

Address to the OSCE Permanent Council

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

This is clearly a special moment for my country. For the first time ever, the Netherlands will serve the OSCE in the capacity of Chairman-in-Office. And I deliberately say *serve*, because the Netherlands is firmly convinced that the Chairman-in Office is the linchpin of the organisation, and must truly have the interests of the OSCE at heart. The Chairmanship has a responsibility to ensure the coordination and continuity of OSCE policies, as well as to keep abreast of international political developments and general policies within the Organisation. Not to mention all the practical work that ends up on the plate of the Chairman-in-Office.

The consensus nature of the OSCE fits well with the Dutch view of the role of the Chairman-in-Office of the Organisation. Having grown up in a tradition where one is forced to collaborate in a battle against the elements – mainly water in the case of the Netherlands – every Dutchman is born and bred in a culture of consensus and compromise. No man, however rich and powerful, can build a dyke by himself, but together we can accomplish the unimaginable. Only through close cooperation can we achieve our aims. Active participation and dedicated commitment are needed from everyone. No Chairmanship can succeed without the full support of all the participating States. That will be the spirit of the Dutch Chairmanship in 2003.

Before turning to the heart of the matter, I would like to say a special word of thanks to Portugal. As I said at the Ministerial Council last December, Porto produced progress. The ambitious outcome of the 10th Ministerial Council is proof of this. Some key decisions have been taken that will guide the OSCE and the participating States for years to come. The downside is of course the workload facing the Dutch Chairmanship for the year ahead. A

burden – it goes without saying - that the Netherlands is only too happy to shoulder. Thanks again to Portugal: *Obrigadísimo!*

Many important topics figure on the OSCE agenda for 2003. Without claiming to be comprehensive, I would like to highlight some of these issues to remind us of the tasks ahead.

First of all: terrorism, an issue that has topped the agenda of many international organisations since 11 September 2001. And unfortunately, as the incidents in Bali, Moscow and Mombasa have shown, rightly so. Two crucial decisions taken in Porto, the adoption of the Charter on Terrorism and the Implementation Decision on Terrorism, have prepared the ground. Now it is time for the OSCE to change gear and shift from policymaking to action. The OSCE's concept of common and comprehensive security is a solid point of departure. All three dimensions and traditional OSCE activities are relevant here. More specifically: policing, border security, anti-trafficking and suppressing terrorist financing. Given the complex and global nature of terrorism, one-dimensional approaches will not be enough. Only an approach that links the three dimensions and uses all the bodies and institutions of the OSCE can produce the desired results.

In all these efforts the OSCE will work closely with other international organisations, in accordance with the Platform for Co-operative Security adopted at the Istanbul Summit in 1999. Strict adherence to the principles of good governance and democracy will help to protect our societies from the threat of terrorism. The rule of law and the full participation of all citizens in political life are essential in the fight against terror. The only societies that have the strength to challenge the extremists in their midst are those where the right to question is beyond dispute. The fight against terrorism should never infringe the fundamental human rights of our citizens. This would not only be contrary to the basic and timeless principles of the OSCE, it would also make our citizens vulnerable to extremist manipulation of any kind.

The Porto Decision on the Development of an OSCE Strategy to Address New Threats to Security and Stability in the 21st Century is equally vital. It reaffirms the OSCE's role in helping to make the Euro-Atlantic area more secure. Through dialogue, and in close cooperation with other international, regional and sub-regional organisations, on the basis of the Platform for Co-operative Security. I therefore applaud the initiative taken by the former Portuguese Chairman-in-Office and the active contributions of the participating States that helped produce a first draft. I would single out the Russian Federation and the United States of America for particular mention. We should however realise that we are only at the beginning. Porto has rightly set an ambitious target. The Strategy must be the result of our joint efforts. The Chairman-in-Office will do its utmost to fully involve the participating States, the Institutions and the Missions of the OSCE, by actively encouraging all to come forward with the necessary input. It is bound to be a Herculean task. But absolutely indispensable – decisive for the work of the OSCE in the years to come.

Mr. Chairman, the decision to establish an Annual Security Review Conference, taken by the Ministerial Council in Porto, will help to dovetail the work of the Forum for Security Cooperation and the Permanent Council. It should eventually lead to greater internal coherence on a wide range of security issues. The Annual Security Review Conference provides the framework for an enhanced security dialogue. Not just within the OSCE and among the participating States, but also with other relevant international and regional organisations. And at the same time, the Annual Security Review Conference should give a clear picture of what the OSCE and the participating States have actually undertaken in terms of security. The decision has been taken. The potential is there. It will be up to us to make it work.

In this context it might be useful to mention the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty. The revised version remains a cornerstone of European security. Ratification continues to be an active concern.

Mr. Chairman, trafficking poses a clear threat to stability and security, both inside and outside the OSCE region. It occurs on a wide scale and often goes hand in hand with

international crime. Trafficking human beings, a particularly repulsive crime, is a rapidly growing scourge. Trafficking in drugs is a multi-billion dollar business directly affecting the economies of all our countries. It also has a serious destabilising impact on our societies. And finally, the trafficking of small arms and light weapons is clearly a direct threat to security. The Netherlands considers trafficking to be a clear example of a new threat. Trafficking doesn't just cross borders, it also crosses dimensions. It not only causes human misery, it is devastating national economies and putting undue pressure on political systems. It has a negative and destabilising impact all over the OSCE region. These, in short, are the reasons why the Netherlands has proposed that 'trafficking' be made a major theme for this year's OSCE Economic Forum in Prague. And the reason why I again underscore the importance of the matter today.

Mr. Chairman, in the same vein, I think it is only right to thank and praise the Belgian and Russian co-chairs of the Group on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women and Anti-Trafficking. They have done a tremendous amount of work. This is a good example of the CiO and the participating States jointly pushing policy forward.

We have all heard the commercial slogan "Let's make things better". I think this is exactly what applies to us when we talk about the administrative reform of the OSCE. The organisation has come a long way. But in the current climate of change, which is helping to define its future role, reforms are needed to prepare the organisation for the challenges ahead. Administrative reforms are therefore more than an internal organisational matter. They are dictated by the ever-changing international political landscape. It is our common goal, as participating States, the Secretariat, the Institutions and the Missions, to make the OSCE as effective as possible. Adherence to management principles such as administrative transparency, clear personnel policies and financial accountability is part and parcel of this exercise. As well as regular evaluations of OSCE activities to learn lessons that will benefit future operations.

Let me stress the importance of our field activities. Our field missions make the difference between an Organisation that talks and an Organisation that does. It is for this reason that I

welcome new thinking about the nature, scope and focus of the missions. After all they are the eyes and ears of the Organisation. What we have to dispell is the notion that they could be perceived as liabilities. Missions can be a crucial instrument in furthering security and stability. They should be and should be seen as net contributors and an asset to the host country. As CiO I will do the utmost to support them in their work with all the means at my disposal.

The OSCE is known for its comprehensive security concept. Security is more than arms control and smoothing over political differences. Without due regard for human rights and economic and ecological development, no sustainable security, no lasting peace can ever be achieved. Its practical experience of making such linkages at the field level has placed the OSCE at the cutting edge of conflict management. This expertise, this strength, should in my opinion be the light that guides us into the future. This is clearly the added value the OSCE has over other international organisations active in the field of security.

During its Chairmanship, the Netherlands will continue actively to address all aspects of security. All three dimensions are extremely important for achieving and maintaining stability. Often this is in close correlation. However, the struggle to strike the right balance between the dimensions should never blind us to the realities on the ground. Needs will largely determine our actions – what we do and where. Let me be clear about this. The OSCE has always been in the vanguard of those working for the improvement of human rights. This is not about to change under the Dutch Chairmanship. Security, after all, is about people and giving them the protection they need to live their lives in dignity. The Netherlands Chairmanship is particularly attached to providing security to individuals, minorities and other socially vulnerable groups.

Mr. Chairman, we have a busy year ahead. But the same could be said of last year and of 2004 as well. Security, and certainly comprehensive security, requires constant maintenance – or should I say investment – from all of us. The ever-changing political circumstances require this, as experience has shown. And there is no reason to think that things will be any different in the future. The OSCE therefore needs to be flexible in its responses. Able to adapt time and time again, and to act whenever and wherever needed.

This does not mean that there are no issues inherited from the past that still await lasting resolution. Of course I am referring in particular to the situation in the Caucasus and to the stalemate in Moldova. True to its mandate the OSCE has been called upon to play a constructive role in these cases. You may be assured that this Chairmanship will do its utmost to promote a peaceful resolution of these conflicts, and that it will be most attentive to developments in any other region which harbours a potential for conflict.

All this, in a nutshell, is the challenge ahead, for this year and many years to come.

Your Excellencies, Mr. Chairman, our region has seen some testing times, particularly in the last 50 years. And some parts of Europe are still in the thick of it. The OSCE – and its predecessor the CSCE – has worked hard to overcome the political divisions, the separation of people. To stop conflicts and prevent new ones from arising. Together we have come a long way, but our work is not yet done. We must continue our efforts, driven forward by the joint commitment of all participating States. The Dutch Chairmanship is determined to play its part to the full, along with all of you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.