

Statement by  
Mr. GORDAN JANDROKOVIĆ  
Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration  
of the Republic of Croatia

ENGLISH only

17<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Ministerial Council of the OSCE  
Athens 1-2 December 2009

Mr. Chairman (*Prime Minister*),  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me first to join those who have already thanked the Greek Chairmanship for the excellent working conditions and splendid hospitality extended to us here in Athens. On this occasion, I would like to express our gratitude to the very efficient team of Greek diplomats for their initiatives and efforts, which are recognised and appreciated by the diplomatic community within the OSCE.

Since its establishment in 1975, our Organization has come a long way, starting from a Conference composed of states divided in blocs, to developing a security system based on cooperation and stability in all three OSCE dimensions. Next year the OSCE will celebrate the 35th anniversary of the Helsinki Act that had marked the beginning of the historical process of detente and laid foundations for comprehensive co-operative and indivisible security concept from Vancouver to Vladivostok. I think it is necessary to recall all these facts in order to be aware to what extent we have managed to build up the OSCE.

We welcome the fact that the Greek Chairmanship succeeded in initiating the Corfu Process as an open and new dialogue on key issues of European security, which in our view will undoubtedly bring multiple benefits. We regard the decisions that we will adopt today as a strong political message that the OSCE is still able to efficiently respond to the diverse and complex security challenges of our time.

One of such challenges is Georgia, our «security gap», and we regret the missed opportunity and the abolishment of the OSCE Mission. It is our common interest for this issue to be resolved to the benefit of all, while respecting the territorial integrity and sovereignty of that country.

The stability of Europe is in direct relation to the situation in Southeast Europe. This is not just a diplomatic catch phrase but a notion of reality that has to be taken into account in all strategic

considerations about this area.

Much has been done since the end of the war, and it is necessary to emphasize that the Euro Atlantic future of the countries in the region made it possible to normalise relations and to develop an intensified cooperation. Croatia is on the verge of reaching its main strategic goals. Having become a NATO member, we are now in the final phase of our negotiations on joining the EU.

We are fully determined to meet the remaining membership criteria and finish the technical part of the negotiations by mid 2010. And we hope that on the last stretch of our way to EU membership we shall enjoy the support of all our partners in the EU. Our success in achieving this goal is not only a contribution to regional stability, but also a guide and encouragement to other countries to continue with the implementation of important reforms and adoption of the *acquis*.

In the process of Euro-Atlantic integration, regional cooperation is of crucial importance. With that in mind, we are also dedicated to solving open bilateral issues. I am glad to inform you that one of those open issues – the one between Croatia and Slovenia - has been successfully resolved. Another open issue that Croatia on its part recognizes as a matter of priority is the return and local integration of refugees. In our view, this important humanitarian issue should be treated with no political connotations and in accordance with International conventions.

The OSCE and Croatia have a well-developed cooperation in a number of areas, marked by the 13-year long presence of field mission. With its overall positive contribution and the continuous work of my Government, we have entered the final phase of OSCE field presence in Croatia. I would like to stress the Croatian Government's commitment to fulfil the remaining obligations covered by the mandate of the OSCE Office in Zagreb. Our responsible approach in this regard has been recognised and valued by the Office in its reports, including the latest Status Report.

That is why I am calling on all members of the Permanent Council to show a constructive approach in determining the framework for the final phase of the OSCE Office in Zagreb. I firmly believe that bringing the mandate of the OSCE mission in Croatia to its conclusion will be a success story for both Croatia and the OSCE.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Each year, the OSCE chair invests enormous efforts in implementing the commitments of our Organisation, always bearing in mind that the security we are building is not meant for states alone, but primarily for individuals whose human rights and freedoms are our highest priority.

This meeting in Athens faces a special challenge – to launch the Corfu Process as a joint commitment of the participating states and international actors, in order to achieve – in the spirit of partnership – the goals we have proclaimed in a number of documents. We need to approach the initiative for top-level meetings responsibly and open-mindedly, but with a clear goal – to further enhance Euro Atlantic and Eurasian security.

In conclusion, I would like to wish all the success to Kazakhstan that is soon to take over the OSCE presidency. Especially, to my colleague the Secretary of State and Minister Kanat Saudabayev and his team we wish every success in taking the OSCE forward.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.