

MC.DEL/17/09
1 December 2009

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

**STATEMENT BY MR. BERNARD KOUCHNER,
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF FRANCE, AT THE
SEVENTEENTH MEETING OF THE OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Athens, 1 December 2009

Mr. Chairman,
Secretary General,
President of the Parliamentary Assembly,
Ministers, friends,

I should like first of all to congratulate Greece on its achievements this year as holder of the Chairmanship of the OSCE and to thank it for its warm welcome here in Athens for this 17th meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council.

The fall of the Berlin Wall 20 years ago allowed us to dream of a Europe finally reconciled with itself. The changes that have taken place on the continent have, in fact, been considerable: the European Union has been enlarged, peace has progressed in the Balkans, and some of yesterday's enemies are finally talking with one another.

In the last ten years, however, the hope of a continent at peace with itself has been shaken by the reality of new schisms. We were unable to avert the crisis in Georgia in summer 2008 because our collective security instruments have lost their fundamental value and effectiveness. Our arms control instruments are no longer being applied; human rights are still being flouted in many places; and the conflict is nothing like resolved in Georgia, where we were obliged to take the decision to close the OSCE mission in June 2009 – a sad symbol.

Our Organization therefore needs to rally itself. In this regard, I should like to pay tribute to the Greek Chairmanship for the initiative taken by it in Corfu. I sincerely believe that dialogue within the OSCE, together where necessary with the other organizations involved in European security, will make it possible to restore confidence. At the same time, it is vital for us to choose our priorities and to aim for specific results.

For that reason, I should like rapidly to propose four focuses.

I have just received a document from our Russian friends, which we shall be examining in greater detail. Browsing rapidly through it, however, I note that it refers to only one of the four suggestions that I shall be making. Some countries attach a good deal of significance to the Corfu Process. France was the first country to react when President Medvedev suggested an initiative relating to security dialogue in Europe. It is in this spirit that I should like briefly to present four proposals based on Corfu.

- Conflict prevention and settlement, because – as I have said – our prevention mechanisms are not working, at least in the case of Georgia in 2008. It is therefore vital to modernize them and step up our efforts to settle old “frozen” conflicts.
- Conventional arms control, because we need to preserve what we have achieved together over the years so that our armies cease to prepare themselves for confrontation. Visits to military bases, overflights and the exchange of information are more indispensable than ever. For this reason, we need to find a way of unblocking the situation at the political level, in other words at our level.
- Human rights: I have often uttered these words in my life. But they are not just words; they are human realities. We need to take account of each individual man and woman on an equal basis. We must reaffirm the legacy of the Helsinki Final Act, talk about human rights and give them back the place and the visibility that they deserve in our discussion. I realize that not everyone has the same conception of human rights and it is for that very reason that we need to discuss them. Every year we need to review the progress made and the difficulties that remain.
- Finally, “new threats” that jeopardize the stability of our continent. The OSCE should step up its contribution to the fight against organized crime and trafficking in human beings and arms.

Mr. Chairman,

I firmly believe that we need to take the process we have embarked upon to the highest political level. In view of the fact that the problems of security remain and that our Organization is struggling to find solutions, I believe that it is vital, as Kazakhstan has proposed, for the heads of State or government to meet so as to reaffirm our commitments ten years after the Istanbul summit, 20 years after the adoption of the Charter of Paris, and 35 years after the signing of the Helsinki Final Act.

A meeting of this nature will encourage us to search together for a solution to the difficulties encountered with regard to conventional arms control in Europe and the settlement of conflicts such as those in Nagorno-Karabakh or Transdniestria, for which bases for agreement already exist.

There has been significant progress in the negotiations on Nagorno-Karabakh thanks to the efforts by the Minsk Group and the constructive attitude of presidents Aliyev and Sargsyan, who have met six times during the course of 2009. I trust that this progress will be reflected in the work of the OSCE Ministerial Council in Athens. The time has come for decisions, and I urge the two parties to take the opportunity offered them and to confirm without further ado the principles for settlement that have been proposed to them so as to be able to move finally to the drafting of a settlement on an agreed basis.

Finally, you are aware of France’s profound commitment to a political settlement of the conflict in Transdniestria. I therefore urge the parties concerned to resume negotiations unconditionally and without further delay.

The year 2010 offers us an opportunity that we must seize. France is determined to make a contribution and will support Kazakhstan and Mr. Saudabayev and his idea for a summit meeting. I wish Kazakhstan every success in its Chairmanship of the OSCE.