



REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

ENGLISH only

STATEMENT

by

**H.E. Mr. Ilir META,
Deputy prime Minister and
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Albania,**

at the 17th Ministerial Council Meeting of the OSCE

Athens, 1-2 December 2009

Check against delivery

Mr. Chairman,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Albanian delegation, I would like to join my colleagues and express our sincere appreciation for the warm hospitality that our neighbours and friends, the Greek authorities and Prime Minister Papandreu personally, have reserved to all of us.

As another intensive year for the OSCE is drawing to a close, we are very pleased to note that Greece has fully lived up to the expectations reposed on a Chairmanship-in-Office at a time when the Organization has embarked upon a challenging process of intensifying the dialogue on Europe's current security architecture and the state of implementation of all OSCE commitments. In this regard, the efforts, the creativity and the leadership shown by Greek Chairmanship during the Corfu Process deserve due praise and recognition.

Dear Colleagues,

We note with satisfaction that during the last year the OSCE has taken a central stage in the European security dialogue and has been identified as the most appropriate forum to address the security concerns of the Euro-Atlantic community. The proceedings of the Athens Ministerial Council offer the opportunity to take stock of the constructive dialogue held under the Corfu Process and task the Organization to further advance with the dialogue on the current security architecture and the state of implementation of the existing commitments. In this light, Albania strongly supports the adoption of the Corfu declaration and the relevant decision.

We do believe that Europe's current security structure is already tested as being solid and effective, while its foundations are consistent with the geopolitical realities and needs of the continent. Over the last two decades we have been able to develop an effective network of international organizations, whose mandates,

institutions and values reflect the comprehensive nature of European Security and are complementary to each other.

20 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall we note with appreciation how successful this structure has been in drastically improving the European security environment and in providing peace and stability to Eastern and South-eastern Europe. Hence we see no need for radical changes in this area.

On the other side, we understand that the very existence of this dialogue suggests that the transatlantic community perceives that the principles of cooperative and indivisible security for all have not been entirely fulfilled. In our opinion this cannot be attributed to the shortcomings of the current security architecture, but rather to the persistence of protracted conflicts and to the selective implementation of the commitments adopted in the Human Dimension, which is at the core of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security.

For this reason Albania supports the idea that the Corfu Process should clearly reaffirm the entire validity of the current comprehensive *acquis* of the OSCE, and at the same time explore ways for selective improvements in the existing security architecture, including the adoption of new mechanisms to strengthen the effectiveness of the OSCE in conflict prevention and resolution, to better address transnational threats, as well as to independently monitor violations of human rights. These aspects deserve and call for our renewed attention during the discussion that will take place next year.

Dear Colleagues,

I believe you are all aware of the reasons behind Albania's long-standing bid to chair the OSCE; of our demarches conducted this year and our strong dedication to this offer that dates back as far as May 2006. I avail myself of this occasion to express our sincere gratitude to all those OSCE member states that have genuinely welcomed and strongly encouraged our offer.

Albania has noted that despite the extensive support received during this year, our bid did not rally the unanimous support needed to pass a Ministerial

Decision here in Athens. In this context, our approach was guided by the overarching interest of the OSCE to build the consensus needed in such cases. As you already are aware we took a flexible stance, deciding to postpone our bid to chair the Organization in the year 2014.

This bid remains a top priority in our OSCE agenda and we expect support from all member states when the time for a decision has come. We would like to assure our partners and all the OSCE community that Albania is ready to fully take up the challenges and the responsibilities that the Chairmanship entails. We believe we possess all the necessary capacities to show leadership during our Chairmanship-in-Office and to give a substantial contribution to the cause of security that the OSCE strives to further; just as we do at a regional level, in the Western Balkans, where we responsibly pursue a moderate, constructive and forward-looking regional policy, in keeping with the vital interests of the region's Euro-Atlantic integration agenda.

Mr. Chairman,

During this year Albania has reached important milestones in its Euro-Atlantic integration process, not least the organization of the June parliamentary elections that met most of the OSCE commitments. As an outcome of the popular vote Albania is governed by a coalition of parties that are strongly committed and is working hard to materialize a long-standing aspiration of the Albanian people, notably the integration into the European Union.

In this endeavour the current government will build upon the encouraging developments in the state of relations between Albania and the European Union, resulting after Albania's membership application and the Council's latest decision to request the opinion of the European Commission on Albania's readiness to become a candidate country. Albania commends this decision and is making the necessary preparations to face the next steps of this process that we expect will turn Albania into an EU candidate country within the shortest period of time possible.

Dear Colleagues,

Never in its turbulent history has the Western Balkans enjoyed such a peaceful and stable geopolitical environment and such a clear perspective of Euro-Atlantic integration. In April 2009, Albania and Croatia become fully-fledged members of NATO, while the other countries of the region have steadily advanced their respective integration agendas. Albania welcomes these developments and takes the opportunity to reiterate our strong support and unwavering contribution for the European perspective of the whole region.

We commend the Government of Kosova for organizing free and fair municipal elections; the first held after the independence of the country and entirely run by the local authorities. Albania considers these elections are yet another example of the increased maturity of the Kosova people and its political representatives. They further reconfirm that an independent Kosova is perfectly able to provide a tangible contribution to the security of the Western Balkans. In this regard, we would like to express our satisfaction for the encouraging level of participation of the local Serb community in these elections. Their participation in the democratic and legitimate institutions of independent Kosova is the best contribution they could make to their future, which is naturally and inevitably linked with a stable, prosperous and European Kosova.

Finally Mr. Chairman, we would like to wish the incoming Kazakh Chairmanship-in-Office every success in their challenging endeavours and we look forward to closely cooperate with them in all areas, especially in the field of religious and cultural dialogue where our two countries boast successful models of tolerant societies.

I thank you for your attention.