

A D D R E S S

**by Dr Dimitrij Rupel, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia
at the 12th OSCE Ministerial Meeting in Sofia,
7th December 2004**

Mr Chairman,

Several decades ago Slovenian writer France Bevk decided that he had to get to know the Bulgarian nation. He thus embarked on a trip and brought back his impressions of your people, culture and history to the Slovenian public in the book "Ten Days in Bulgaria". In the book, he noted with excitement that he and his Bulgarian friends could speak their own languages and still understand each other. The book was published in 1938. What followed afterwards was a long period during which contact between our two peoples, despite the numerous cultural and linguistic links that bind us, was limited. This was due to specific historical circumstances, of which we are all aware. In the end it was the Helsinki Process that began bringing down the walls that kept us apart.

I therefore find special symbolism in taking over from you the role of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office. I believe this handover speaks volumes not only of the changes that have taken place since 1975, but also of the special mission and purpose of this organization. I am honored to continue where you are leaving off. I would like to thank you and your staff for all the energy you put into your Chairmanship and for your efforts to reinvigorate the organization.

Infolge Ihres Engagements bringt uns das 12. Ministerratstreffen in Sofia zahlreiche wichtige Aufgaben. Meiner Meinung nach ist es von großer Bedeutung, Ihre Bemühungen bei der OSZE-Reform fortzusetzen, um die Effizienz und das Ansehen der Organisation zu verbessern. Einige andere internationale Organisationen befinden sich ständig im Reformprozess und es gibt keinen Grund, warum die OSZE es ihnen nicht gleichmachen sollte. Es freut mich daher, dass die Entscheidung über die Rolle des Generalsekretärs seine Funktion als administrativer Hauptoffizier (Chief Administrative Officer) der OSZE stärken wird. Sollte bis Ende dieses Jahres keine Entscheidung getroffen werden, wird Slowenien als neuer Vorsitzender im Amt das Bestellungsverfahren des OSZE Generalsekretärs neu beginnen. Ich begrüße ebenfalls die Gründung des Gremiums namhafter Persönlichkeiten (Panel of Eminent Personalities), die neuen Anstoß zur notwendigen Bewertung unserer Tätigkeiten und der Diskussion darüber, wie wir unsere Leistung im Lichte der zukünftigen Herausforderungen verbessern könnten, geben sollte.

На мой взгляд, наиболее важным вызовом является текущее положение в организации, для которого характерна угрожающая трещина в отношениях к востоку и к западу от Вены. То, что мы не смогли принять Политическую Декларацию здесь в Софии является точным отражением этой прискорбной реальности. Иногда кажется, что чем больше мы говорим о недопущении новых разделительных линий в Европе, тем чаще мы с ними сталкиваемся. Поэтому я внимательно изучил недавнее Московское Заявление и Обращение, принятое в Астане. Разрешите подчеркнуть значение, которое я придаю Заявлению девяти президентов государств-участников СНГ. Это Заявление заслуживало бы серьезного рассмотрения даже в том случае, если бы его подписал только один глава государства. В таком виде в каком оно есть, Заявление является ярким выражением недовольства на высшем уровне, которое необходимо учитывать, когда мы рассуждаем о работе организации. Я намерен непрерывно прилагать усилия, для того что бы изменить это положение. И на конец, я убежден, что нас объединяет очень многое и что этого больше чем того что разделяет нас, прежде всего имею в виду фундамент на котором была построена наша организация.

Notre coopération est encore plus importante à la lumière des questions essentielles qui requièrent notre plus sérieuse attention. Je me réfère ici, bien sûr, à la situation actuelle relative à l'adoption de nouvelles échelles de contribution et, par conséquent, à l'adoption du budget de 2005 avant la fin de l'année. Sans cela, le fonctionnement même de l'organisation serait sérieusement compromis. Je fais donc appel à tous les Etats participants afin qu'ils manifestent leur engagement envers l'OSCE en faisant preuve de flexibilité dans les discussions en cours. Dans ce contexte, je voudrais rappeler que l'année qui suit sera une année d'anniversaires : on fêtera notamment le 30ème anniversaire de l'Acte final de Helsinki, le 15ème anniversaire de la Charte de Paris, le 10ème anniversaire de l'OSCE, ainsi que le 60ème anniversaire depuis la fin de la seconde guerre mondiale et le 10ème anniversaire des Accords de paix de Dayton. De tels événements sont toujours une occasion pour jeter un regard en arrière et essayer de tracer la voie future. Il ne serait donc pas approprié d'entamer cette année d'anniversaires sans le budget adopté. L'organisation est, après tout, efficace du point de vue du coût, elle promet beaucoup et a un grand potentiel. Cela semble parfois plus évident aux non-membres de l'OSCE qu'à ses membres. Je voudrais donc tout spécialement saluer la Mongolie en tant que nouveau partenaire pour la coopération et lui assurer que nous sommes prêts à l'assister dans l'établissement de relations étroites avec l'Organisation.

As you can see, the agenda before us is a demanding one. Needless to say, it will be faithfully reflected in the program of the Slovenian Chairmanship, which I intend to present at the Permanent Council in Vienna this coming January 13. I can already tell you that in my work I will be guided by the following principles: focus on implementation; ensuring the continuity of the work of the organization; fostering adequate attention to all three dimensions; maintaining flexibility in addressing challenges as they arise; enhancing the geographic balance of OSCE activities through promotion of issues that are relevant to the entire OSCE area and through strengthening the cooperation with other international organizations, partner states and NGOs. I therefore count on your support in eliminating the divides among us. I also count on the able assistance of the OSCE Secretariat and the OSCE Institutions in the execution of all of these demanding tasks.

Slovenia approaches the great responsibilities that await us next year with the invaluable experience and knowledge acquired this year as a member of the Troika of the OSCE. I would therefore like to thank wholeheartedly our Dutch colleagues not only for the important contributions they made to the work of the organization during their previous Chairmanship, but also for all the advice and assistance they graciously shared with us during this period of our "apprenticeship". You will be missed.

I would also like to express our appreciation to our Belgian colleagues for the fruitful cooperation to date, which presents an excellent basis for the challenging work that awaits us next year. Together we are stronger.

In conclusion, I would like to say that my biggest concern at this moment is averting a potential stalemate in the organization, by encouraging the reengagement of all the participating States within the OSCE. In my view, this will be crucial – not only for the adoption of the organization's budget, but also – for the organization's future as such. Our renewed partnership would also have concrete consequences for the work of the OSCE in a number of areas, including the so-called "frozen conflicts". I would therefore like to conclude my remarks with the hope that next year we will celebrate the Thirtieth Anniversary of working for security and cooperation in Europe not only in words but in deeds as well.

Thank you.