



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008  
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008  
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

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## **Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union**

**OSCE Permanent Council No. 697  
Vienna, 24 January 2008**

### **Address by H.E. Dr. Dimitrij Rupel, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia**

**Check against delivery!**

*Mr. Chairman,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,*

It is my pleasure to address you here in Vienna. I have pleasant memories of the occasions when I addressed this forum in the capacity of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office in 2005. I have no doubt that the experiences gained during that period will be of help now when Slovenia holds the Presidency of the EU.

Let me first greet our Finnish colleagues and wish them all the best in their recently undertaken role of OSCE Chairmanship. I thank them for giving me the opportunity to present the priorities of the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU.

At the outset, I would also like to congratulate Greece, Kazakhstan and Lithuania on their successful candidatures for the OSCE Chairmanship. I am confident that they will assume their role with utmost responsibility and success.

*Mr. Chairman,*

We are living in an important moment in the history of the EU. Slovenia is proud to be the first among the new Member States to hold the Presidency. This serves only to confirm the legitimacy of the decision to unite the European continent and, in so doing, to overcome its unnatural division. Indeed, it is a tribute to the courage with which both Western democratic nations and Central and Eastern European nations seized the historic opportunity that the end of the Cold War presented.

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The priorities of the Slovenian Presidency have been to a large extent determined by the 18-month programme, which was presented for the first time by the German Presidency and continued under the Portuguese Presidency, and by the inherited agenda of the Council of the EU.

On this basis, Slovenia works on five main priority areas, namely the future of the Union and the timely implementation of the Reform Treaty, the successful launching of the new Lisbon Strategy cycle, climate and energy issues, the strengthening of the European perspective for the Western Balkans and the inter-cultural dialogue.

Regarding the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty, our main task is to encourage the successful ratification process of the Lisbon Treaty. Together with the other 26 Member States, and in particular with the forthcoming French Presidency, we are determined to lay the new foundations for the Union before the elections to the European Parliament in 2009. Slovenia wants to provide a good example and plans to ratify the Treaty as soon as possible.

The second three-year cycle of the renewed Lisbon Strategy, aiming to make Europe the most competitive and the most dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, started in 2008. The Slovenian Presidency will further promote the strategic priorities of the Strategy in the areas of research and innovation, in the development of competitive business environment, in the adaptation of the labour market to meet demographic changes, as well as in the areas of energy supply and climate change. Climate change in particular requires decisive action by all States.

Slovenia believes that the stability of South Eastern Europe is of crucial importance for the security and prosperity of the entire European Union. Bearing this in mind, the Presidency aims at strengthening the European perspective for the countries of the Western Balkans. Slovenia will seek the new impetus, upgrading, refreshment of the 2003 Thessaloniki Agenda, the possible conclusion of the network of Stabilisation and Association Agreements with the countries of the Western Balkans as well as the strengthening of regional cooperation in several areas. The process of enlargement and the European Neighbourhood Policy is on the top of our agenda.

Last but not least, this year is the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. It is thus fitting that intercultural dialogue is one of our priorities. Intercultural dialogue constitutes the foundation of the co-existence of all European citizens. The Presidency understands such dialogue as the basis for long-term EU action rather than a one-off event. It is therefore important to increase the level of awareness of the value of intercultural dialogue and multilingualism among EU citizens and the European public at large and to incorporate the positive experience of this year into future EU policies. Dialogue is

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another expression for diplomacy. Intercultural diplomacy is a test for the survival of diplomacy generally. If we do not talk, countries will fight.

*Mr. Chairman,*

Although the EU and the OSCE are two distinct entities, they are inevitably connected when it comes to common values, goals and responsibilities. After all, all EU Member States are also OSCE Participating States.

Despite the different political and historical backgrounds which individual OSCE Participating States have, the OSCE has always been a forum where states were able to overcome their differences on the basis of dialogue, common values and the overwhelming sense of common responsibility.

We welcome a number of decisions that had been adopted at the Madrid Ministerial Council. Of particular importance are the Ministerial Statement on Supporting the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, the Madrid Declaration on Environment and Security, Decision 7/07 on the Follow-Up to the Fifteenth Economic and Environmental Forum: Water Management, Decision 8/07 on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings for Labour Exploitation, Decision 10/07 on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination: Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding and Decision 09/07 on Combating Sexual Exploitation of Children on the Internet.

We strongly commend the efforts of those who worked tirelessly on the preparation of the text of the Convention on the international legal personality, legal capacity and privileges and immunities of the OSCE and express our sincere regret that the text was not approved in Madrid. Further strengthening of the OSCE, also in terms of granting it a legal personality, is necessary to ensure that the OSCE is able to face contemporary challenges effectively.

In 2005, when we assumed the OSCE Chairmanship, Kosovo was one of the major issues on our agenda. As we take over the EU Presidency, Kosovo still remains a subject of our common concern. The recent Permanent Council decision, by which the mandate of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo was extended into 2008, is important. The continued presence of the OSCE in the key areas of human rights monitoring, institution- and capacity-building and the rule of law is as relevant now as ever. The EU is therefore firmly convinced that the OSCE Mission in Kosovo must be able to continue its important work. The EU will play a key role in Kosovo in the upcoming period. The Presidency actively encourages the formation of consensual solutions to ensure the long-term stability of the entire region.

At the Madrid Ministerial Council, the Participating States recognised the situation in Afghanistan as one that can have a profound effect on the overall security scenario in the

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OSCE area. The EU welcomes the Ministerial Decision that will allow the OSCE to contribute to the efforts of the international community by developing measures to help secure the border between Afghanistan and neighbouring OSCE participating States.

The EU appreciates and supports the activities of the OSCE that are aimed at achieving a peaceful solution to frozen conflicts in the Republic of Moldova, Georgia and Nagorno-Karabakh. The EU considers the principle of peaceful resolution of conflicts as the basis on which these conflicts are to be resolved.

Both sides involved in the conflict in the South Ossetian region of Georgia must do their utmost to utilise the existing negotiation mechanisms and at the same time to avoid any escalation of the already fragile situation. To this end, the OSCE's confidence building measures and reconstruction efforts in Georgia are of a great value. The EU supports the Economic Rehabilitation Program for South Ossetia, to which the EU Member States are major contributors. The EU has also started implementing its confidence building measures in Georgia and we hope that working together with the OSCE would further contribute to the conflict settlement efforts.

The EU was pleased that after a long stalemate in the negotiation process in the Republic of Moldova, an informal 5+2 meeting took place in October 2007. The European Union encourages the parties involved to build upon these positive developments and continue with the negotiations to reach a peaceful settlement of the Transnistrian question.

In their efforts to bring about a peaceful solution to the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group have presented a set of Basic Principles for the Peaceful Settlement of this conflict. The EU calls upon the parties involved to effectively continue with the course of the negotiations to bring to an end this protracted conflict by preparing and implementing a comprehensive peace agreement.

We must give the South Caucasus a chance – part of the ENP. Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan are our neighbours and the EU is strategically interested in close relations.

The OSCE can and must shift its focus to the countries of Central Asia. Cooperation with Central Asia remains a priority for the EU, as reflected in the EU Strategy for Central Asia and EU Strategy for a new Partnership with Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. We hope that both the EU and OSCE will succeed in their common efforts to assist and foster development in the region.

The EU has frequently expressed its full support for ODIHR's election observation activities and its internationally recognised election observation methodology. The EU calls on all participating States to enable ODIHR to observe their elections without restriction, in accordance with established practice and in line with the spirit of their

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commitments. The EU continues to attach importance to the close cooperation between the ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly on the basis of the 1997 Cooperation Agreement.

The EU considers the CFE Treaty as a cornerstone of European security architecture and deeply regrets the unilateral decision by the Russian Federation to suspend the implementation of the CFE Treaty. We urge the Russian Federation to continue with effective dialogue in pursuit of an acceptable solution to the outstanding issues of implementation that are of concern to all state parties to the CFE Treaty.

*Mr. Chairman,*

With 27 EU member States among the 56 OSCE Participating States, the EU represents an important part of the OSCE, both in terms of finances and personnel. At the same time, the EU is also a valuable partner of the OSCE since both share many common goals.

It has for long been established that there are various aspects of security and that we must pay equal attention to all of them in order to ensure lasting peace and security. In this light it must be stressed that the work of the OSCE in all three dimensions is equally important and serves to that affect. The EU will strive to contribute as much as it can to support its activities in politico-military, economic-environmental and human dimension.

At the end, I would particularly like to outline the need to ensure the coordination of the activities conducted by the EU and the OSCE, thus rendering them more effective and avoiding duplication. The Slovenian Presidency will work to improve and deepen the co-operation between the EU and the OSCE when addressing the various issues that are on the table. In this respect, we are looking forward to fruitful co-operation with the Finnish Chairmanship. In line with our Presidency's slogan "**Sinergy for Europe**" we will do everything that is in our power to support you.

Thank you.

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