

## **Building the Future on Common Ground<sup>©</sup>**

### **OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Dr Dimitrij Rupel**

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Slovenia began its Chairmanship of the OSCE not by promising magic solutions but rather by advocating targeted and pragmatic steps towards thawing frozen conflicts, consolidating peace-building processes and supporting democratization. At the end of our path, I can proudly look back at the work done over the whole year.

We took over the helm of the Organization by recalling some of the remarks exchanged in Sofia and the lack of consensus between participating States on various issues. We promised to work towards bridging the divide and addressing the discontent through dialogue and an unbiased approach. I never believed that the OSCE had outlived its purpose and belonged in the scrapyard of history.

The first signs that other participating States shared this belief came when we reached consensus enabling us to overcome the administrative issues that were weighing down the normal functioning of our Organization. As a result, I will hand over the Chairmanship on New Year's Eve to my Belgian colleague Karel De Gucht with a clean slate, which will allow him to devote even more time to the real issues of concern to the peoples of our community.

The Ministerial Council at the beginning of this month has paved the road for an even more effective Organization. With Russia's constructive and valuable contribution – from the appointment of the Panel of Eminent Persons onwards – the Ministers in Ljubljana adopted a roadmap for the OSCE reform that should sharpen our tools to better confront new challenges facing our family of nations and even its neighbours.

By holding a successful Economic Forum the OSCE brought two increasingly important issues to the attention of every single country in its region - migration and integration. The Organization's unparalleled approach to these issues provides a means to keep them in focus in the future. Together with the decision on organizing a seminar on military doctrines in 2006, adopted in Ljubljana, the politico-military and the economic and environmental dimensions have been strengthened, resulting in a more balanced approach towards all three "Helsinki baskets".

At the same time the OSCE has this year yet again proven its up-to-date nature when it comes to confronting the challenges of the modern world with the Cordoba conference as the pinnacle of the Organization's activities in the fight against discrimination and the promotion of tolerance. I can also proudly say that Slovenia has contributed its own piece to the mosaic of the OSCE's human dimension by successfully implementing its own Human Rights Education Project, which has found a home in sixteen different languages including Russian.

It has been an active year in many regions of the OSCE. In Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Kosovo, among other places, the Slovenian Chairmanship has worked towards a consensus among the 55 States that brings lasting stability and progress to the regions and the OSCE community as a whole.

It is very hard to lose sight of our common purpose when you see the difference that men and women wearing white baseball caps with blue logo make on the ground. They and the Organization they represent are sometimes the preferred address, or even the only address, for our citizens to turn to for answers.

The final days of each year are also spent reflecting on the past twelve months. Has Slovenia been successful? Has the OSCE been successful? Are we all in a better shape now?

In the course of the 2005, the participating States have reached consensus over numerous issues and decisions that will shape the Organization's work in the future. The OSCE is undoubtedly in better shape today than it was one year ago. We have put our finances in order, and we have agreed on the roadmap for the reform. We have a Chairman's Statement that adequately reflects the positions of a great majority of participating States. Russia's contribution to these endeavours has been most valuable for the Chairmanship's work. All my meetings with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, as well as other Russian representatives, have proven to me that our common ground is far greater than the points on which we differ. I hope this renewed Helsinki spirit stemming from our rich past will be preserved and nurtured in a promising future for the OSCE.

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