

MC.DEL/36/07  
29 November 2007

ENGLISH only



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

STATEMENT BY  
H. E. MR. MATJAŽ ŠINKOVEC

STATE SECRETARY  
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRES

OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL  
MADRID, 29 - 30 November 2007

Mr. Chairman,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first congratulate Spain on behalf of the Slovenian Government for organizing this year's OSCE Ministerial Council in Madrid. Let me extend our gratitude to the Chairman-in-Office, Minister Moratinos, for the excellent work done under the Chairmanship over the last year.

In just about a month Slovenia will take over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. None of you will need reminding that the EU includes almost half of the OSCE participating states.

Slovenia's priorities during its presidency will have a high degree of relevance for the work of the OSCE. In cooperation with the German and Portuguese presidencies, we set ourselves the broad goals of strengthening, enhancing and promoting the EU and its interaction with the rest of the world. Slovenia's priorities include the question of the future of the EU, EU enlargement and neighborhood policy, energy and climate changes, as well as intercultural dialogue.

EU enlargement and the EU's engagement with its neighbors are undeniably relevant for the OSCE. Slovenia is actively involved in efforts to help bring the countries of the Western Balkans closer to membership in the European Union. In recent years the improvement in the situation in the region has been due to the considerable helping hand of the international community. The countries of the Western Balkans have in various degrees pursued the path of democratic and economic reform and mutual cooperation. It is true, there are setbacks now and then, but in general, the region is moving in the right direction.

The imminent enlargement of the Schengen area comes at a time when traditional definitions of security in the first dimension have been surpassed by the need to respond to the risks posed by organized crime, terrorism, and trafficking. The OSCE's efforts to destroy ammunition stockpiles and control the flow of small arms and light weapons are important to ensure the security of the whole region.

Questions related to environmental and climate changes as well as energy supply are high on the agenda of the Slovenian EU presidency and the OSCE's agenda in the second dimension. Slovenia reaffirms its commitments made under the 2003 Maastricht OSCE Strategy and supports the OSCE activities to promote the level of awareness in participating states that environmental changes have an important impact on security and stability.

As for intercultural dialogue, there can be no doubt that the EU and the OSCE share a common vision of the importance of this aspect of the third dimension.

There is no country in the OSCE region that does not benefit from OSCE membership. The OSCE's institutions and structures, such as the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Representative on the Freedom of the Media, and the Special Representative in Combating Trafficking in Human Beings have all been tasked by us to help us to fulfill the commitments that we all have made.

We must be prepared to let the OSCE help us to help ourselves. No OSCE participating state should dispute the value of democratic elections. Democracy is an imperfect system – but we know no better. Even democratic electoral systems differ from each other – there is no perfect recipe. However, all elections should be free and fair.

The ODIHR is an invaluable partner in this task, therefore its autonomy should be preserved. Election observation is amongst the OSCE's most valuable and most respected activities, but effective election observation requires a three-way partnership between the ODIHR, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and the participating states. The latter have full responsibility to effectively implement their commitments related to election observations. We regret very much that the ODIHR election observation mission could not take part in the Parliamentary elections in the Russian Federation.

The OSCE's field presences also require an effective partnership. Every OSCE field presence has a positive role to play, and the OSCE Mission in Kosovo is no exception. We are of the firm conviction that this mission's mandate should be extended for another year, to allow it to perform its tasks in support of a peaceful, democratic and multiethnic Kosovo. Let us not fail there. Let us not fail the people of Kosovo.

Slovenia supports OSCE engagement with Afghanistan on the borders and will consider concrete steps to implement this task. We are convinced that it is of the utmost importance for the OSCE region to ensure long-term security and stability in Afghanistan, and we welcome the OSCE's increasing focus on the whole Central Asian region. We also look forward to a higher level of cooperation of all the major international players on the ground. Our success in Afghanistan also depends on the success of the UN, NATO, the EU as well as the United States-led coalition (OEF) and vice-versa. We are all in it together.

Furthermore, this year has seen the re-emergence of one challenge that is of concern to us all. We are aware of the mutual benefits that the CFE Treaty has provided all of us since its entry into force, and we hope that these mutual benefits can be preserved in the future. My former colleague from NATO Nick Burns spoke very much to the point. The CFE Treaty represents a cornerstone of European security. Although Slovenia is not a State Party to the CFE Treaty, it attaches great importance to its preservation and continued operation. I would like to state once again Slovenia's readiness to request accession to the adapted CFE when circumstances allow.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Slovenia welcomes the fact that the OSCE's Participating States have been able to agree on the text of the convention on the international legal personality, legal capacity, and privileges and immunities of the OSCE. Five years ago, it was almost unimaginable that the OSCE would be able to achieve consensus on this issue; today, this fact only serves to reinforce our belief in the vitality and relevance of this organization. We hope that the draft convention will be adopted as soon as possible.

Finally, I would like to express my best wishes to our Finnish friends for the coming year. I have every reason to believe that the cooperation between the Presidency of the EU and the Chairmanship of the OSCE will be exemplary.

Thank you.