difficulties it faces, we remain convinced that the OSCE provides its participating States with useful tools for conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction.

Continuity should also guide OSCE activities over the longer term. The decision in Madrid to grant the OSCE Chairmanship to Greece in 2009, Kazakhstan in 2010 and Lithuania in 2011 offers a unique opportunity for long-term planning of the Organization's activities. Finland is convinced there are many issues where working in the framework of this "Quintet" can provide long-term benefits. We appreciate the very positive response received from these four other States and look forward to cooperating with them.

Finland will work to enhance confidence among all the participating States as well as confidence in the OSCE.

The Finnish Chairmanship has put the protracted conflicts in Moldova, Georgia and Nagorno-Karabakh at the top of its agenda. The Chairman-in-Office will personally visit all the conflict region countries. Indeed, he already visited Moldova in January and will be travelling to the South Caucasus next week.

Minister Kanerva has nominated a Special Envoy to promote any useful negotiations on conflict resolution. In all of these conflicts, the parties should be encouraged to engage in serious negotiations, and any momentum created should be fully used. We will seek to build opportunities to foster deeper trust between the parties and promote conflict resolution in Transnistria, Moldova, South Ossetia, Georgia and in Nagorno-Karabakh between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The Finnish Chairmanship will bolster the role of the OSCE in promoting politico-military security and transparency in Europe. Controlling the illicit flow of small arms and light weapons is a case in point. The OSCE has been at the forefront of international efforts in this area since 2000; Finland will intensify the focus and activities of the OSCE.

In the second dimension, Finland will seek greater implementation of economic and environmental commitments and also improve the dialogue on these matters. This year, the OSCE dialogue will focus on maritime and inland waterways co-operation as well as the challenges of land-locked countries. We are pleased that the events planned will include a conference in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan in March.

Finland will focus on three questions related to human rights: combating trafficking in human beings, promoting tolerance and non-discrimination, in particular with regard to the Roma and Sinti people, and gender mainstreaming in all OSCE activities. All of these areas relate to the core task of the OSCE to promote respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all citizens in the OSCE area.

This year we will be celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This anniversary will also underline the role of the brave people who defend human rights often in difficult situations. The Finnish Chairmanship will seek

to increase support for their invaluable work. Parliamentarians and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly have a vital role in debating human rights and democratisation issues in the OSCE area.

Mr President,

Ladies and Gentleman,

I wish to draw your attention to three issues facing the Finnish Chairmanship and the OSCE in general. The Finnish Chairmanship will address each of these with the same resolution and guided by the priorities we have set.

First, there are developments in Kosovo.

The declaration of independence by Kosovo last Sunday has gained the attention of the international community. Naturally, the OSCE has also been mobilised. The presence of the Serbian Foreign Minister at the Special Permanent Council on Tuesday is a testimony to the OSCE's important position as a forum to discuss both politics and principle.

The OSCE has played an important role in Kosovo -- in establishing and consolidating local institutions, in promoting democratization, the rule of law, as well as human and minority rights. In the process, the OSCE has developed a unique ability to work with all ethnic communities in promoting stability and democratic development. It is the firm belief of the Finnish Chairmanship that the role of the OSCE is and will be beneficial to all communities in Kosovo. It has cooperated well with other international actors. As we move forward we must do our utmost to ensure regional stability and cooperation.

The Finnish Chairmanship is determined to ensure continued OSCE engagement in Kosovo.

Second, the observation of elections has dominated the agenda of the Finnish Chairmanship.

Many efforts were taken to secure credible OSCE election observation in the Russian Presidential Elections next week. Despite our efforts to reach a compromise, the ODIHR and the Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation could not quite bridge the gap of five days concerning the start date of the mission. However, their dialogue was a step forward compared to the Duma Elections last December.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly acted in the very same manner in the Presidential Elections as the ODIHR did this time.

The OSCE commitments demand the participating States to invite and host an OSCE election observation mission. These missions should cover all the key phases of the electoral process – candidate and voter registration, electoral campaign, media coverage, complaints and appeals. It is the view of the Chairmanship that the ODIHR should be able to field election observation missions on professional grounds, in order to produce a meaningful assessment and recommendations benefiting the observed country. We also greatly value the cooperation between the ODIHR and the Parliamentary Assembly as already witnessed this year in Georgia and Armenia.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has always played an important role in supporting OSCE election observation. We are deeply grateful for the experience of parliamentarians in providing the necessary parliamentary dimension to what is an important and delicate process.

The Finnish Chairmanship is convinced that continued dialogue on election-related issues among the participating States, with the involvement of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, is essential. In this respect, the Chairmanship plans to conduct a structured dialogue on election related issues, including the involvement of international organizations, parliamentary assemblies, and NGOs.

Third, the continuing deadlock in the negotiations concerning the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe poses serious risks to our common security. The CFE treaty remains a cornerstone of European military security. The Chairmanship urges the parties to continue a dialogue in order to seek resolution of outstanding differences. We should seek at all costs to avoid an erosion of the treaty

regime. It is important that the Parliamentary Assembly pays attention to the situation of the CFE treaty and to the possibilities of safeguarding this unique achievement in post-Cold War arms reduction in Europe.

Mr. President,  
Distinguished Members of Parliament,  
Mr. Secretary General,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

All the three cases Kosovo election observation and the CFE-treaty – all of these point to different features of the OSCE today.

The OSCE is as necessary today as it has ever been. It remains a central security actor across the Transatlantic and Eurasian areas as the *only* venue where all security questions and major actors are bound together.

These questions highlight also the fragility of what we have achieved in the OSCE. In election observation missions, in supporting States in difficult political transitions, in embedding stability in South-east Europe – the participating States share a responsibility to work tirelessly to sustain the progress attained and to keep moving in the right direction. This requires constant debate and good will.

Mr President,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Across the three continents, the OSCE works for stability, prosperity and democracy in 56 States through political dialogue about shared values and through practical work that makes a lasting difference. This is the mission of the OSCE.

With this mission comes responsibility – the responsibility to protect the fragile instrument that is the OSCE and the responsibility also to continue to assist States in co-operating on an ambitious mandate.

I trust that the Finnish Chairmanship can count on the support of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. We look forward to your ideas, your vision and your determination.

Thank you.