

PC.DEL/628/08
17 July 2008

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

**STATEMENT BY MR. BERNARD KOUCHNER,
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF FRANCE, TO THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

Vienna, 17 July 2008

Mr. Chairman,
Mr. Secretary General,
Distinguished Ambassadors,

It is a great pleasure for me to be with you today here in Vienna for this exchange of views within this living and dynamic Organization. I have a good knowledge of your Organization. It is indispensable.

Six months ago, in Madrid, I asked the OSCE to get itself into order. I am pleased that the Finnish Chairmanship shares this analysis. It will be our task to pursue this path in the run-up to the Ministerial Council meeting in Helsinki.

I am aware of the debates that are enlivening our Organization. We have all listened with attention, and perhaps some surprise, to the proposal by President Medvedev to establish a European security pact. I think it essential that the discussion be continued and that that discussion take place here in Vienna. Since the first meeting of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), the OSCE has in effect always been a forum for discussions on security from "Vancouver to Vladivostok".

I believe however that these debates must be closely linked to those that today are going on in parallel within the European Union (EU). I think this not only because the EU today represents nearly half the membership of the OSCE and three quarters of its budget but mainly because the Union and the OSCE are profoundly complementary. They share the same values and the same principles, but they are not yet working together to the required degree. These values and these principles are essential. They must be affirmed, but we frequently lack the means to do so.

Now that France has assumed the presidency of the Council of the European Union, I want to tell you that one of the objectives of the French presidency will in fact be the strengthening of that complementarity.

Together with our Czech and Swedish friends we have prepared an 18-month EU programme, a programme that we hope will provide an innovative approach in many subject areas. A great many of these areas are of direct interest to the OSCE.

I shall not dwell here on all the priorities of the French presidency since you are already aware of them: energy and the environment, migration, European security and defence, a common agricultural policy and social affairs. The essential thing for the presidency is to listen to its partners. I shall also not speak at length of the imperative need to reform the European institutions. On the other hand, I should like to try to explain to you the way in which these priorities will be addressed within the OSCE.

1. We must co-operate more on conflict prevention throughout the OSCE area and also on the resolution of unfortunately frozen conflicts, which can sometimes come alive.

The European Union and the OSCE are deeply involved in seeking a settlement for the crises in Georgia and Moldova.

Let us not deceive ourselves. Despite the efforts of our two organizations and their special representatives, the situation in Georgia is continuing to grow tense. I had an opportunity to speak at length yesterday with my Georgian colleague. We cannot be satisfied with this situation, which continues to require all our attention. We must be more active. Let us not delude ourselves into believing that changing the negotiation formats will by itself resolve these conflicts.

The European Union and the OSCE are already, I know, active on the ground, and I wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute the staff of the OSCE Mission to Georgia, who are working under often difficult conditions. We must come up with fresh political initiatives.

But we must do more, namely develop political initiatives. Why not, for example, in the case of emerging crises, consider joint visits or, at least, co-ordinated visits by the two chairmanships of the EU and the OSCE? For my part, I have decided to visit Georgia at the earliest opportunity on behalf of the European Union. This trip, however, requires careful preparations if it is to produce results.

Regarding Nagorno-Karabakh I must be frank in noting that there has been no progress here despite all the efforts that have been undertaken. I myself hold meetings with my Armenian and Azerbaijani counterparts. France is involved in the search for a solution here together with the other co-chairmen of the Minsk Group. We achieved some results in Madrid. Those efforts must continue.

Regarding Kosovo, I am familiar with and appreciate through personal experience the irreplaceable role that the OSCE has played and is continuing to play.

The OSCE Mission in Kosovo is performing an important role in guaranteeing the democratic and multi-ethnic future of that country, particularly with regard to safeguarding the rights of minorities.

The situation there is unfolding in a relatively satisfactory manner, even though it will take a generation for it to become completely stable. In the meantime, we must be vigilant in seeing to it that our values are preserved.

A majority of our States has recognized Kosovo. Some countries have not done so. No one, however, is questioning the positive role of the OSCE. For me, that role is a source of satisfaction. I hope that our presidency will enable the OSCE to intensify its work in common with the European structures on the ground, specifically the European Union Rule

of Law Mission (EULEX Mission), which is destined to play an essential role in ensuring respect for those values that the OSCE is charged with promoting.

Stability in the Balkans must be a shared objective on the part of the European Union and the OSCE.

I know how much our Organization hopes to be able to contribute to the stabilization of Afghanistan.

The European Union is also engaged in Afghanistan, where the situation remains difficult. On 12 June France welcomed in Paris an Afghanistan support conference that brought together the major donors and actors involved in that country. The objective of that conference was to frame a common strategy. This was not only a donor conference but also a political strategy. We are waging war on extremism alongside the Afghans. We must listen to these people and see to it that the actions taken by the international community take into account their hopes and aspirations. This is what I understand by afghanization.

I hope that the steps taken by the OSCE will meet the requirements of non-duplication, effectiveness, territorial continuity and security. The projects submitted by the Secretary General seem to me to meet these objectives, to which we shall be attentive. In this context, we must see to it, by conferring on the OSCE a legal personality of its own, that our personnel enjoy the legal guarantees that are indispensable.

2. We must work together, I say again, to settle all these crises and promote a global approach to security.

Alongside a coherent set of crisis management mechanisms, the OSCE has developed confidence-building measures that continue to be exemplary. The European Union is deeply committed to the fundamental role that the OSCE must continue to play in the area of arms control.

It is our intention, during our presidency, to seek to revitalize and further strengthen this Organization's leading role in thinking about arms control regimes in Europe, the threats to these measures and their future.

The CSCE, and later the OSCE, was at the origin of a global and integrated approach to security questions. The European security strategy adopted in 2003 also draw its inspiration from this approach.

Whether it has to do with combating terrorism, with initiatives with respect to the transport of small arms and light weapons, or with programmes against landmines, we have much to do in common. The drug conference that you are holding here at this very moment bears witness to this. Let us therefore intensify our synergies while at the same time avoiding a duplication of efforts. In Afghanistan, we believe that the fight against drugs has not been a success and that we must revise our objectives and our approach to the problem.

Regarding the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty), we must spare no effort, as I pointed out in Madrid, in seeking a solution and averting an irreversible process that would ultimately lead to the disappearance of a major instrument of transparency and predictability.

Proposals have been made that it would seem to us provide a basis for constructive, reasonable and forward-looking discussions. It is in the interest of all of us to find the kind of solutions that will make it possible to guarantee the viability of the regime governing conventional armed forces in Europe.

3. The work of the European Union and of the OSCE in Central Asia represents a good example of this approach.

The Central Asian region is the one in which OSCE activities have been best developed in recent years. The European Union too, by adopting a strategy for Central Asia, is similarly about to become a full-time player in the region. During my recent visit to Dushanbe I was able to see for myself the degree to which Europe is being awaited and the essential role played by the OSCE in that region.

During our presidency we intend to concentrate our efforts, in close co-ordination with the OSCE, on security issues in Central Asia. Specifically, these questions will be discussed in Paris on 18 September at the first EU/Central Asia forum on security arrangements. It goes without saying that I have invited our friends from the OSCE to attend this forum.

This forum will be followed by three events:

- A reinforced meeting of experts on trafficking in chemical precursors, to be held in Brussels on 1 October;
- An EU/OSCE/United Nations conference on integrated border management and the fight against narcotic drugs, to be held in Dushanbe in October;
- A ministerial conference on energy, to be held on 28 and 29 November of this year.

The French presidency is counting on active contributions by the OSCE on all these subjects.

Another important problem in Central Asia is the problem of water. This problem also demands preventive attention by a security organization such as ours. In making this subject a priority concern, the Spanish Chairmanship of the OSCE succeeded in introducing a new element. I sincerely hope that we shall be able to continue those efforts.

4. The OSCE was founded on the conviction that security goes hand in hand with the promotion of human rights and democracy.

We must not permit a blurring of this historic vision, which in fact represents the essential principle of our Organization. This is also the vision behind the founding of the European Union and it is above all this vision that embodies our identity in the eyes of European citizens as indeed of the rest of the world. A retreat in the area of human rights is not acceptable. Let us not yield ground on the principle of universality or on the advances ushered in by the recognition of the duty to interfere and of the responsibility to protect.

Our presidency will be marked by the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This symbolic anniversary must provide an opportunity to recall vividly the universality of these values and of these principles.

The French presidency will place particular emphasis on the rights of women, specifically on measures to combat violence against women. Whether in the environment of armed conflicts or in peaceful society, this phenomenon always represents a major challenge to us all.

I know how committed the Finnish Chairmanship of the OSCE is to this subject. We shall not fail, therefore, to develop joint initiatives on this subject. I am gratified moreover that the observance of this 60th anniversary has been extended here in Vienna with the help of the Finnish Chairmanship, and I hope that we shall take this opportunity to highlight the essential role and state of permanent alert of those whose task it is to defend human rights.

The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is a symbol of the OSCE's involvement in this area. Speaking in Madrid, I noted just how essential an institution of our Organization the ODIHR is. It derives its power from its autonomy. That autonomy must be preserved. France, in exercising the presidency of the European Union, will pay close attention to promoting the Office's unique expertise and its exemplary role in the area of election monitoring. I am familiar with the difficulties you have had to face in that regard.

Rest assured that France will lend its full support to the Office's new director so as to ensure that he can continue to exercise his mandate in complete liberty and to promote the values that are defended by the ODIHR and that we must all support.

I wish also to pay tribute to the work of the other OSCE institutions, most specifically to the Representative on Freedom of the Media and the High Commissioner on National Minorities.

I should also like to commend the day-to-day efforts of the men and women assigned to our 19 field missions everywhere where assistance is needed and useful in helping participating States to meet their commitments.

I wish lastly to applaud the Secretary General's efforts and to express my pleasure at his reappointment. He is of course a compatriot of mine, but above all he is a man of distinction who has done a remarkable job. Let us all give him our support and provide him with the means for carrying out his work.

Mr. Chairman,
Mr. Secretary General,
Distinguished Ambassadors,

I am counting on you. The road to Helsinki will not always be an easy one, but I wish to assure all of you that the French presidency of the European Union will do everything in its power to make of the Ministerial Council meeting in Helsinki the historic success for our Organization that the world and Europe need.

After all, it was at Helsinki that the splendid history that brings us together began.

Thank you.