



STATEMENT

**by the Chairman in Office,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia Dr Dimitrij Rupel
at the meeting of the North Atlantic Council,
Brussels, 26 January 2005**

Mr. Secretary General,
Ambassadors,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to address the North Atlantic Council in the first month of Slovenia's Chairmanship of the OSCE.

Until recently, NATO membership and EU accession were high priorities for my country. Now we are active participants, we chair the OSCE, and we look forward to our Presidency of the EU.

Triple 'R' Agenda in an Anniversary Year

This is a year of achievements for Slovenia and anniversaries in which we will recall dramatic changes that have occurred in Europe's recent history.

In May we will commemorate the end of the Second World War. It will be a time to recall the horrors of war and extremism, to mourn the victims, and to reflect on our desire to prevent the recurrence of such violence and hatred on our continent and in the world.

This year in the OSCE community we will mark the thirtieth anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act – a document that was so important in promoting security and co-operation in Europe during the Cold War and which set in motion events that significantly contributed to the collapse of communism.

2005 is also the 15th anniversary of the Charter of Paris which ushered in a united Europe and set down building blocks for a security architecture that has been so important for the process of European integration and post-Communist transition.

It is therefore ironic – and troubling – that in this year when we should be celebrating our unity as a continent and a Euro-Atlantic area there are signs that the common ground on which we stand may be shakier than we thought.

At the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Sofia last December OSCE Foreign Ministers failed, for the second year in a row, to reach consensus on a Ministerial statement. I've also been worried by the tone of some remarks.

At the moment the OSCE still has no budget for 2005 and no scales of assessment. Our Border Monitoring Operation in Georgia, which I believe was one of our most valuable field missions, is closing despite the interest of the host country to continue its activities. And the OSCE has been

heavily criticized by the Russian Federation and some countries of the CIS which it says promotes double standards, is deviating from its original objectives, and is losing its comparative advantage.

I do not have the answers to all of these complex problems. But in order to make a start in addressing this situation, I have proposed a Triple “R” agenda for Slovenia’s Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2005: Revitalize, Reform, and Rebalance.

By revitalizing the OSCE I mean injecting new ideas into the Organization. Next month I will appoint a panel of seven eminent persons to look at ways of strengthening the OSCE. I have also encouraged participating States to come forward with fresh ideas for the OSCE’s future, and I hope that the Ministerial Council at the end of the year in Ljubljana will bring to fruition many of the initiatives that have been launched over the past two years on border monitoring, counter terrorism, in the political-military dimension, and concerning economic and environmental issues.

I will seek to rebalance the OSCE’s three dimensions – bringing up the political-military and economic and environmental dimensions to the same level as the human dimension, which remains the core of the OSCE’s work.

Strengthening the Political-Military and Economic and Environmental Dimensions

Allow me to expand on that briefly, because many activities may have an impact on corresponding activities in NATO and EAPC, whose members are also OSCE participating states.

This June the OSCE will hold its third Annual Security Review Conference. The ASRC has become a main event in the OSCE calendar, bringing together top political-military experts from around the OSCE to discuss the most pressing security issues of the day. It is a forum for exchanging ideas, and an incubator for hatching proposals, many of which are developed into operational activities.

A proposal has been made for the OSCE to host a seminar on military doctrine. I believe that this is timely, and the OSCE is the ideal place to discuss this topic. Disarmament, arms control and confidence-building measures have long been central elements of the OSCE’s work. Bearing in mind the changes in the security environment, technology, and warfare, it would be useful to compare notes on contemporary military doctrines.

This year, as a matter of priority, the OSCE’s Forum for Security Co-operation will pay significant attention to the implementation of decisions aimed at strengthening the control of participating States over export and trafficking of small arms and light weapons, including MANPADS. One of the priorities is also the implementation of the concrete projects designed to assist participating States in improving the management, security and destruction of surpluses of small arms and conventional ammunition stockpiles. To that end Slovenia took over the coordination of the work on the stockpiles of conventional ammunition. There is a considerable potential for co-operation with other international and regional organizations in this field, particularly with NATO. NATO is doing already a lot in this field with some countries concerned and we will only be successful if we can combine the efforts.

In order to bring the political-military dimension more into the mainstream of the OSCE's activities, we will strive to increase the interaction between the Forum for Security Co-operation and the Permanent Council.

In terms of counter-terrorism, particular attention will be paid this year to looking at ways of curbing the use of the Internet for terrorist purposes, reporting lost and stolen passports to Interpol, and enhancing container security. This will be in addition to ongoing efforts to strengthen travel document security and to facilitate the ratification and implementation of the 12 universal anti-terrorism instruments as called for under UNSCR 1373.

We will also build up the OSCE's activities in policing. I see this as a growth area for the OSCE, bringing together as it does both security and human rights.

Border security is also of particular interest to the OSCE. We have firm intention to finalize an OSCE Border Management and Security Concept this year. This should be complemented by operational border related activities. For instance, we are actively engaged in implementing a cross-border co-operation programme in South East Europe on the basis of a concept jointly developed with other international organizations, including NATO, in Ohrid in 2003.

Since 1999, we have had an important Border Monitoring Operation in the mountains along the Georgian-Russian border designed to build confidence between the parties in this volatile region. In the view of the recent situation we should consider ways to accommodate the Georgian Government's desire to have international assistance in strengthening its border management capabilities.

Cooperation between the OSCE and NATO in the economic and environmental dimension has been considerably developed in the last few years. NATO, through the Science for Peace Programme, has joined the Environment and Security Initiative as an associate. Together, in 2004 the OSCE, NATO, UNDP and UNEP conducted an in-depth technical assessment of environmental risk factors in the Ferghana Valley and launched a 2.5 million dollar programme to deal with radioactive waste management, preventing and remedying industrial hazards, improving disaster preparedness and risk reduction, as well as introducing sustainable management of land and water. This type of targeted project can make a real difference to those affected. It would be good to build on this work as well as the successful experience of the joint NATO-OSCE South Caucasus River Monitoring Project.

Keeping a Strong Human Dimension

Strengthening these two dimensions should not come at the expense of the OSCE's human dimension.

Some have argued that the OSCE applies different standards East and West of Vienna. I reject this categorically. The OSCE has common standards which are agreed to by consensus. That is the bedrock on which OSCE States inter-act with each other, and the foundation for dealings between peoples and their governments. Any attempt to erode those standards would weaken the bonds of the system that unites us.

There may be ways that election monitoring could be improved. This can be discussed. But not at the expense of the OSCE's well-deserved high-quality work and reputation in this field. I have full confidence in the work of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights which is our flagship for elections, human rights and democracy-building in the OSCE area.

The OSCE is also well known for its work on national minority issues. This remains extremely important. Some inter-ethnic issues remain the source of violent conflict and so-called new minorities are presenting complex challenges in our multi-ethnic communities. I believe that there is more scope for the OSCE in this field, which is why the main theme of our Chairmanship will be “migration and integration”.

One of the best ways to do this is to devote more attention to tolerance and non-discrimination. I have re-appointed three personal representatives in this field who have recently begun their work and we will pay special attention to the fight against all forms of intolerance.

On anti-trafficking, added attention will be paid to the special needs of child victims of trafficking. We will continue to work with NATO in the field of anti-trafficking, through the efforts of the OSCE Special Representative to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings.

OSCE and NATO share a common vision on anti-trafficking in their respective policies. I particularly commend NATO’s encouragement to all nations contributing forces to NATO-led operations not only to ratify, accept or approve the UN Convention against Organized Crime and the relevant anti-trafficking Protocol, but also to adhere to the OSCE Code of Conduct, which has specific anti-trafficking provisions.

But frankly I think that all of our countries could and should do more to make this a priority. We hear a lot about the countries of origin and transit of this vile trade in human beings. But we too easily forget that the victims end up in the streets of our own cities, in western, central Europe and North America, as well as in the east of the continent. It is the responsibility of all of us to tackle human trafficking on our own doorsteps.

OSCE’s contribution to peace building and regional stability

A centrepiece of the OSCE’s activity is its contribution to building peace and regional stability in the OSCE area.

The recent presidential elections in **Ukraine** have occupied much of our attention for the last weeks. The OSCE was fully engaged in the process, and its monitors played a crucial role in highlighting irregularities that led to a repeat of the second round.

Having visited Ukraine three weeks ago, I believe that the time is ripe for the opening of a new chapter in OSCE-Ukraine relations. This could also have implications for regional security, particularly resolution of the **Transdnestrian conflict**. I intend to visit Moldova after the parliamentary elections in March to see what new impulses can be given to the thawing of this long-frozen conflict.

The OSCE plays a lead role in the conflict settlement processes in Moldova and Georgia and we intend to continue to work with the parties to seek a peaceful and sustainable resolution to these crises.

Of course, the Moldova issue – as in Georgia – is tied up with the **Istanbul commitments and the CFE Treaty**. I have heard the arguments on both sides. The Russian Federation complains of unnecessary postponement of the entry into force of the adapted CFE Treaty, while we, NATO countries – among others - insist on the complete implementation of the Istanbul commitments first.

The bottom line is that all sides should remain committed to the CFE Treaty and to a peaceful resolution of the conflicts in Georgia and Moldova in ways that respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the States concerned. A key principle is that any stationing of foreign troops should have the agreement of the State concerned. I believe that there will be plenty of occasions this year to find a way forward on these issues at a high level and I pledge the commitment of Slovenia as a friend of all those involved to help facilitate this process.

We will also continue to work with Armenia and Azerbaijan to build on recent positive developments that give some hope for progress in resolving the long-standing Nagorno-Karabakh crisis. At the end of this week a fact-finding mission to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan will take place under the auspices of the OSCE.

The OSCE must remain engaged in **South Eastern Europe**, a region that has accomplished much so far. The progress achieved due to the engagement of the OSCE, NATO, EU and others needs to be consolidated in order to prevent the possibility of the type of violence that we witnessed in Kosovo last March. Positive developments in the region validate the steps taken by the states concerned and the co-operative approach of European institutions.

The OSCE, in close co-operation with other international partners, will continue to provide assistance on minority issues, in the repatriation of refugees and internally displaced persons, to enhance the capacity of the domestic judiciaries, and to monitor domestic war-crimes trials - also in support of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

Kosovo deserves special attention this year. It is my intention to make sure that the OSCE is actively involved in the standards review process and any re-structuring of the international presence in Kosovo. OSCE is willing to further engage in the process of moving Kosovo towards becoming a stable and fully functioning society.

Central Asia is an important region for the security of Europe, and the OSCE has a well-established regional presence there. We will deepen our co-operation with the countries of Central Asia on a range of issues including border management and security, policing, migration, democratization and education. We will also be involved in important election processes coming soon in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

I believe that the OSCE can be a catalyst for promoting regional security in Central Asia, also bearing in mind that Afghanistan and Mongolia are OSCE Partners for Co-operation.

I personally believe that the OSCE should continue its involvement in Afghanistan to contribute to the international community's efforts in which NATO plays such an important role.

The need to talk and build trust

Ladies and Gentlemen,

These are the types of activities that the OSCE intends to carry out this year. The OSCE is a model "soft" security organization, with highly innovative Institutions, operational field activities, and a broad membership that makes it a truly pan-European Organization that can promote security through co-operation in Europe.

It is evident from recent developments and the contemporary situation in Europe that such an organization is highly necessary and relevant.

In this anniversary year the OSCE is not resting on its laurels, reminiscing about its important role in détente or the process of post-Communist transition. Rather, we are fully engaged with the challenges of the day. How can we contribute to a better understanding among OSCE participating States, particularly through addressing the evident grievances of the Russian Federation? How can we stay one step ahead of the latest threats to our security? How can we prevent and resolve violent conflict? How can we assist States in their processes of democratization?

At the same time, how can we – as a large group of States – ensure that the OSCE can remain a useful vehicle for promoting security and co-operation? And how can we assist others – either our Partners or adjacent regions – to learn from and profit from the CSCE and OSCE's experience and expertise?

I will not hide from you that there is a sense of crisis in the OSCE. The recent statements of dissatisfaction from the Russian Federation and some CIS countries must be taken seriously. But we should be aware that the criticism is about much more than the OSCE.

It is clear that we need to talk, and the OSCE is the ideal forum for that to happen. It is important for NATO to speak with one voice, and to defend its founding principles. It is also important for NATO to be as transparent as possible in communicating its objectives, and to build trust between it and the Russian Federation. Relationships need careful nurturing. Here the NATO-Russia Council can play a valuable role.

But there is no substitute for the inclusive, multi-lateral framework provided by the OSCE. As I will say when I visit Moscow next week, the OSCE is not the problem, it is part of the solution.

The OSCE, like Europe, is at a cross-roads. It is very likely that when my successor, the Foreign Minister of Belgium, comes to talk to you next year the OSCE will have changed considerably. That would be consistent with its past performance as arguably the most innovative and flexible security organization in Europe, albeit anchored in a clear set of principles and commitments.

NATO is also in the midst of changes, as indeed are the EU, the UN and other organizations. NATO has proven its flexibility and ability to adapt in a number of operations in the Balkans and in Afganistan. If we did not adapt to a rapidly changing world we would quickly become irrelevant.

Let us therefore continue to innovate, to listen to the voices of all OSCE members, and to build on our strengths. And let us continue the co-operation between States and all organizations that have an interest in European and international security. That would be the best way to pay tribute to those who fought for freedom more than sixty years ago, those who signed and were inspired by the Helsinki Final Act, and all those who continue to believe today in a Europe whole and free.

Thank you for your attention.

Mr. Secretary General, thank you for the invitation and I invite you to address the OSCE Permanent Council this year.