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**STATEMENT BY MR. VLADIMIR VORONKOV,  
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE  
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE MEETING OF  
THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

24 January 2008

**In response to the statement by Mr. Dimitrij Rupel,  
President of the Council of the European Union**

Mr. Chairman,

We are pleased to be able to again extend a warm welcome to Mr. Dimitrij Rupel, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovenia and President of the Council of the European Union (EU). We listened with close attention to his statement regarding the priorities of the Slovenian presidency and the development of relations between the EU and the OSCE.

Slovenia's EU presidency is in many ways a unique event. Slovenia is the first of the "new members" of the European Union to assume its presidency. It is the first Slavic country to preside over the Union. The Slavic ethnic group is one of the most numerous in Europe, and we are counting on the "Slavic factor" to play a positive role in promoting mutual understanding on the continent. Slovenia knows a good deal about mutual understanding: two years ago, in 2005, it held the chairmanship of the OSCE, and we all well remember how brilliantly it acquitted itself in that function.

Mr. Chairman,

We regard the European Union as one of the OSCE's most important partners. The foundation of their complementary co-operation rests on the standards and principles enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act, which make it possible to create an indivisible security and stability space, and also in the Charter for European Security, including the Platform for Co-operative Security adopted in 1999 at the initiative of the countries of the European Union.

We look forward to constructive work with the countries of the European Union in seeking solutions to the problems that have accumulated in the OSCE and in tapping the potential of our Organization and strengthening the effectiveness of its work. We must turn the OSCE into a fully fledged international organization under the guidance of collective intergovernmental bodies with clear "rules of the game" and an agenda reflecting the security and co-operation interests of all the participating States.

Russia is prepared to work on the specific issues touched upon by Minister Rupel. These involve: endowing the OSCE with its own international legal personality, including the adoption of a charter; strengthening its institutional structure; ensuring progress in the sphere of disarmament and the introduction of new confidence- and security-building measures in Europe; combating terrorism and the threat posed by narcotic drugs; conflict prevention and resolution; the advancement of the “Alliance of Civilizations” initiative; the promotion of tolerance; the protection of the rights of national minorities; combating trafficking in human beings; and intensifying co-operation in the economic and environmental dimension.

As regards the activities of the OSCE with respect to Afghanistan, these activities — and this is our deep conviction shared by other countries — must be strictly transparent and conducted outside the territory of that State, focusing on questions having to do with the strengthening of its borders and on personnel training in areas concerned with combating the narcotics traffic and organized crime. These activities must not duplicate but rather complement the efforts already being undertaken by the international community.

It goes without saying that nothing that I have said means that there are no differences between Russia and the European Union in their approaches to the problems on the OSCE agenda. Specifically, I should like to single out the need to arrive at a common understanding as to how the work of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is to be improved in the area of election monitoring.

Our fundamental position regarding the settlement of the question as to the status of Kosovo, which we have more than once articulated at meetings of the Permanent Council, remains unchanged. The sole legitimate option for a settlement here is a negotiated solution based on international law, above all the principles of the Helsinki Final Act, and approved by the United Nations Security Council. We are convinced of the need to continue negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina regarding the status of the territory. In that context, Russia has placed before the Security Council a number of ideas in the form of a “road map” for the settlement of the Kosovo problem.

We take the position that any change in the structure of the existing civilian presence in Kosovo or the establishment, in parallel to it or in place of it, of any other international mission, including a possible EU mission, must in any case be approved by the United Nations Security Council.

As regards the present OSCE Mission in Kosovo, we are in favour of extending its activities as long as there exists a basis in international law for so doing.

It is our view that in settling conflicts in the OSCE area — whether to the east or to the west of Vienna — uniform approaches and principles must be applied. These include the achievement of an understanding by the parties to the conflict themselves, the taking into account without conditions of the positions of each of them, the inadmissibility of options involving the use of force, a careful attitude towards existing negotiating and peacemaking formats, and, finally, concern to ensure that the men and women who find themselves in conflict zones do not feel isolated. We can improve the prospects for the resolution of conflicts only if we follow these principles.

We favour a constructive resolution of the situation surrounding the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty). Russia's suspension of the application of that Treaty is a measure that has been forced on it and the result of an abnormal situation in the area of arms control that is unacceptable in terms of our national interests and European security in general. The Russian moratorium is not an end in itself but rather a means of restoring an arms control regime. Russia's proposals submitted at the Extraordinary Conference on the CFE Treaty remain on the negotiating table.

Mr. Chairman,

We are in favour of further developing the strategic partnership between Russia and the European Union. Our position flows from the need for a new basic agreement on co-operation and is based on adherence to the "road maps" for the four general spaces, namely in the spheres of the economy; freedom, security and justice; external security; and scientific research, education and culture. In these "road maps" the OSCE is repeatedly mentioned as one of the platforms for co-operation between Russia and the European Union. We are prepared to actively pursue collaboration with the European Union — both directly and within the OSCE — with the aim of achieving the common objectives of European security and co-operation.

In conclusion, I should like to wish Slovenia and Minister Rupel personally every success in the difficult task of presiding over the European Union.

Thank you for your attention.