

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,
6th December 2004**

Mr Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, let me express Slovenia's gratitude to the Bulgarian Chairmanship and above all to my colleague Solomon for the hard work done in 2004 and the hospitality we enjoy here in Sofia.

Mr Chairman,

Almost thirty years ago, when the Helsinki Final Act was signed, an editorial in The New York Times stated: *“The 35-Nation Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, now nearing its climax after 32 months of semantic quibbling, should not have happened. Never have so many struggled for so long over so little..... If it is too late to call off the Helsinki Summit every effort must be made there, publicly as well as privately, to prevent euphoria in the West.”*

Europe and the whole world have witnessed significant changes since that August day in Helsinki. The enlargement of the European Union and NATO, of which Slovenia and other countries have become members this year, are merely the most recent achievements of an idea to bring the East and the West closer to each other. The area of security and stability in our continent has been persistently expanding. The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, which has been entrusted to us, and is very much alive after three decades, proves the author of the editorial wrong. As it proves wrong all those who got the feeling in the last few days and nights that they were struggling too long over too little. Your work here is greatly appreciated.

Nevertheless, constant changes and challenges are immanent in the today's global security environment. Consequently, our response should be comprehensive, efficient and on-time. It is clear that no individual state or international organisation can be an island in this quest. Only with close and effective co-operation have we a fighting chance to overcome these challenges. We should all work together - in order to get there.

The OSCE has always responded well to challenge and adversity. Its ability to adapt has over the years become one of its greatest virtues and advantages. The responsibility to make it stronger and more visible in the global arena rests upon us.

When moving forward, it is difficult to look ahead if one has a valuable baggage to drag behind. The budgetary concerns and the issue of a new Secretary General are of vital importance to the life of the OSCE. Recent discussions among the Fifty-Five fill me with some concern about the prospects of our Organisation.

Honouring the commitments of previous Ministerials as well as Summits and their implementation is also a key factor in guaranteeing not only the Organisation's, but also each Participating State's credibility, and subsequently strengthening the OSCE's role. It is a challenge for us to corroborate our words with concrete actions, especially in the field, where it matters most. To make this step forward, to fulfill the expectations of all fifty-five Participating States, and to return to those East and West of Vienna a sense of true ownership of the Organisation, we should promote a balanced approach to all three dimensions, by strengthening each of them. Furthermore, we believe that moving events from the established locations is feasible only with a broad and sound consensus on the issue.

Mr Chairman,

When I began to write this year's address I went back, to see the one from the Maastricht's Ministerial. Right there, on the first page, was the Western Balkans - with the issue of Kosovo in the hotspot. It would be a joyful occasion to stand before you today and advocate the downsizing of our presence in this part of the OSCE area. All of us here could agree on the necessity to put the field missions out of work - the sooner, the better. Unfortunately, we must be realistic and acknowledge that there is still plenty of

unfinished business in the Western Balkans, Caucasus, Central Asia and, as recent events demonstrate, also in Eastern Europe.

Regretfully, some of the Participating States are still in dire need of long-term security and stability with a vision of economic progress. Some of them still do not live up to the OSCE standards of democracy and human rights. The famous words: “I don't know exactly what democracy is. But we need more of it.” can sometimes be very true. However, I am firmly convinced that all this is not a niche for the OSCE, but rather a whole spectrum of numerous opportunities for the Organisation, its institutions and Participating States.

Although we have to be realistic in our approach – as there is only so much that can be done between the two Ministerial meetings – Slovenia is resolute that the OSCE should have a strong role in sowing the seeds of security and co-operation throughout its area and beyond.

Mr Chairman,

The whole world has witnessed significant changes since that August day in Helsinki. Significant tasks still await us, some of them already in the upcoming weeks and months. None of us would be in Sofia today if we did not believe in the importance and the prospects for the OSCE in these endeavors.

Thank you.