



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

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Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

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EU statement in response to the address by the Chairman-in-Office, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, H.E. Iikka Kanerva

The EU congratulates H.E. Iikka Kanerva, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, on the assumption of the functions of Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE. We warmly welcome you to the Permanent Council for the first time in this new capacity and thank you for your address outlining the priorities of the Finnish Chairmanship in 2008. We wish you well and look forward to working with you and your delegation.

The transition from the Spanish to the Finnish Chairmanship provides us with a chance to build on the achievements of the past under a new leadership. The EU welcomes your readiness to engage on the range of issues facing our organisation today. You can be assured that you have the full support of the EU in all of your efforts to defend and promote our organisation's core values as well as the uniqueness of its model of cooperative security. The motto of "continuity, coherence and cooperation" that has been selected for the Finnish Chairmanship is a good choice that highlights some of the best aspects of our work here at the OSCE.

The EU agrees that the decision at the Madrid Ministerial Council on the Chairmanships-in-Office for the next three years will allow the organisation to structure its work with a forward-looking perspective. In this light, we appreciate the Chairman's offer to hold a five-party meeting of past, present and future Chairmanships in Finland.

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At the same time, the EU emphasises that the adoption of a budget and the scales of contribution in the near future is necessary for the OSCE to be able to carry out its tasks. We are highly concerned by proposals of some participating States for considerable cuts in the Secretariat, ODIHR and several OSCE field missions. The extensive cuts that have been proposed by some other participating States would make it impossible for the organisation to perform essential tasks and they would indeed put at risk the organisation's capability to function. We are prepared to work closely with those who have problems with these issues and call on all participating States to make the necessary effort to resolve them as soon as possible.

The EU remains firmly committed to the adoption of the text on the Convention on the international legal personality, legal capacity and privileges and immunities of the OSCE at the earliest possible date, which would give the OSCE the status of a fully fledged international organisation. Furthermore, the EU sees merit in devising a statute or a charter for the OSCE as long as it does not reopen existing commitments. We would be willing to continue discussions on such a statute or charter.

The EU is of the firm conviction that the OSCE should remain engaged in Kosovo. The OSCE Mission in Kosovo continues to play an essential role in supporting our common goal of promoting in Kosovo a peaceful, democratic and multi-ethnic society based on the rule of law, highest level of internationally recognised human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Cooperation with Central Asian States remains a priority for the EU. The OSCE's engagement in Central Asia, including on border security and management, plays a central role in complementing the EU Strategy on Central Asia.

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The Chairman's desire to contribute personally to the OSCE's conflict prevention and crisis management efforts by visiting those countries concerned by protracted conflicts is a positive sign that will hopefully translate into concrete progress on the ground for the populations concerned.

The EU agrees with your assessment that the CFE treaty remains a cornerstone of security and stability in Europe and regrets the unilateral suspension of its implementation by the Russian Federation. We are aware of the mutual benefits that the CFE Treaty has provided all of us with, and every effort should be made to assure that these mutual benefits can be preserved in the future.

The Chairman's focus on intensifying the implementation of the Vienna Document 1999, the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security and the OSCE's efforts on small arms and light weapons and ammunition as well as on border management provides a framework to achieve our goals in these areas. The EU supports the Chairman's intention to promote cooperation both with other organisations and with interested participating States. The fact that Finland will hold both the Chair of the FSC and the Chairmanship-in-Office at the same time will hopefully also serve to encourage cooperation within the OSCE itself.

In this day and age, the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security is of increasing importance also in the economic and environmental spheres. Cooperation among countries contributes to stability and prosperity and the EU supports the Chairman's intention to discuss the OSCE commitments and recommendations in the framework of the 16th Economic and Environmental Forum dealing with security and environmental issues in the areas of maritime and inland waterways cooperation.

The EU has frequently expressed its full support for ODIHR's election observation activities and its internationally recognised election observation methodology. We

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stand ready to broaden and deepen our election-related commitments. The EU calls on all participating States to enable ODIHR to observe their elections without restriction, in accordance with established practice and in line with the spirit of their commitments. The EU continues to attach importance to the close cooperation between the ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly on the basis of the 1997 Cooperation Agreement, and welcomes the effective cooperation seen most recently in Georgia.

The EU has always attached the greatest importance to the promotion of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and wholeheartedly supports the Chairman's priorities in the human dimension. In particular, support for human rights defenders is a long established principle of the European Union's human rights external relations and a most appropriate subject for a Ministerial Decision.

The EU welcomes the Chairman's engagement to counter trafficking in human beings. We also support the emphasis that Finland intends to put on Roma and Sinti issues, being conscious of the very special situation faced by the Roma and Sinti across Europe.

We are encouraged by the Chairman's request to the Senior Gender Adviser to address the meeting of the Heads of Missions and Institutions and are confident that due priority will be given to the full implementation of the Gender Action Plan adopted in 2004.

The EU shares with you the sentiment that the foundations of our cooperation are once again being put to the test. We fully share your goal to find ways to enhance the OSCE's capabilities and improve its working methods. We look forward to hearing more in due course on how we can take this forward together.

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2008 promises to be a busy and lively year for all of us here at the OSCE. The EU is determined to contribute constructively to the debates that will occupy us and hopes that all other States will do so too. We reiterate our full support for the Finnish Chairman-in-Office and his team and wish them all the best for the coming year.

The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, as well as the European Free Trade Association country and member of the European Economic Area Iceland align themselves with this declaration.

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

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