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CHAIRPERSON'S PERCEPTION STATEMENT

Responding to a large number of taskings by the Tenth Meeting of the Ministerial Council in Porto, and after a yearlong process of very intensive work, the current Ministerial was able to adopt a number of very substantial documents which will guide the work of the Organization in the years to come. The Chairmanship pays tribute to the work done by a large number of informal groups of friends and their very able Chairpersons, who really did the work for us. The Chairmanship also acknowledges that the very intensive work programme and the large number of meetings this entailed, placed a very heavy burden particularly on the smaller delegations in Vienna.

Without enumerating each and every document, the Chairmanship highlights the following:

- The OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century;
- The OSCE Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension;
- The Decision on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and the related Action Plan;
- The Decision on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination;
- The Decision and the Action Plan on Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area;
- And a number of decisions relating to anti-terrorism and politico-military affairs.

All Ministers made it clear that they welcomed the new OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Stability and Security in the Twenty-First Century, which draws on the well-known strengths of the OSCE and will require that new capacities be created. The main content of this Strategy can be summarized as follows:

- Early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation remain core functions of the OSCE in a changing security environment. The participating States remain concerned over the persistence of conflicts in various regions of the OSCE area that threaten the observance of the principles of the Helsinki Final Act in several participating States and may at the same time threaten peace and stability in the OSCE region. The participating States commit themselves to intensify their efforts to resolve these conflicts;
- The participating States will take practical measures to combat terrorism and organized crime, will continue to strengthen OSCE's police-related activities and will develop activities in the field of border security and management, aimed at promoting open and secure borders;
- Arms control, disarmament, and confidence- and security-building remain indispensable to OSCE's comprehensive approach to security. The Ministers encourage the Forum for Security Co-operation to continue to develop its work in accordance with its mandate in these areas as well as in areas of growing security concern, including terrorism;
- The human dimension remains at the heart of the activities of the Organization. The OSCE will intensify efforts in all countries to combat intolerance, to strengthen pluralist democracy, civil society and the rule of law and to ensure full respect for and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, which are essential to stability, development and prosperity;
- The OSCE will strengthen its co-operation in the economic and environmental dimension in order to enhance capabilities of all participating States to adequately respond to challenges and threats in these fields;
- In order to meet the challenges, the OSCE will strengthen its co-operation and interaction with other international, regional and subregional organizations and institutions on the basis of the Platform for Co-operative Security, making the most of the strengths and advantages of each organization. To accomplish this, it will propose establishing a new ad hoc consultative mechanism as part of the effort to analyse and cope with threats jointly.

The new Strategy will guide the work of the OSCE bodies, institutions and field operations, within their respective competencies and mandates. All these make significant contributions to putting into practice the goals and principles of the Organization.

It is the perception of the Chairmanship that Ministers welcome the results of the first Annual Security Review Conference this year. These conferences will deepen the OSCE's security dialogue and provide an opportunity to review the implementation of the new Strategy and develop it further in the light of emerging threats.

It is also the perception of the Chairmanship that Ministers attach importance to the ongoing efforts to improve the functioning and effectiveness of the work of the Organization. Here I can refer to the Chairmanship's Report on Reform Issues and welcome the progress achieved this year regarding organizational and management reform, progress which has found a favourable reception in the Preparatory Committee. It seems desirable for the Permanent Council, through its competent subsidiary bodies, to continue its consideration of the relevant issues and, where appropriate, to take the necessary decisions in a timely fashion. The Ministers also seem to welcome the start of the discussions this year on ways of further improving the functioning and effectiveness of OSCE field operations; this might lead us to the conclusion that this discussion could be continued in 2004.

The Ministers decided to step up efforts to combat the growing threat of trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants, endorse the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings and to establish an OSCE mechanism to assist in its implementation. The mechanism will consist of two parts: a Special Representative appointed by the Chairmanship-in-Office, and a special unit in the OSCE Secretariat. Efforts to address smuggling of migrants will also be identified.

The Ministers are appalled by recent acts of terrorism, which have cost many innocent lives. They are determined to combat this scourge and therefore endorse further counter-terrorist measures. These include enhancing the security of travel documents and creating a counter-terrorism network. Terrorists seek to undermine security, stability, democracy, fundamental freedoms and human rights, the values that unite us. The participating States are determined to defeat them by drawing on the strengths of the OSCE while at the same time safeguarding democratic and legal standards and human rights. The Ministers expressed their intent to combine the individual national efforts with those of the OSCE, all within the global framework set by the United Nations. The Ministers welcomed the steps taken this year to counter the financing of terrorism.

The Ministers endorsed the decisions taken this year by the Forum for Security Co-operation on Man-Portable Air Defence Systems, the OSCE Document on Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition and the publication of the OSCE Handbook of Best Practice Guides on Small Arms and Light Weapons, which complements the relevant OSCE Document.

The Ministers welcomed the continued successful implementation of the Treaty on Open Skies and its contribution to promoting greater openness, transparency and stability in the OSCE area. They have noted that the applications of a number of OSCE participating States have already been approved by the States Parties or are on the agenda of the Open Skies Consultative Commission.

The Ministers welcomed the new OSCE Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension that complements the 1990 Bonn Document. Since then, many of our countries have made considerable progress in achieving more stable conditions for

development, in some instances through the process of transition and reform. At the same time, new economic and environmental threats to security have emerged. The OSCE's response is aimed at developing co-operation among participating States, action and policies to strengthen good governance, at ensuring sustainable development and at protecting the environment. To this end, the Ministers agreed to enhance the role of the OSCE by deepening our dialogue, by improving the process of review of implementation of our commitments and by strengthening OSCE's capacity to provide advice and assistance and to help mobilize the expertise and resources of other organizations.

The Ministers expressed their resolve to continue to address the intolerance and discrimination which exist in all of our societies through, *inter alia*, legislation and law-enforcement as well as educational measures with special attention to the younger generation. They welcomed the offer by Germany to host a conference on anti-Semitism in Berlin as well as the offer by Belgium to host a conference in Brussels on racism, xenophobia and discrimination, both to be organized in 2004. The Ministers also welcomed the offer by France to host in Paris in 2004 a forward-looking event, fully respecting the rights to freedom of information and expression, on the relationship between racist, xenophobic and anti-Semitic propaganda on the Internet on one hand, and hate crimes on the other. They expressed their wish to promote close interaction between cultures and beliefs. They endorsed the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area. The Ministers tasked the Permanent Council to consider the need for additional commitments in the field of elections and tasked ODIHR to consider ways to improve the effectiveness of its assistance to participating States in following up recommendations made in ODIHR election observation reports.

The Ministers decided to strengthen and intensify the co-operation and dialogue with their Asian and Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation, by early identification of areas of common interest and concern and possibilities for further concrete initiatives. They, therefore, decided to invite all Partners to participate on a more regular basis as observers in the meetings of the Permanent Council and the Forum for Security Co-operation.

The Ministers recognized that risks and threats originating from outside the OSCE area are of increasing concern. The Ministers saw a need to consider ways in which OSCE norms, principles, commitments and values could be shared with adjacent areas. In this context, the Ministers welcomed the Permanent Council Decision on Further Dialogue and Co-operation with the Partners for Co-operation and Exploring the Scope for Wider Sharing of OSCE Norms, Principles and Commitments with Others.

In short, the Ministers considered that what is needed is an integrated response and close co-operation between participating States, increased co-ordination between and within the bodies and institutions of the OSCE, further involvement of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and the development of closer links with other organizations and institutions in the framework of the Platform for Co-operative Security. They are convinced that the joint responsibility for security and stability in the OSCE area is built

upon the sense of community — within States and between States — that underpins OSCE's comprehensive approach to security.

The Ministers welcomed the statement on South-Eastern Europe, which, *inter alia*, refers to the progress made in establishing stable and democratic institutions and improved relations among the countries concerned. It recognizes that organized crime, corruption and trafficking are real obstacles to democratic stability and the rule of law. The Ministers reiterated the importance of functional multi-ethnic societies, based on respect for the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms, and called on the countries concerned to intensify their co-operation with and render all necessary assistance to the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

Ministers remained deeply concerned at the failure to achieve a settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. They reaffirmed their conviction that the prompt resolution of this protracted conflict will contribute to lasting peace, security, stability and co-operation in the South Caucasus region.

Ministers reiterated the importance of re-energizing the peace dialogue and called upon the sides to redouble their efforts to achieve an early resolution of the conflict based on norms and principles of international law. They also encouraged the parties to explore further measures that would enhance mutual confidence and trust.

Ministers welcomed the commitment of the parties to the ceasefire and to achieving a peaceful and comprehensive settlement. With presidential elections completed in Armenia and Azerbaijan, there is now a new opportunity to make progress in the talks. They urged the parties to resume their efforts as soon as possible, with the active support of the Minsk Group Co-Chairmen, aimed at reaching a just and enduring settlement.

The Ministers reiterated their support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova. Most Ministers welcomed the significant advance in the spring of 2003 in the negotiations for a comprehensive political settlement of the Transdniestrian problem in the Republic of Moldova with the establishment of a Joint Constitutional Commission, on the initiative of the President of Moldova, to draft a new constitution on federal principles for a reintegrated Moldovan state. They urged the parties to redouble their efforts to overcome their differences, and to complete a draft constitution, which would provide the basis for a viable state, for public discussion and submission to a national referendum throughout the territory of the Republic of Moldova during 2004.

Most Ministers welcomed the joint effort of the mediators from the Russian Federation, Ukraine, and the OSCE to develop compromise solutions on disputed issues in the five-sided political settlement negotiations and the Joint Constitutional Commission. Close co-operation and co-ordination among the mediators in the five-sided format will continue to play an indispensable role in achieving progress towards a comprehensive political settlement. Most Ministers noted that continued collaboration

and unity among the mediators can also help to reduce tensions over economic issues. In this context they urged both sides to work constructively to find practical solutions towards the economic reintegration of the country. They welcomed the Moldovan/Ukrainian customs protocol as a step towards enhanced borders and customs controls, and called for further steps in this direction.

Most Ministers noted the importance of security issues, in particular questions of military security, to the achievement of a lasting political settlement of the Transdnistrian problem. They applauded steps taken to reduce the level of military confrontation, such as the withdrawal from the Security Zone of all armoured vehicles of the Moldovan and Transdnistrian peacekeeping contingents. They called upon the sides to agree and to implement further measures to enhance military transparency and build confidence. They reaffirmed their willingness to support a political settlement acceptable to the people of Moldova, by providing an OSCE mandate for a multinational peace consolidation mission, and by providing unarmed observers, to monitor compliance for a transitional period to be agreed.

Most Ministers noted the efforts made by the Russian Federation to fulfil the commitments undertaken at the OSCE Istanbul Summit in 1999 to complete the withdrawal of Russian forces from the territory of Moldova. They noted that concrete progress was achieved in 2003 on the withdrawal/disposal of some ammunition and other military equipment belonging to the Russian Federation. They appreciated the efforts of all participating States of the OSCE that have contributed to the Voluntary Fund established to support this effort. They were, however, deeply concerned that the withdrawal of the Russian forces will not be completed by 31 December 2003. They stressed the need for the fulfilment of this commitment without further delay.

The Ministers reiterated their commitment to support the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia and reaffirmed previous OSCE Summit and Ministerial Council documents concerning Georgia. Most Ministers noted with satisfaction that the recent crisis had been solved by peaceful means and called upon all parties to continue to show restraint and settle all problems within the framework of the constitution. Positive developments in Georgia would also contribute to peace and stability in the whole of the South Caucasus. Most Ministers confirmed their commitment to assist Georgia in the further progress of stabilization and of consolidation of democracy. They stand ready to remain involved in the preparation of elections which should be fair and free so as to reflect the will of the people of Georgia.

As political change in Georgia is proceeding, resolution of the conflicts in the country remains as urgent an issue as ever before. Regrettably, the peace process in the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, has remained without tangible progress over the last period of time. Most Ministers called upon all parties to intensify their work towards a peace settlement, in particular on the basis of the draft Intermediary Document. Furthermore, most Ministers encouraged the sides to continue efforts directed at confidence-building and to support speedy implementation of programmes to facilitate the return of refugees and internally displaced persons.

Most Ministers supported the efforts of the United Nations and its lead role in Abkhazia in negotiations aimed at a peaceful settlement of the conflict. In this context they called upon the parties to resume constructive dialogue on the basis of the document on the distribution of constitutional competencies between Sukhumi and Tbilisi that has been elaborated under United Nations auspices. Most Ministers regretted that the general security and human rights situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, remains fragile, particularly in the Gali district. They remain prepared to actively support efforts to promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and to help promote an agreement on the return of refugees and IDPs which have been forced to move from places of their permanent residence as a result of mass destruction and forcible expulsion.

Unfortunately, after intensive consultations no agreement could be reached on inclusion into the Ministerial Declaration of agreed language concerning the complete fulfilment of the Istanbul Commitments.

In accordance with the 1999 Istanbul Commitments most Ministers reaffirmed the need of reaching an early agreement between the parties on the duration and modalities of the Russian military bases at Batumi and Akhalkalaki and the Russian military facilities within the territory of Georgia. They encouraged a speedy conclusion of negotiations concerning open issues on the Gudauta base in Abkhazia/Georgia.

The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), it was agreed, continued to make a significant contribution to security and stability and remained a cornerstone of European security. Most Ministers recalled that some of the commitments made at the 1999 Istanbul Summit on Georgia and Moldova had not yet been fulfilled. Their fulfilment without further delay, would, in their view, create the conditions for States Parties to move forward on ratification of the adapted CFE Treaty.