

- The Netherlands fully subscribes to the statement of the European Union, as presented by the Portuguese EU Presidency. Please allow me, Mr Chairman, to elaborate on a few elements in my national capacity.
- First of all, the Netherlands welcomes the fact that the informal Working Group on Legal Personality, Legal capacity and Privileges and Immunities reached consensus on the text of a draft Convention, which could finally give the OSCE an international legal personality, legal capacity and privileges and immunities as a genuine international organisation.
- The Netherlands would like to commend this Group, chaired by our own able Permanent Representative to the OSCE, both for its hard work and for this unique result. This common effort has brought us further than ever before in cracking some of the hard nuts around an issue which has been with us for quite some time.
- The Netherlands urges all participating States not to miss the unique opportunity at hand to at least solve some of the problems which the OSCE faces at present, just because of the lack of a legal personality and to ensure that Ministers will be able to endorse the text of the Convention in Madrid.
- The Netherlands remains open to further discussions in the course of next year on the possibility of a Charter or Statute, provided that this would not re-open the existing commitments which participating States have freely accepted since the very beginning of the Helsinki process.
- Second, the Netherlands would like to underline the importance of moving forward on the issue of election observation in the OSCE area. In our view the OSCE commitments on elections and election observation should be strengthened, not weakened.
- Elections form an important element in democratic processes. ODIHR should continue to be able to assist all participating States in implementing their OSCE commitments, on the basis of its mandate which provides for a certain autonomy, as agreed by participating States. In order to be able to perform its functions in a credible way, ODIHR should be allowed to make good use of this autonomous position and should not be subjected to unilateral restrictions imposed by individual participating States.
- The Netherlands welcomes all the improvements ODIHR has introduced in its own work since the Brussels Ministerial, including on elections and election observation and fully supports the draft decision which the EU has proposed on further improving electoral commitments.
- Finally, the Netherlands fully supports the efforts of the Chairmanship to find a solution on the candidatures for the Chairmanships for the coming years. For the Organisation as a whole, it remains of the utmost importance that this is solved in such a way, that it strengthens the sense of ownership and common responsibility for this Organisation, both west and east of Vienna.