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EU closing statement at the 17th OSCE Ministerial

Swedish Presidency of the European Union

17th OSCE Ministerial Council, Athens 2009
Athens 2 December 2009

Council, Athens, December 2, 2009

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies,

The European Union expresses its high appreciation to the Greek Chairmanship for the organization, hospitality and tireless efforts to seek consensus during this Ministerial Council.

Since the last Ministerial Council meeting in Helsinki, the EU has engaged constructively and substantively with partners in the dialogue on the future of European security. We warmly welcome the adoption of the “Ministerial Declaration on the OSCE Corfu Process: Reconfirm-Review-Reinvigorate Security and Co-operation from Vancouver to Vladivostok” and the “Decision on Furthering the Corfu Process”. These important texts signal that the OSCE is ready to take on the challenges to address the real security threats in our common space. The EU believes that this dialogue on European Security has great potential to restore trust and confidence between participating States. We also hope that it will lead to a stronger and revitalized OSCE – an “OSCE Plus” that would benefit us all. The EU is open to the convening of a high-level meeting in the OSCE,

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provided that it is motivated by substance. We will continue to contribute actively to the dialogue within the Corfu process and look forward to its continuation in 2010.

The EU has taken note of and is ready to study the Russian proposal for a European Security Treaty and other proposals related to European security within the framework of the Corfu Process. Our initial impression is that it encompasses only certain existing OSCE commitments, whereas other are not included. The EU considers that our focus should be on practical action and strengthening existing institutions and commitments.

The EU welcomes the fact that after intense consultations the Ministerial Council has managed to adopt a number of important declarations and decisions in all dimensions of the OSCE.

The EU is pleased that the Council could take a decision on the OSCE Chairmanship for 2012 and passes on its best wishes and support to Ireland in its upcoming preparations.

We also welcome Australia as a new Partner for Co-operation.

The EU particularly values the decisions on energy security, issues relevant to the Forum for Security Cooperation, small arms and light weapons and stockpiles of conventional ammunition, women's participation in political and public life, hate crimes, Roma and Sinti and the Declarations on Non-Proliferation and on the Occasion of the 25th anniversary of the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

The EU, however, deeply regrets that consensus could not be reached on all six decisions proposed by the Chairmanship in the Human Dimension. The EU has promoted relevant decisions on media freedom, rule of law and trafficking in human beings. The protection and promotion of the freedom of expression is an area where the OSCE and participating States need to enhance their efforts. We need to take urgent measures to respond to the negative developments on media freedom in the OSCE region as well as to attacks against journalists and other human rights defenders. With regard to the decision on hate crimes, the EU continues to insist that “sexual orientation and gender identity” is an integral part of the definition of hate crimes and should explicitly be recognized as such.

The EU fully supports the ongoing reform process in the Economic and Environmental Dimension. The Ministerial decision on its future orientation paves the way for further measures to improve the effectiveness, enhance the continuity and strengthen the focus on security aspects in this dimension. The EU will continue to insist that the OSCE should play a role in addressing the security implications of climate change.

We welcome future efforts by the OSCE to address transnational threats, to further enhance police related activities, to reinforce the implementation of the international legal framework to counter terrorism and to increase the standards of travel documents security.

While this has been a very productive Ministerial Council, we would have liked to see progress on the issue of the OSCE legal framework. We would like to thank the Chairmanship for all its efforts on a political declaration and note that we came close to adopting it.

Mr. Chairman,

The EU is pleased that agreement was reached on a Declaration on Nagorno-Karabakh. We are encouraged by the recent high level discussions between Azerbaijan and Armenia on the remaining outstanding issues and differences. The EU calls upon the leadership of Armenia and Azerbaijan to continue to engage fully in the negotiations towards a solution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, based on an appropriate combination of support for the territorial integrity of Armenia and Azerbaijan, as expressed by the EU in its Partnership and Cooperation Agreements and in its Action Plans for these two countries, with other OSCE principles, notably the non-use of force or threat of its use and the equal right of peoples to self-determination.

We regret that consensus was not found on statements regarding the conflicts in Georgia and the Republic of Moldova. The EU reiterates its firm support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of both Georgia and the Republic of Moldova within their internationally recognised borders.

We remain fully convinced of the need for a meaningful OSCE presence in Georgia and will continue to work actively towards that end. We call upon the incoming Kazakh Chairmanship to continue

the work carried out by the Greek Chairmanship to seek consensus on the basis of the present Chairmanship's Draft Decision.

The EU also remains firmly determined to seek a settlement of the Transnistrian conflict and calls for the resumption, as soon as possible and without preconditions, of negotiations in the 5+2 format.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate our deep gratitude to the Greek Chairmanship for their diligent efforts in leading this Organization over the last year and congratulate them on the successful outcome of this meeting. We applaud the strong performance of the Chairmanship team, including the Greek delegation in Vienna under the leadership of ambassador Mara Marinaki.

The EU looks forward to a continued close cooperation with Kazakhstan with the aim of achieving a successful Kazakh Chairmanship during 2010. The EU stands ready to lend its full support and wishes Kazakhstan all the best for the coming year.

The candidate countries TURKEY, CROATIA* and the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, MONTENEGRO and SERBIA, the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area ICELAND

and NORWAY, as well as UKRAINE align themselves with this statement.

*Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.