

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Māris Riekstiņš,  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia  
at the OSCE Ministerial Council  
4<sup>th</sup> -5<sup>th</sup> December 2008, Helsinki**

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Madame Chairperson,  
Dear Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first express **our warm appreciation to Foreign Minister Alexander Stubb** for his extraordinary endeavours as Chairman-in-Office over the past, highly complicated year and to **thank our Finnish hosts** for their excellent organization and hospitality at this Ministerial meeting.

I would like to start by expressing my full support to the statement by the Foreign Minister of France Bernard Kouchner on behalf of the European Union.

The 2008 has been a particularly **intense year** for the OSCE region and the OSCE as an organization. I should like to emphasize that for us the OSCE remains a key component of the security structure in Europe. Its comprehensive and co-operative approach in all three Dimensions has been an important contributor to stability and democracy in the region. We should make good use of the unique features of the OSCE – its **inclusive membership** in the pan-European and transatlantic region and its ability to maintain **free and open political dialogue**.

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An important part of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security is the **human Dimension**.

Latvia highly values the **work of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights** (ODIHR) for its capability, expertise and professionalism in assisting all OSCE states in fulfilling their commitments and in reporting on the state of human rights and democracy across the OSCE region. All human dimension commitments have to be fully implemented, including those concerning all forms of intolerance. We should remain watchful to symptoms of **anti-Semitism, xenophobia and racism**, which have grown in scale in some OSCE member states.

OSCE institutions such as the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Representative on the Freedom of the Media are also fundamental to the realization of the OSCE's mandate.

Dear Colleagues,

If we aim to pay more attention to the hard security in the OSCE area, full compliance and implementation of already existing political-military commitments by all the participating States is important. The Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe is an important mechanism of the European

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security. And the need for a return to full implementation of the **CFE Treaty** by all thirty States Parties has not diminished.

Security is fundamentally based on the shared values and principles, these values are enshrined in our basic documents applied to the OSCE region and are at the heart of the OSCE—the Helsinki Final Act, the Charter for European Security and the CFE Treaty. The strength of the OSCE derives from respect for these values and from fulfilment of commitments by each and every participating state.

Latvia commends the strong emphasis placed on the **OSCE's role in conflict prevention and resolution**, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation by the participating States holding the OSCE Chairmanship in the years up to 2011, and their pledge to intensify efforts to settle the unresolved conflicts in the OSCE area.

Although, the Finnish Chairmanship has done its utmost, we would like to see more progress with regard to the resolution of the conflict in **Transnistria, Moldova**. We call on all parties involved for resumption in full scale of 5+2 talks. Apart from that, we attach crucial importance also to practical assistance. The EU Border assistance mission on the Moldova-Ukrainian border, where Latvia actively participates, has given a significant contribution in restoring legal commercial activities in Transnistria.

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We recognize with satisfaction that the basic principles on conflict **settlement in Nagorno-Karabakh**, proposed to Armenia and Azerbaijan in the document transmitted by the three co-chairs of the Minsk Group during the Madrid meeting of the Ministerial Council, have been successfully tested by the challenging election periods in both countries. We welcome the outcome of the Meeting of the three Presidents last month in Moscow and encourage the parties to rapidly finalize these principles.

Dear Colleagues,

This year's Ministerial occurs during a **challenging time for the OSCE**. Military conflict in August between two participating States has put in question the commitments that are at the core of the Helsinki Final Act. Protection of compatriots abroad has been used as a pretext for use of force on the territory of another country without an international sanction. One participating State has unilaterally recognized two breakaway regions in an attempt to change the internationally-accepted borders of an OSCE participating State. These developments are unacceptable and have rightly been strongly condemned by the international community.

We commend all the efforts to normalize situation in Georgia, including **negotiations in Geneva**, and underline that a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict must be based on full respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia as recognized by international

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law. The agreements of August 12 and September 8 should be implemented fully, including complete withdrawal of forces of the Russian Federation to the positions they held prior to the 7<sup>th</sup> of August.

With respect to the **OSCE Mission to Georgia**, we call upon all the participating States to enable the mission to continue to operate on the basis of its present mandate. The OSCE monitors, as well as their EU counterparts, need full access to the whole of the territory of Georgia, including South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Without international presence in the entire territory of Georgia, safe return of internally displaced persons cannot be ensured.

The way in which resolution of the conflict in Georgia is pursued will influence our view on the future security in Europe. What is required is implementation of the existing commitments rather than new process of setting new norms.

In closing, Madame Chairperson, I would like to offer our full support to the incoming Greek Chairmanship. We have every confidence that your efforts will continue to strengthen the OSCE.

Thank you!