

Statement

by

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at the OSCE and EastWest Institute conference

"Europe's Borderlands – The OSCE and Beyond: No New Dividing Lines?"

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Mr. Secretary-General, Mr. Mroz, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to be again here in Vienna. My coming here also represents a welcome opportunity to continue our cooperation with the EastWest Institute, which has already organized two OSCE-related conferences in Slovenia in the last two years in cooperation with our Office of the President. I believe we should continue this practice. I also believe that we should be more open to working with academic and non-governmental circles in general, as they can be more creative, even bolder in their ideas, and can sometimes offer the much-needed out-of-the-box solutions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you know, on October 1 Slovenia took over the chairmanship of the Advisory Committee on Management and Finance, arguably one of the more important bodies of the OSCE these days. A big part of the reason for its importance lies in the current situation concerning the adoption of the new scales of contribution and, subsequently, the adoption of the 2005 budget before the end of this year. Without this, the very functioning of the organization would be seriously jeopardized.

We are confronted with strong pressures to further reduce the budgetary expenditures. We are also faced with resistance by some of the Participating States to even consider increasing their share of contribution. In this sense, the discussions regarding the budget serve as a stark

reflection of the current situation in the organization, which is characterized by a crisis in the relations East and West of Vienna.

We are therefore paying special attention to and actively participate in the on-going discussions regarding the recent Moscow Declaration and the Astana Address. In this connection, I would like to emphasize the importance, which Slovenia attaches to the Declaration of nine Presidents of the CIS states. In our view, the Declaration would warrant serious consideration even if only one Head of State signed it. As it is, it represents a resounding expression of dissatisfaction at the highest level, which has to be taken into account when thinking of the future work of the organization and of the role of the EU within it. We are therefore pleased that the Astana Address, signed by eight CIS Foreign Ministers, contains concrete proposals for future activities. Our reading of the proposals indicates many possibilities for common projects and thus a way forward. This analysis is also shared by many other EU states.

Slovenia, as the incoming Chairmanship, is therefore endeavoring to ensure that the current consultations in Vienna, the Hague, and Brussels result in concrete measures to reengage countries East of Vienna within the organization. In our view, this reengagement is imperative not only for the sake of the organization as such, but also in light of the recent tragic events in the OSCE region. It is safe to say that the Beslan massacre had a similar impact upon the Russian Federation as the September 11 attacks on the United States. We should therefore pay special attention to the requested reinforcement of the OSCE activities in combating international terrorism and eradicating its underlying causes.

In a way, the Beslan tragedy presents a new opportunity for the establishment of better cooperation between the West and the Russian Federation in fight against terrorism. OSCE, with its extensive set of instruments and mechanisms offers an appropriate framework for this kind of cooperation and should be used to the full. Moreover, OSCE is the only international organization with a systematic presence on the ground in South Eastern Europe, the Caucuses and Central Asia. As such, it can contribute significantly to the stabilization of the situation in this part of the Eurasian continent. Instability in the OSCE area increases the dangers of terrorist acts.

It is therefore all the more important to strengthen the efforts to resolve the so-called “frozen conflicts”. Close cooperation between the EU and the OSCE can play a crucial role in this connection. The EU with its mechanisms can supplement the activities of the OSCE and vice versa. The key precondition for the success of such cooperation, however, is the quality of dialogue between the EU and the Russian Federation. In this sense, it is important that we use the recent Beslan tragedy and the forward-looking parts of the Astana Address to finally bring to an end the Cold War inertia in thinking, which persists within the OSCE even now, fifteen years after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the biggest concern of the incoming Slovenian Chairmanship at this moment is overcoming the current stalemate, by encouraging the reengagement of the countries East of Vienna within the OSCE. In our view, this will be crucial not only for the adoption of the organization’s budget by the end of the year, but also for the organization’s future as such. Renewed partnership between countries East and West of Vienna would also have concrete consequences for the work of the OSCE in a number of regions. As mentioned before, cooperation between the EU and the Russian Federation within the OSCE framework could have concrete impact on the “frozen conflicts”. I would therefore like to end my intervention with the hope that next year the organization will celebrate its Thirtieth Anniversary of working for security and cooperation in Europe not only in words but in deeds as well.

Thank you.