

MC.DEL/93/06
7 December 2006

ENGLISH
Original: SPANISH

**STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF SPAIN AT THE
CLOSING SESSION OF THE FOURTEENTH MEETING
OF THE OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

5 December 2006

On 1 January 2006 the Belgian Chairmanship inherited a vast responsibility. Minister De Gucht and his team have provided solid leadership in circumstances that were not always easy. That being so, I should like to express my sincere gratitude to the outgoing Chairmanship for its formidable determination in the matter of seeking consensus.

The Chairman-in-Office himself has just described the results of the Brussels Ministerial Council. The decisions adopted here will help to stimulate our activities in the three dimensions and to strengthen the effectiveness of our Organization. These are decisions that reinforce the position of the OSCE in its traditional fields of activity, but which also guide our co-operation with others in new directions.

It is our intention to put them into effect, and to that end we should like to count on the active collaboration of all participating States. In this way we hope to move towards greater transparency and a keener sense of relevance — principles that should guide our daily chores and are in line with the spirit in which Spain plans to direct the Organization.

In preparing to launch its Chairmanship on 1 January 2007, Spain is well aware of the enormous responsibility it has assumed. Over the last few years our Organization has accumulated undoubted successes which unfortunately have not always come to the attention of public opinion. These successes were possible thanks to the soundness of our values and shared commitments and to the will of all participating States. As the incoming Chairman, I can assure you that the safeguarding of these commitments, and where necessary their improvement and adaptation to new circumstances, will be one of the guiding principles of our Chairmanship. But at the same time we must recognize that there are unresolved problems and important challenges confronting us.

I mentioned the word challenge. We have no reason to fear it; quite the contrary, we must try to transform challenges into incentives and convert our problems into solutions. The first step in this process consists precisely in not closing our eyes but in recognizing openly the situation in which we find ourselves, with its light side, but also its more sombre aspects. I think this is an opportune moment to put forward a number of succinct considerations, though without trying to discuss them exhaustively.

- In the first place we must realize that the transition to democracy in many States throughout the OSCE area is going through a difficult phase, a process which is by no means finished. In reality, this should not surprise us. After all, the transition to democracy and the consolidation of democracy require time and a favourable international context. For this reason I firmly believe that the OSCE must maintain, with more resolve than ever, its commitment to support and accompany these processes so as to guarantee their peaceful development. To adapt a line from the Spanish poet Antonio Machado, the path to democracy is there to be trodden.
- In the area of crisis management and confidence building, which are part of the genetic code of this Organization, there is also work remaining to be done. While we may have made a great deal of progress in resolving the conflicts that plagued the former Yugoslavia, we must recognize that there still remains a lot of work to do with a view to strengthening democratic institutions, coexistence and the rule of law in some parts of this region. In 2007, moreover, we shall find the question of Kosovo very much in the foreground. We in the Chairmanship will maintain the commitment to continue with the presence of the OSCE on the ground. We shall support the efforts being made to build a structured, multi-ethnic and tolerant society determined to respect human rights and democratic institutions.
- As far as the so-called protracted conflicts are concerned, we have not been able, alas, to resolve them in all these years. As long as there remain zones of conflict and lines of battle within our continent, the OSCE will have work to do. The Spanish Chairmanship will endeavour to facilitate matters, trying to give continuity to the whole process or to set in motion the confidence-building measures agreed on by the parties which seem most likely to contribute to the solution of conflicts. We are prepared, with your assistance, to act with energy and dedication, but at the same time in a thoroughly pragmatic spirit designed to achieve practical results.
- Our challenges are not limited to relations between States. Within individual States our increasingly diverse societies find themselves menaced by various kinds of intolerance, discrimination and even hatred. I want to make it clear that Spain, in its capacity as Chairman, will give special attention to using the institutions, mechanisms and activities available in the human dimension which are best designed to accommodate the diversities in our plural societies through democratic channels entailing popular participation.
- Furthermore, this diversity seems to be increasing within the OSCE in such a way that it could represent a real obstacle to our cohesion. The participating States find themselves in different stages of political and economic transition and at different levels as regards membership in the relevant international organizations. The OSCE must continue its efforts to bring about more or less institutionalized dialogue with other organizations and co-operation processes in its own area and in fact also beyond the boundaries of that area.
- At the same time we must be aware that the OSCE does not constitute an isolated space within its immediate surroundings. It is absurd to suppose that we can guarantee our security without taking account of the vast transformations occurring among our neighbours in the Mediterranean area, sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Asia. For this reason we are bound to begin by strengthening our relationship

with the Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation. In the course of its Chairmanship Spain wants to help strengthen relations with our Mediterranean colleagues, but without forgetting the contribution of the Asian partners. The point is to endow these relationships with genuine content and launch specific activities that will give reality to the status of these areas, showing participants the variety of initiatives possible within the framework of the OSCE. In this way we will be pursuing two objectives: to revive interest among those who are already part of the group and to attract the attention of other possible Mediterranean partners for the future.

- Finally, with regard to the actual framework of the OSCE, as participating States in that Organization we should be capable of doing more to implement the commitments we have assumed by putting them effectively into practice. The matter is very simple and very clear: given the complexity of the challenges that confront us in these turbulent times at the beginning of the twenty-first century, commitments have value only when they are given practical effect.

We have to carry on now, as the Secretary General has reminded us, with limited resources. The reality of “zero growth” in the budget imposes on all of us the responsibility of making choices — choices with regard to priorities and with regard to the activities in which we choose to become involved. Let us not be afraid to make the choices we consider necessary for the effectiveness of this Organization.

In this context, then, Spain has selected its priorities in keeping with a clearly defined criterion: what I mean is that we focus on what is essential. The Chairman-in-Office will announce these priorities to the Permanent Council in Vienna on 11 January. Right now, however, I may say that in each of the dimensions we will base our choice on the threats and challenges identified in the Maastricht Strategy for the twenty-first century.

In the politico-military sphere, Spain will endeavour during its Chairmanship to promote the OSCE’s capacities as a forum for dialogue and co-operation. Special attention will be given to the protracted conflicts which are still going on in our region: we must work to resolve them and to banish the tensions that have accumulated in the last few months, ensuring that they give way to an atmosphere of détente and understanding. Similarly, Spain will try to ensure that the OSCE develops all its conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation capacities.

We will also be giving special attention to the fight against terrorism. Fortright and determined co-operation on the part of the participating States and scrupulous respect for democratic standards and values offer guarantees of success. Similarly, Spain will promote the protection and due recognition of victims of terrorism.

In the economic and environmental sphere, Spain is endeavouring to enlarge the scope of environmental security and to win recognition of the problem of soil degradation and contamination as a serious threat to our collective security, placing emphasis on the need for rational and effective water management and giving the OSCE an active role as one of the principal protagonists in this field which is so crucial for our future.

With regard to the human dimension, Spain intends to give special attention to everything connected with “participation and diversity in open societies”, since this is a

question which affects all OSCE States equally. Under this general theme, every effort will be made to continue the fight against intolerance and discrimination and trafficking in human beings, and to enhance transparency and democratic processes and further the creation of societies genuinely subject to the rule of law — the only way, in the final analysis, of protecting our citizenry and making sense of our social organization.

To conclude, then — after describing to you the main challenges and priorities of the forthcoming Spanish Chairmanship — I should like to reiterate our resolve to promote an OSCE which is truly:

- A forum in which differences are shared rather than exacerbated;
- A forum in which dialogue is strengthened and not suffocated;
- A forum in which resources are held in common and not divided up; and
- A forum in which requirements are firmly tackled and not avoided.

Considering the debates of recent days, I should like to utter a warning about the danger of going back to the creation of blocs in our area where they had effectively disappeared. All our efforts in the OSCE must be geared towards avoiding this. This Organization requires a genuine collective will, not the imposition upon others of a will belonging only to some of us.

The OSCE represents a unique opportunity. Let us summon up the wisdom to grasp it. The Organization is already a community of values and a community of commitments, and it should also be a community for action.

With this common objective in mind, the Spanish Chairmanship will welcome you on 11 January in Vienna, a city which for centuries has been closely bound up with the history of Spain. This will be the first stage of a journey that is to end in Madrid.

Thank you very much.