



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

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Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

**Special Permanent Council No. 708
10 April 2008**

EU statement in response to the address by the Chairman-in-Office, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, H.E. Alexander Stubb

The EU congratulates H.E. Alexander Stubb, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, on the assumption of the functions of Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE. We warmly welcome you to the Permanent Council for the first time in this new capacity and thank you for your address. We can assure you that you will always be able to rely on the EU's support for your activities as Chairman-in-Office.

The motto of "continuity, coherence and cooperation" that has been selected for the Finnish Chairmanship highlights some of the best aspects of our work here at the OSCE. In this context, we appreciate the Chairman's renewed offer to hold a five-party meeting of past, present and future Chairmanships in Finland.

The EU has welcomed the desire of the Chairmanship-in-Office to contribute to the OSCE's conflict prevention and crisis management efforts. Minister Kanerva's visits to Moldova, Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan were a positive sign and we are pleased that you intend to continue his endeavours in this regard. We also welcome the support that your Special Envoy, Ambassador Heikki Talvitie, has given to conflict prevention efforts in the region.

The EU is of the firm conviction that the OSCE should remain engaged in Kosovo. The OSCE Mission in Kosovo continues to play an essential role in supporting our common

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goal of promoting in Kosovo a peaceful, democratic and multi-ethnic society based on the rule of law and the highest level of internationally recognised human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Cooperation with Central Asian States remains a priority for the EU. The OSCE's engagement in Central Asia, including on border security and management, plays a central role in complementing the EU Strategy on Central Asia. It will also contribute to increasing stability and security in the region.

The EU welcomes the support provided by the Finnish Chairmanship to the important work being carried out by the OSCE in the field of democratisation, human rights and the rule of law in participating states. The EU reaffirms its wholehearted support for the priorities of the Chairmanship-in-Office in the Human Dimension.

The EU appreciates the Chairman's engagement to counter trafficking in human beings and welcomes the announcement that Finland, in cooperation with the office of the Special Representative for Trafficking in Human Beings, will host a conference on successful prosecution of cases of trafficking in September.

Excellency, the work of the Finnish Chairmanship-in-Office to date has been of the highest standard. From our vantage point here in Vienna, we would especially like to commend the sterling performance of Ambassador Antti Turunen and his staff. We are confident that your team will continue to demonstrate the professional approach that has characterised it so far this year and wish you all the best for the coming months.

The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential

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candidate countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, as well as Armenia align themselves with this statement.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process

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