

MC.DEL/63/07
30 November 2007

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

**STATEMENT BY THE
HEAD OF THE DELEGATION OF TURKMENISTAN AT THE
FIFTEENTH MEETING OF THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Madrid, 30 November 2007

Mr. Chairman,

First of all, allow me to express to you as the host our gratitude for the excellent organization of the Madrid meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council. Your country's chairmanship of our Organization in 2007, which has been marked by great transparency and openness in the consideration and adoption of decisions, is in our view an example for future chairmanships.

Much has happened in the OSCE area during the past year, and our country is no exception. At the end of last year, Turkmenistan suffered a great loss through the death of the first President of Turkmenistan, Saparmurat Niyazov, who made a priceless contribution to the formation and development of an independent and neutral Turkmenistan. Fond memories of him will forever remain in the hearts of the citizens of Turkmenistan.

We were faced with the task of electing a new president while preserving the stability and predictability expected of such an election both by the international community and by the population of Turkmenistan. Today we can say that the Turkmen people and Government passed this test with honour and, relying on traditional foundations and democracy, were able to organize and hold elections to appoint the new Head of State, elections which offered a genuine choice and took place in an environment of complete openness and transparency. The experts present in our country from the United Nations and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), along with representatives of the delegation of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and international journalists, were able to see this for themselves.

The run-up to the elections, the actual holding of the presidential elections, the formation of the government and implementation of reforms have clearly demonstrated the stability of our country's political, economic, social and legal system. The presidential elections constituted an important step towards strengthening the democratic foundations of modern-day Turkmen society and consolidating in it the traditions of genuine democracy. More than 2.5 million of Turkmenistan's citizens (98.65 per cent of the total electorate) took part in the elections, at which they had the opportunity to choose among six candidates. Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov was elected President of Turkmenistan after winning 89.23 per cent of the votes.

After taking the oath of office, the new Head of State, whose presidential thrust is reliance on the support of the people of Turkmenistan, signalled continuity of policy and declared that support for a high level of social protection for the population would be maintained; he also launched important reforms in the area of agriculture, education and public health. Conditions are being actively developed to promote private and small businesses and create jobs, and Turkmenistan's international contacts are being given fresh impetus.

At a practical level, the number of educational establishments has increased significantly, the duration of schooling at the secondary level has been set at ten years, and the number of students studying at institutions of higher education has grown as has the duration of instruction there. Teachers' salaries have gone up. Multimedia technologies are being actively introduced into the work of educational establishments. The educational infrastructure is being strengthened, and new secondary schools and kindergartens continue to be built. Hundreds of Turkmen students went abroad this year to study at the world's leading institutions of higher education. Turkmen science has received a powerful stimulus for its development.

There is active capacity building among the domestic media and the work of the electronic media is being improved. The publishing sphere is developing considerably; the volume of printed material — periodicals as well as fiction and textbooks — is being expanded.

With a view to further developing the democratic foundations of State affairs and public life in Turkmenistan and ensuring the protection of human rights and freedoms, a State committee to examine appeals by citizens regarding the activities of law enforcement agencies has been established under the President of Turkmenistan. An interdepartmental commission has been set up to ensure that Turkmenistan's international human rights commitments are met.

Major work to reform the agricultural sector has begun. A State programme is currently being elaborated to ensure a high level of social welfare for people living in villages, towns and district centres. In line with these goals, a legislative framework in keeping with the norms of international law is being set up consistently and systematically. Work is under way to bring national legislation into line with international law so as to make it more acceptable and transparent in the interests of developing the key branches of the national economy, an area in which major international projects have been launched.

Draft laws on State guarantees of equal rights for women and on combating trafficking in human beings, along with a draft labour code, are currently being prepared for consideration in the Majlis. Work will soon begin on draft laws on lawyers and advocacy, on the Office of the Public Prosecutor and on the structure of the courts and legal status of judges.

Our reforms are intended to systematically strengthen our democracy and stability within the State and society, to develop democratic institutions and to implement large-scale economic and social reforms using national experience and traditions to preserve civil society, peace, and law and order. The main parameters here are openness to the outside world, a focus on scientific and technical progress and the achievement of social prosperity. Processes aimed at further democratization of public and political life, the establishment of

institutions of civil society, the introduction of modern electoral mechanisms and the development of local bodies of self-government are gathering pace in our country.

As our President noted: "... we are not forcing this process; we are not imposing any artificial time frame on it. The main thing is that it should be irreversible, that it should be understood and supported both inside the country and abroad. And in this respect, we value highly the assistance international organizations are providing us in this work...".

Turkmenistan is not standing on the sidelines when it comes to resolving major global issues, here it stands shoulder to shoulder with the international community. Turkmenistan is honouring all of its international commitments as it steadfastly pursues a policy of permanent neutrality.

We are proud of the fact that the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia will open in Ashgabad next month.

The opening of this Centre will mark a qualitatively new contribution in the work of the countries of our region to ensure peace, security and stability in the region, and will also have a positive influence on the solution of problems facing our region.

Our region has thousands of historical, ethnic and humanitarian ties with neighbouring countries. In this context, Turkmenistan is disturbed by the events taking place in Afghanistan. We are pleased with the successes achieved by our neighbours in building a peaceful life and empathize with them in their difficulties. Turkmenistan is assisting in the restoration of the Afghan economy, training of leaders and construction of social facilities as well as providing a number of Afghan provinces with petrol and electricity. Together with the entire international community, we are united in our desire to assist in the securing of stability in Afghanistan and to help our Afghan brothers obtain peace and prosperity.

We should like to express our gratitude to the OSCE Chairmanship, the senior officials of the OSCE Secretariat and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) for their co-operation with Turkmenistan in holding the presidential elections. We believe that the only way of developing fruitful relations with all of the OSCE institutions is to foster co-operation and mutual understanding, due account being taken of the needs of the participating State. Aware as we are that this kind of co-operation is not a one-time event but a long-term process, Turkmenistan is continuing constructive co-operation with the OSCE. Furthermore, our delegation has also entered into dialogue with the Director of the ODIHR with a view to identifying ways, methods and parameters of co-operation with this OSCE institution in the very near future. The ODIHR has already proposed to us its view of expanded co-operation with Turkmenistan, in which we see quite a number of areas where we can apply the Office's experience and expert assistance.

In developing mutually beneficial co-operation with the OSCE the main thing is to evaluate objectively the state of affairs and to make the best possible use of the historical experience and national features of the development of democratic foundations in each individual State. As the President of Turkmenistan noted: "We need reliable partners, good friends and like-minded associates, and in our relations with them the practice of double standards must be completely excluded". We note with satisfaction that this approach prevails among our partners in the OSCE.

Turkmenistan is developing genuinely democratic and legal foundations for national statehood. The main asset of our society is the human individual, his or her rights and freedoms. Today, this is a priority in our State policy.

Turkmenistan today is open to the world and open to broad-based partnership in all areas. Our country is prepared to continue its work to establish the principles of international law as well as the ideals of humanity, justice, tolerance and mutual respect as factors governing present-day relations among States.

In conclusion, allow me once again to express our firm support for the candidacy of Kazakhstan for the Chairmanship of our Organization and also to wish the incoming Finnish Chairmanship every success next year.