



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA TO THE UN,
OSCE AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN VIENNA

Statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia H.E.

Mr. Māris Riekstiņš

at the OSCE Ministerial Council

29th November 2007, Madrid

Mr Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first express our appreciation to the Spanish Government for the warm hospitality here in Madrid. I would also like to thank Mr. Moratinos for the excellent leadership during this year of your Chairmanship.

While fully supporting the statement made on behalf of the European Union, I would like to briefly highlight some aspects of the OSCE activities to which we attach great value.

An important part of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security is the **human dimension**. The promotion of democracy, human rights, rule of law, good governance and freedom of expression is as important as ever. All human dimension commitments have to be fully implemented, including those concerning all forms of intolerance. We should remain vigilant to symptoms of **anti-Semitism, xenophobia and racism**. Latvia commends the organizers of this year's conferences in Bucharest and Cordoba promoting fight against anti-Semitism, racism and other forms of intolerance.

Latvia believes that the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights continues to play an indispensable role with its particular expertise and experience, especially in the field of **election observation**. In this context we regret that, due to a number of restrictions and bureaucratic obstacles, the ODIHR was unable to act upon the invitation by the Russian Federation to observe the upcoming elections to the Russian State Duma. We hope, however, for full involvement of ODIHR in the observation of the presidential elections in Russia. I would like to reaffirm our full support to the election observation activities of the OSCE.

Mr Chairman,

The OSCE remains an important, even primary instrument for early warning, conflict prevention and resolution, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. However, this will only sound true, if we manage to take more effective steps to find a solution for the **unresolved conflicts** in the OSCE area. These conflicts hamper societies from realizing their potential. They generate instability. They hinder development and co-operation in the region.

Peaceful, patient, persistent approach in search for solutions on the basis of full support to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia and Moldova is the only way ahead, and our governments should contribute to this process and share the responsibility.

We believe, there is a need for further practical measures to alleviate tensions and build confidence. First of all, we should aim at further demilitarization steps by South Ossetia authorities, increased number of OSCE monitors and improved placement of them, as well as economic rehabilitation projects.

We value the work of the OSCE and its mission in Georgia in defusing tensions and playing active role in building mutual confidence. However, the outcome of the OSCE involvement in investigation of the missile incident near

Tsitelubani in August or the incident in *Ganmukhuri* in the end of October has been less than impressive.

We call for resumption in full scale of 5+2 talks that were interrupted last year. The informal meeting of the 5+2 that took place in Odessa on the 23rd October was a breakthrough after a long stalemate and was a step in the right direction. We urge the parties to use this positive development and continue negotiations on a peaceful settlement of the Transnistrian question. Transformation of the peacekeeping operation would be essential to reach this goal. Seven sectoral working groups and joint projects on infrastructure help to create a promising momentum for this process. The EU Border assistance mission on the Moldova-Ukrainian border, where Latvia actively participates, also has been a significant contribution in restoring legal commercial activities in Transnistria.

Mr Chairman,

If we aim to further ease the tensions in the OSCE area, full compliance and implementation of the political-military commitments by all the participating States is required. The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe is an important mechanism of the European security. The decision of the Russian Federation to suspend its participation in the **CFE Treaty** undermines confidence and predictability in Europe, and therefore is a cause for serious concern.

Mr. Chairman,

The **Kosovo** status process is approaching a decisive stage. We reaffirm our full support to the negotiations led by the Troika. The OSCE engagement in Kosovo has proved useful, not least, in organizing elections this month. The support for peaceful, democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo, provided by the OSCE Mission, will continue to be necessary, regardless of the outcome of the status

talks. We should be able to agree without delay on the extension of the Mission's mandate for the next year.

The situation in **Afghanistan** is having an impact on the security in the OSCE area. We are convinced that it is of the utmost importance for the OSCE region, in particular for Central Asia, to ensure long-term security and stability, as well as social and economic rehabilitation in Afghanistan. In this regard, we welcome the OSCE engagement with Afghanistan on border management and security.

Mr Chairman,

Today our organization faces new challenges that are fundamentally transnational in its nature. The OSCE has to evolve in order to be able to deal with new threats to our security. **Energy** is an aspect of **security** that is very much on all our minds, and the OSCE should be able to play a role here. The increasing energy interdependence between producing, consuming and transit countries within the OSCE area needs to be addressed by strengthened dialogue and international cooperation to promote global energy security.

Mr Chairman,

Next year we'll meet in Helsinki, where our organization started three decades ago with the adoption of the Helsinki Final Act. I wish the future Finnish Chairman in Office every success in tackling the tasks ahead.

Thank you!