

Meeting of Foreign Ministers of the OSCE

29 – 30 November 2007, Madrid

Address by H.E. Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir,

Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland

Mr. Chairman, Minister Moratinos,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset let me congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, for the dynamism and commitment you and your team in Vienna and Madrid have brought to your chairmanship.

Mr. Chairman

The OSCE and Europe have come a long way since 1975 and the signature of the Helsinki Final Act. OSCE and its forbears have made their contribution to shaping the Europe we have today in lasting peace, prosperity and democracy.

Last year's work on "Strengthening the Effectiveness of the OSCE" resulted in improvement in the transparency of the organisation. The informal working group on Legal Personality has successfully concluded its work and Iceland supports a decision here in Madrid to adopt a text of a **Convention** which would improve the functioning of the OSCE, including its field operations. As to an OSCE **Charter**, Iceland would be willing to consider such an instrument, as long as it did not re-open existing commitments.

Central to the OSCE's role of strengthening democracy is the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and its election observation missions. Iceland strongly supports ODIHR's election observation activities on the basis of the Copenhagen document of 1990. Iceland is also convinced that the measures taken by ODIHR to implement the Ministerial Council Decision 19/06 will further strengthen ODIHR's role as the standard setter and leading agency for election observation in the OSCE region.

We would also like to stress the importance of continued partnership between ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, on the basis of the 1997 Cooperation agreement. ODIHR's methodology and professionalism is a rich resource. No action should be taken that could undermine ODIHR's autonomous position in election observation. It is incumbent on all member states to cooperate to the maximum with ODIHR in the execution of its tasks. In particular, it is absolutely essential that timely invitations be issued by participating states and that conditions are not imposed which restrict election observations in any way.

Mr. Chairman,

An essential element of peace and prosperity is security, not least of the individual. One of the most vicious assaults on personal security, particularly of women and children is **trafficking in human beings**. We very much support the good work of the OSCE Special Representative and co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and would like to underline that the OSCE should also focus on children in this respect.

Increasing the participation of women at all levels of decision making is as vital to the OSCE as it is to all other international organisations, and indeed, national administrations. We attach importance to **gender mainstreaming** in all OSCE dimensions and promotion of women's rights including countering all forms of violence against women. Iceland is among those countries who strongly recommend that these topics should be in the forefront of those to be discussed in human dimension events next year.

Mr. Chairman,

The narcotics trade contributes both to organised crime and to terrorism. Bearing in mind that several of the OSCE participating states have common borders with **Afghanistan**, Iceland welcomes initiatives for OSCE engagements with Afghanistan, which is an OSCE partner state, to secure those borders, also because the security situation has relevance for the OSCE region. Iceland, therefore, welcomes the decision to address border security and management assistance and training for border guards and customs officers along these borders, including through activities related to capacity-building and the fight against drug trafficking.

Mr. Chairman,

Fostering Human rights, democracy and the rule of law is at the core of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security. We must build on the commitments we have undertaken in our Organisation. Fulfilment of our commitments should also be the guiding principle of any state assuming the **Presidency of the OSCE**. Having said that I would like to underline that Iceland holds the view that any of the 56 participating states of the OSCE should be entitled to chair the organisation, but should equally importantly be aware of these obligations. Iceland welcomes the efforts of the Spanish chairmanship to reach an agreement whereby Greece, Kazakhstan and Lithuania would chair the OSCE in the years following the Finnish presidency.

Mr. Chairman,

The stalemate in deciding the final status of Kosovo is to the detriment of all parties. The international community has invested massive resources, both human and financial, in re-establishing security and peace in the region. All parties should work together in good faith with the international community to find solutions which will enable Kosovo and Serbia to look to the future.

Iceland commends UNMIK'S close relationship with the OSCE Mission in Kosovo (**OMIK**) which inter alia supported the organisation of the November 17 elections. Iceland is convinced that the OSCE Mission (OMIK) can continue to play an important role in Kosovo. Therefore we welcome the extension of OMIK's mandate to 31 December 2008.

Finally Mr. Chairman,

The Treaty on Conventional Forces Europe is a central pillar of the European Security Architecture. It is a common achievement which we should strive to maintain together by working for early entry into force of the adapted Treaty while ensuring the fulfilment of all related commitments.

I should like to thank you, Minister Moratinos, for the excellent conduct of this meeting and you and your able team for the good work during Spain's Presidency.

I would also like to wish the incoming Finnish Chairman in Office and the Finnish team every success for the OSCE Presidency in 2008.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.