

ENGLISH only

Address of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic

Ján KUBIŠ

at the 16th Ministerial Council in Helsinki

4 December 2008

Dear Mr. Chairman,

Dear colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Slovakia fully supports the statement made by the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of France, monsieur Bernard Kouchner, in his capacity as acting President of the European Union. I shall confine myself to share with you some thoughts from our national perspective.

Primarily, let me join others in expressing our sincere gratitude to the host Minister Stubb and the Finnish chairmanship for the formidable engagement on behalf of all of us during the whole year. It was a year during which we had to face several grave challenges, notably the tragic war in Georgia of this summer. This conflict that engaged armed forces of two OSCE and CoE states shall remain a memento for us to redouble our efforts in conflict prevention and crisis management which are at the heart of the OSCE raison d'être. There is a lesson we have learned: frozen conflicts and unresolved disputes, if left aside, tend to erupt into a dangerously hot stage. Here the OSCE and perhaps others failed by allowing the situation of Georgia and in a number of other unresolved conflicts to remain static. Now, the OSCE must work vigorously to contribute to finding solutions out of this tragedy. Among others, it has a long-established mission in Georgia and that should be able to continue its work for the benefit of all those affected by the war. That is why the mission should be able to implement fully

its mandate in its current form on the whole territory of the country. And let me confirm once again: for Slovakia sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders of every country of the world – be it Serbia or Georgia – is sacrosanct and we reject any moves and steps that violate these principles.

Mr. Chairman,

Recently, a discussion about European security principles architecture has been proposed. We are open to discussing new ideas and to listen to concerns of our partners – and the ones reflected in the proposal of President of Russian federation are serious and must be taken seriously. Yet novelties should improve and strengthen, not weaken our current commitments and obligations in their entirety, the existing structures, instruments and mechanisms. As the OSCE is empowered to deal with security from Vancouver to Vladivostok, let me add my voice to those who see the OSCE as the right forum for such a discussion. Convening an OSCE summit as a part of this effort might be an appropriate step – but at due time and based on thorough preparations, necessary clarifications of all open questions and first of all clarity on its deliverables that must be agreed by all. While discussing concerns of Russia, such a summit shall, in our opinion, first of all reinvigorate and reinforce the OSCE as such, in the entirety of its mandate based on its comprehensive approach to security. That also concerns topics like OSCE legal personality or OSCE Convention that should be a part of the deliverables, if there is no consensus on these issues before the summit.

Moreover, under the OSCE auspices we have numerous agreements and arrangements that have been created as instruments of confidence and security-building, to prevent threat or use of force. Let's put them in practice. Among them is the CFE Treaty that we all consider a cornerstone of the European

security. Led by our common objective of preserving the long-term viability of the CFE regime we urge Russia to resume its implementation and all of us to proceed with speedy ratification of the Adapted CFE.

Mr. Chairman,

Effective multilateralism requires meaningful cooperation of relevant international organisations. To promote this approach was one of our priorities while chairing the Committee of Ministers of Council of Europe.

This year we mark the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as fostering of the culture of inter-religious and inter-ethnic tolerance remain my country's priority. That is why I strongly support the notion of reconfirming our commitments we all have voluntarily adopted and thus commemorate this anniversary.

Slovakia assigns a key importance to the work of the ODIHR as a tried-and-tested OSCE instrument for protection and promotion of human rights, freedoms and democracy. This applies as well to election observation – a great instrument of the OSCE that should have full support from all of us during the observation period, but also by implementing recommendations based on the critical assessment of the elections against the OSCE and international standards. On the other hand, the whole exercise of election observation must be depoliticized.

Mr. Chairman,

New ideas and proposals, new challenges to global security and the spreading global financial and economic crisis should not divert our attention from our more traditional agenda, including conflict resolution, economic and

environmental issues or rule of law. We ought to work more actively and with better practical effect in all of these areas.

OSCE Field Missions remain a major comparative advantage of our organisation. They need, however, to reflect actual needs. The OSCE should be ready to downsize or close missions or offices in countries with significant positive development where their mandate is fulfilled, like in Croatia, and to reinforce its presence where it is more needed, like in Central Asia or Kosovo (UNSC Resolution 1244/99).

Border management and prevention of trafficking in drugs, weapons and human beings should increasingly be present among our activities, notably in the most vulnerable areas. I regret that it was not possible to start a wider co-operation with Afghanistan this year. Equally we should continue our common efforts in the fight against terrorism and WMD proliferation by all available means and in all available fora.

Mr. Chairman,

Thirty-three years have passed since the Helsinki Final Act was signed here in this hospitable capital of Finland. A process of democratic transformation that brought about and was built on respect of human rights, justice and good governance has then started in Europe. Today, we came back to assess again the developments of the foregone year and to discuss a way forward for the OSCE in the next year. Slovakia is prepared to continue working with all its partners and the incoming Chairmanship of Greece on every effort needed to make the OSCE a more effective and more relevant organisation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.