

PC.DEL/1/09
15 January 2009

ENGLISH only

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Statement
Déclaration

Vienna 15 January 2009

Permanent Council No. 746**EU Statement in response to the address by the Chairperson-in-Office, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece, H.E. Dora Bakoyannis**

The EU congratulates H.E. Dora Bakoyannis, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece, on the assumption of the functions of Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE. We warmly welcome you to the Permanent Council for the first time in your new capacity and thank you for your address outlining the priorities of the Greek Chairmanship in 2009. We wish you and your team every success and look forward to working with you and your delegation.

Looking at your priorities, the EU is confident that the continuity with the achievements of the former Finnish Chairmanship will be ensured. The EU welcomes your readiness to engage on the whole range of issues facing the OSCE today. You can be assured that you have the full support of the EU in all your efforts to defend and promote our Organisation's core values and principles as well as the uniqueness of its model of cooperative and comprehensive security.

OSCE has experienced major challenges in 2008 that have put the basic principles of this Organisation to the test. Indeed, as you rightly said, restoring trust and understanding is a precondition for cooperative security as well as for realizing our vision of a Europe free, united and at

peace. The EU is ready to fully participate in this process with a view to promoting the full implementation of OSCE commitments and respect for principles and values OSCE participating states have entered into collectively.

The EU remains committed to the enhancement of the security in the OSCE area through open and frank dialogue. This dialogue should take full account of the elements Minister Stubb has aptly summarized at the Helsinki Ministerial luncheon. The EU thanks the Greek Chairmanship for its readiness to assist and facilitate a debate on this topic within the OSCE framework.

Madame Minister, the EU agrees with you that every unresolved conflict is a tragedy for the people on the ground and that every case requires special attention. The EU applauds your determination to promote the peaceful resolution of the protracted conflicts in the OSCE region. Any sign of progress in resolving them will be a strong impetus for renewing trust and bolstering our dialogue. We therefore welcome your decision to continue the practice of appointing a Special Representative for the Protracted Conflicts. We wish him well, promise him our full support and kindly advise him to closely cooperate with the EU Special Representatives for the respective regions.

The EU supports the Greek Chairmanship in its endeavours to help find a solution that will guarantee stability and security in Georgia. Such a solution must be based on full respect for the principles of independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders. We deeply regret that in spite of the sterling efforts of the Finnish Chairmanship, it was not possible to reach a consensus on the

extension of the mandate of the OSCE Mission to Georgia at the end of last year. This has seriously jeopardized the valuable work of the MMOs and other confidence building measures, such as the Economic Rehabilitation Programme. We therefore welcome the ongoing efforts of the Greek Chairmanship aimed at preserving the valuable OSCE presence in Georgia, including South Ossetia. This is particularly urgent given the ODIHR's report on the worrying human rights situation in conflict zones in Georgia. We again encourage all parties to implement the ODIHR's recommendations in this respect. In parallel, the EU supports the ongoing talks in Geneva and hopes that these talks on the shores of Lac Léman will soon bring successful results.

Urgent progress is needed in order to overcome the crisis concerning the CFE Treaty. The EU underscores, once again, the importance of arms control mechanisms and the CFE Treaty in particular. We agree with you that the CFE Treaty remains an anchor and cornerstone for stability and security in Europe and should be seen as the most important Confidence and Security Building Measure in the OSCE area. The benefits of the CFE Treaty should be preserved in the future. In this regard the EU calls on the Russian Federation to fully implement the CFE Treaty and to work with all concerned states to reach an agreement in order to overcome the current stalemate.

The EU will continue to support the work of the Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC) to strengthen security, stability and cooperation in the OSCE region. In this regard we are determined to continue fostering the implementation of main OSCE documents, such as the Vienna Document 1999, the documents on Small Arms and Light Weapons and on Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition and the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military

Aspects of Security. Implementation of existing commitments has been considered not only an important instrument for boosting confidence among the participating states but it should also be an important basis for the concept of comprehensive security in the Euro-Atlantic area. The EU agrees with you that the FSC's security dialogue remains a valuable tool for early warning and conflict prevention. The mandate of the FSC should be used fully to this effect.

The EU also welcomes addressing new threats to our security and welcomes the organization of the first OSCE Workshop on a Comprehensive OSCE Approach to Enhancing Cyber Security, which will be held in Vienna in March this year.

The OSCE has become an important and highly respected player in international counter-terrorism efforts. Therefore the EU welcomes your effort to promote the implementation of existing OSCE counter-terrorism commitments. Implementation of decisions on border security and policing and on engagement with Afghanistan would help to further enhance the significance of our Organisation in these fields.

The OSCE's comprehensive concept of security continues to be important also in the economic and environmental spheres. The latest developments in the energy security sphere illustrate the need for further efforts in this direction. The EU is looking forward to discussions at the 17th Economic and Environmental Forum. The EU also hopes that this year we will be able to overcome the obstacles that have so far prevented the OSCE from developing a clear role and its own specific contribution in addressing the security implications of climate change.

Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is a top priority for the EU – the corner stone of our shared values and principles. We therefore welcome the Chairperson’s commitment to the promotion of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The EU sees the role of civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGO) essential in this process. Free and open dialogue among NGOs representatives, OSCE institutions and the participating States, in accordance with the Helsinki 1992 document, remains of utmost importance. In this regard primary attention should be paid to supporting human rights defenders and independent national human rights institutions who deserve our respect and protection.

In the same vein the EU reiterates the importance of freedom of expression and the freedom of media. The EU welcomes the Chairperson’s focus on gender equality and would like to underline the importance of promoting the implementation of the UN Security Council resolution 1325. The EU appreciates the Chairperson’s engagement in the field of tolerance and non-discrimination, as well as the fight against hate crimes. Finally the EU welcomes the Chairperson’s intention to continue the valuable work done on combating trafficking in human beings and focus on the situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE area.

The EU would reiterate its belief that other human dimension priorities deserving attention include: respect of human rights in fighting terrorism, prevention of torture, abolition of the death penalty and manifestations of hatred and intolerance based on sexual orientation.

The EU reaffirms its firm support to ODIHR’s autonomy, impartiality, election observation activities and election observation methodology. The

EU calls on all participating States to enable ODIHR to observe their elections without restrictions, in accordance with established practice and in line with the spirit of their commitments. The EU continues to attach importance to the close and constructive cooperation between the ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly on the basis of MC Decision 19/06 and the 1997 Cooperation Agreement. We expect both institutions, whose complementarity is of great value, to work together and speak with one single voice.

The EU attaches great importance to all OSCE field operations, be they in South Eastern and Eastern Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia. We appreciate their valuable contribution in promoting the OSCE commitments. They rightly find themselves at the centre of your main priorities.

Madame Minister, let me also touch upon two important issues - the international legal personality and the budget.

The vision of the Greek Chairmanship of a stronger OSCE effectively fulfilling its roles and tasks is fully shared by the EU. This includes our full support for approval of the text of Convention on international legal personality, legal capacity, and privileges and immunities of the OSCE. The OSCE urgently needs a legal personality. This would make the Organisation stronger both in legal and operational terms. Bearing in mind the recent Ministerial Decision in Helsinki, the EU will strongly support the Chairmanship's efforts to continue discussion on legal status of our Organisation and bring the negotiations on granting OSCE the international legal personality to a successful end in 2009. The EU sees merit in devising a statute or a charter for the OSCE as long as it does not re-open existing commitments.

Sadly enough, concerning the budget of the Organisation, it has become almost a tradition that the participating States cannot agree within the deadline set by the Permanent Council. Timely provision of financial resources to the OSCE that are commensurate with its programmatic activities is essential to ensure the OSCE's proper functioning and effective programme delivery. The EU calls upon all participating States to make every effort to provide this Organisation with sufficient resources and agree on a meaningful budget as soon as possible.

In conclusion, the EU would like to reiterate our full support for the Greek Chairperson-in-Office and her team and wish them all the best for the coming year.

The candidate countries TURKEY, CROATIA* and FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA and MONTENEGRO, the European Free Trade Association country and member of the European Economic Area ICELAND, as well as UKRAINE align themselves with this statement.

*Croatia and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process