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PERMANENT REPRESENTATION OF PORTUGAL
TO THE OSCE

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**Intervention by the Minister of State and Foreign Affairs of Portugal,
President of the Council of the European Union, Luís Amado, at the
Permanent Council of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in
Europe
Vienna, 12 July 2007**

Mr. Chairman,
Ambassadors

I would like to express my satisfaction at being here today and having an opportunity to present the program of the Portuguese Presidency of the European Union.

As you are aware, for the first time, a program was presented for an 18 month period. It has been a very positive experience and I truly believe that the Trio format constitutes an added value for the European Union. It was particularly interesting to see how countries like Germany, Portugal and Slovenia – of different sizes and different traditions inside the EU – could put together a common agenda. It was not a difficult exercise, but a rewarding one since we were able to work together in a most constructive spirit.

I believe that the OSCE is also about these same principles: being able to foster a common agenda, on the basis of the concerns of each member. In spite of different cultural and historical backgrounds, the OSCE members cooperate on an equal basis. Reaching common objectives has been possible in the framework of the OSCE because this Organization has always been about dialogue, sharing common values, confidence building and achieving consensus.

It is essential to preserve these values in the current times: we are faced with strategic challenges and we have to use all existing instruments to promote stability and to foster guiding principles such as the respect for Human rights, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law.

Europe has gone through extraordinary changes and the OSCE had an important role to play in them. The stabilization of the eastern borders of Europe was well achieved, but there are still important tasks ahead.

The simple fact that 56 participating States are now sitting around this table is a major contribution in itself to confidence building among us and to strengthen the overall security in the OSCE covered area. A comprehensive approach to security has always been the trade mark of this Organization, which provides a platform for cross dimensional dialogue. We may talk without reservations on all subjects, on the basis of common accepted values and political commitments.

Indeed, although I believe that the most serious challenges for our common security now lie in the Mediterranean Basin, I am also conscious that work still has to be done in order to ensure the stabilization of the Balkans and the other regions of the OSCE area.

In this regard, I would like to highlight how important the transatlantic link has been for the stability of Europe. I strongly believe that such a partnership has to remain central in our agenda. At the same time, Europe has to strengthen its strategic partnership with Russia. I see no better forum than the OSCE to try to bridge the remaining and diminishing gaps.

Mr. Chairman

In my capacity as President of the Council of the European Union I would like to underline the importance of designing a complementary agenda with the OSCE. It is essential that we put together our respective instruments and tools in order to face the challenges ahead, especially in some critical scenarios.

The Kosovo process constitutes one of the major causes of concern for the Portuguese Presidency and indeed for the whole of Europe. We will be working on the development of a European perspective for the Western Balkans region. Reforms needed to stabilize and bring the Western Balkan countries closer to the Union should be intensified. I am certain that the OSCE also has an important role to play in this context. The OSCE has already proved to be useful. The OSCE Missions in South East Europe contributed to the stabilization of the region.

The EU also supports the OSCE in its endeavours to bring a peaceful solution to the frozen conflicts in Moldova, Georgia and Nagorno-karabakh. The Minsk Group and its three Co-Chairs have been working hard for a settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and we are confident that, with the full engagement of the parties, a solution can be reached in a foreseeable future. The efforts of the OSCE in view of a settlement of the protracted conflicts in Moldova and Georgia based on the principles of territorial integrity and the complete fulfillment of the 1999 Istanbul Commitments have been high on our agenda. We believe that only a peaceful settlement of those conflicts will bring long lasting security and we encourage the parties to make full use of existing mechanisms to achieve it.

Central Asia and the Mediterranean have become determinant concepts in our daily discourse and they illustrate well how Europe has been responding to new realities, encompassing different ideas, different cultures and different peoples.

The European Union has been working in order to strengthen cooperation with those regions: the European Neighbourhood Policy remains a priority, both in what concerns the Mediterranean and the Eastern borders. To complete this cooperative and security belt, the Trio of Presidencies launched the Joint Strategy for Central Asia, which has just been approved by the European Council and to which the Portuguese Presidency will give continuity. The EU highly values the OSCE presence and experience in the region. This is clearly reflected in the Joint Strategy, in the framework of which the EU and the OSCE will be working closely together in a variety of fields.

Mr. Chairman,

Besides these regional issues, the EU and the OSCE have to adapt so as to face global challenges.

Among them, migrations have to be high on our agenda. The Portuguese Presidency will implement a "Global approach to Migration". In this regard there is a need to intensify the partnerships between the EU and countries of transit, of origin and migratory flows.

An approach to migration issues wholly centered on illegal migration would be simplistic. That is why we will also foster a debate on the promotion of legal migration channels, the integration of migrants, health and migrations, as well as the links between this issue and development policy, readmission and "circular migration". We will also be attaching great importance to questions such as national minorities, human rights, tolerance and non discrimination. And we count on the OSCE's experience in this regard, since from its outset the Organization has been helping in bridging gaps and in bringing diversity together since its creation.

Working together with all the OSCE's Partners for Co-operation, both from Asia and from the Mediterranean region, is of paramount importance to ensure the full success of our objectives, which are also embodied in the "Alliance of Civilizations" initiative, launched by Spain and Turkey. The former Portuguese President, Mr. Jorge Sampaio, has been appointed as High Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for the "Alliance of Civilizations". I am certain that he will highly value the work done by the OSCE in this context. In our view, it would be welcomed if the OSCE became a party to the "Group of Friends" of the Alliance, to which Portugal already belongs.

Mr. Chairman,

In order for the OSCE to continue to play this positive role it has to be future-oriented. And it is important that it continues to strengthen its own internal

structure in order to work more efficiently: establishing the legal personality of the OSCE is an important goal in this context.

Last year's work on "Strengthening the effectiveness of the OSCE" resulted in many positive improvements. The time has now come to make full use of them.

Throughout the years the OSCE has developed a network of commitments, decisions, norms and measures on conventional disarmament and arms control as well as on confidence and security building, within its Politico- Military Dimension. These achievements have been crucial in promoting security throughout Europe. The Portuguese Presidency will also pay particular attention to questions of disarmament and non-proliferation.

The OSCE has also been doing relevant work related to non-military aspects of security such as Border Management and Travel Documentation, Police Training, the fight against Terrorism and radical extremism. All these issues also constitute priorities of our Presidency.

We also attach great importance to the Economic and Environmental Dimension, and we consider the interaction with other Organizations to be of particular importance, thus making full use of existing synergies, or creating new ones, while avoiding duplications.

The promotion of Human Rights, democratization, as well as tolerance and non-discrimination is at the core of the Human Dimension of the OSCE. Over the years we, the participating States, have developed an impressive "acquis", which we are politically committed to implement.

OSCE Institutions have also played a relevant role in developing the human dimension of security. ODIHR's work, and especially its internationally recognized election observation activities, has greatly contributed to the processes of democratization in the OSCE area.

In this context, we attach great importance to the close co-operation between ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. The role of the Representative of Freedom of the Media is also of the utmost importance – free media and freedom of expression are one of the foundations of any truly democratic society.

When speaking about OSCE Institutions we cannot overlook the valuable contribution of the High Commissioner on National Minorities as an instrument of early warning and conflict prevention, on the modality of silent diplomacy. On this occasion I would like to extend my congratulations to Ambassador Knut Vollebaek for his recent designation as HCNM and to wish him success in his challenging tasks. At the same time, and at the end of his mandate, I also want to underline our appreciation of the extremely relevant work that Ambassador Rolf Ekéus has done in the last six years.

Mr. Chairman,

The road to Madrid will be a complex one but the coming Ministerial Council will be a good opportunity to take serious decisions on the most important political issues this Organization has to deal with.

I would like to assure you, Mr. Chairman, that the Portuguese Presidency of the European Union will indefatigably support the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE in his efforts to make a success of that Ministerial Council. A success in the OSCE is certainly a success for the EU, and that is truly how it should be.

Thank you