



JAPAN

Statement by Mr. Shintaro ITO,
State Secretary for Foreign Affairs
at the 16th OSCE Ministerial Council

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of All, I would like to highly commend the leading role played by the Foreign Minister of Finland, Mr. Stubb, throughout his tenure as the chair of the OSCE Ministerial Council and also thank the Government of Finland for the wonderful hospitality.

Since Japan is actually adjacent to the OSCE area to the far east of the Eurasian continent, the European security environment has had a considerable influence on Japan. With an increasing number of items on the global security agenda, Japan, which shares common values with most of the OSCE member states, could work together with the OSCE in a broad range of areas.

For example, Japan has long assisted the democratization process of Central and Eastern Europe and contributed to the stabilization of the Balkans. We shall continue in both of these endeavours. As for the situation in Georgia, one of the most serious concerns at present for European security, it is extremely important that all the parties concerned play a constructive role towards a peaceful resolution of this issue through the process in Geneva. In addition, Japan has announced an assistance package of up to 200 million dollars for Georgia. Japan hopes that Georgia will swiftly recover from the damage caused by the conflict and will return to a path of stability and development.

If we turn our eyes to Asia, first, there remain serious concerns about human rights. Notably we should never forget the abduction issue in relation to North Korea, of which there are testimonial that European nationals have been victim. Japan, in cooperation with the international community, will continue to call upon North Korea to take concrete action towards the resolution of the abduction issue through improving the human rights situation in that country. Concurrently, North Korea's nuclear and missile development poses direct threats to the security of the entire international community. At the time of North Korea's launch of ballistic

missiles in July 2006, I, as Vice Foreign Minister, attended the UN Security Council meeting which adopted UNSCR 1695. I am convinced that, aiming to address such wide-ranging security challenges, strengthened dialogue and cooperation between the OSCE and Japan could contribute to the peace and stability of the whole world. Japan, as the longest established partner for the OSCE, can play an important role as a gateway to Asia for the OSCE.

Mr. Chairman,

Japan-OSCE relations have developed to the stage of concrete cooperation in Central Asia, the Caucasus and Afghanistan. Regarding Central Asia and the Caucasus, Japan has taken part in the OSCE election monitoring missions in Armenia and Georgia this year. We shall continue to cooperate with such monitoring missions in future.

As concerns Afghanistan, the coming year will present unique challenges because of the presidential election in that country. In this context, Japan welcomes the OSCE's strengthened commitment to Afghanistan. Japan will actively contribute toward peace and stability in a democratic Afghanistan, fully utilizing Japan's experience in the field of development assistance. Japan also would like to consider cooperation with the OSCE in various fields including the management of Afghanistan's borders. Furthermore, Japan will continue its support to international efforts in the fight against terrorism. The Japanese government is determined to do its utmost to maintain Japan's activities in the Indian Ocean by passing the necessary legislation to extend these activities. This will enable our refueling for vessels, including those flying the flags of OSCE member states, engaged in counter-terrorism maritime activities to continue.

Mr. Chairman,

Next year Japan will host the annual OSCE-Asian Partners Conference in Tokyo on the 10th and the 11th of June. More than 60 years after the end of the Second World War, Japan has not only achieved economic prosperity, but has also contributed to the development and stability of Asia in no small measure. I would like to emphasize that our country will lead the discussion on our common security challenges, and send a clear message to the international community for the promotion of global peace and stability.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm Japan's willingness to cooperate closely with the OSCE, its member states, as well as with all of our Asian Partners.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.