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Preface by the Chairman-in-Office

A Vision Still in the Making

Since assuming the Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2007, Spain has sought to advance the original vision that gave birth to the CSCE and the Helsinki Process and that has guided the development of the OSCE: the need to build a Europe that is whole and free and at peace with itself.

I believe that a key component of the OSCE's strength stems from the sense of a wider Europe, stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok, that it nurtures in the minds of every individual across the OSCE area, from Tajikistan, via Spain, to Canada. This noble idea contributed a great deal to changing beyond recognition the face of Europe since the days of the Cold War, to abolishing old dividing lines and tearing down walls that separated us. The change has been comprehensive and its scale historic. Much we have achieved, and much remains to be done. Therefore, if we are to keep on this track, the dividing lines of distrust that may still exist between our participating States or within our increasingly complex and diverse societies need to be bridged, their sources eliminated. I believe that the OSCE is in a position to successfully assist in meeting this challenge. It is the only organization that brings together such a varied group of countries and their societies across three continents around a body of shared commitments, and it is the only forum founded on such a generous concept of a Europe unified.

A Europe that is whole must necessarily also aspire to be free. Strengthening and improving the quality of democratic institutions across the OSCE area – this is another challenge that we all face. It takes on different appearances in different contexts. In some areas, the challenge is to strengthen new democratic institutions and embed them more deeply. In this regard, I wish to underline that the Chairmanship is intimately aware of the challenges of transition, given the modern history of Spain. At the OSCE, I have no doubt that we must sustain, with greater determination than ever, our undertaking to uphold and accompany the political transition processes that continue to unfold in the OSCE area. This is necessary to ensure that they proceed in a peaceful and successful manner, and to guarantee the effectiveness of efforts to integrate diversity into healthy societies and legitimate political structures.

Furthermore, it is Europe's right to be at peace with itself. We have made great progress in resolving the disputes that tore apart the former Yugoslavia. However, there is an ongoing need to reinforce coexistence, democratic institutions, and the rule of law in parts of that region. Naturally, the question of Kosovo has occupied centre stage during 2007. As Chairman-in-Office, I wish to stress that we will carry on supporting the efforts being

made to construct a society that is ordered, multiethnic, and tolerant, one that is committed to respect for human rights and to democratic institutions. At the same time, the OSCE will also continue to be active in seeking settlement and preventing escalation in the protracted conflicts of the former Soviet Union. This is not an easy task, but we must work to build greater confidence between the parties to the conflicts in order to prevent events from spinning out of control and to ensure that dialogue prevails and that eventually a political accord satisfactory to all parties involved is reached. The Chairmanship has been watching developments in these areas very closely, intent on actively searching for peaceful ways forward, and has promptly and vigorously reacted to the crises that have occurred.

A Europe at peace with itself must also be built on a foundation of confidence and trust between the 56 participating States. In this respect, the OSCE has a key role as a forum for debate and a channel for confidence building in the politico-military sphere. Its role must be enhanced, not diminished. Held with the OSCE's assistance and at Russia's request, the Vienna meeting of the Extraordinary Conference of the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe was important because it provided an opportunity to examine differing perceptions of the current effectiveness of this important document.

Thus, while we have achieved much, the context in which the work of the OSCE is carried out does not make things easy and the ultimate fulfilment of the original vision that brought us together remains a work in progress. I have no doubt that the Organization's vision of a wider Europe united around a core of common values remains as vibrant today as ever – in all parts of the OSCE area.

Spanish Priorities

In view of this overall context, it should come as no surprise that the agenda of the Spanish Chairmanship has been extremely full.

First, the Spanish Chairmanship has taken a keen interest in strengthening OSCE structures. It is only natural that an organization like the OSCE, with such a wide-ranging mandate and composed of such diverse countries, should be a work in progress. Spain has been particularly interested in the activities of the working group on the international legal personality, legal capacity, and privileges and immunities of the OSCE, which was established by a ministerial decision adopted in Brussels. I believe that completing this task and potentially adopting and ratifying a convention on these matters is in the Organization's highest interest.

The Spanish Chairmanship has made the more active involvement of the OSCE's partners for co-operation one of its priorities – not only at a for-

mal and symbolic level, as essential as these are in diplomacy, but also in more practical terms.

Second, Spain is seeking to deepen and enhance the OSCE agenda across all three of its dimensions.

In the politico-military dimension, the Chairmanship's priority has been the fight against terrorism, and deepening co-operation on counter-terrorism activities has had a prominent place on our agenda. Our work has advanced on several levels, including improving legal co-operation in criminal matters and reinforcing travel-document security, as testified by the recent workshops on these subjects. The OSCE Political Conference on Public-Private Partnership in Countering Terrorism was an excellent initiative brought by Russia and the United States that Spain was keen to support. Another major objective of the Spanish Chairmanship has been to promote the protection and due recognition of the victims of terrorism, and a High Level Meeting on Victims of Terrorism was held in Vienna in September.

In the economic and environmental dimension, by focusing within the extensive topic of environmental security on land degradation and water management, and the latter in particular, the Spanish Chairmanship has sought to place the OSCE at the vanguard of what is becoming a truly global debate. Spain considers the link between the environment and security to be a major current international challenge. The Madrid Declaration on Environment and Security will play a significant role in meeting it.

In the human dimension, Spain has largely given priority to activities aimed at promoting greater participation and diversity in our ever more plural societies. Here, I am pleased with the results of the OSCE High-Level Conference on Combating Discrimination and Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding, which was held in Bucharest as a follow-up to the Cordoba Conference on Anti-Semitism and Other Forms of Intolerance. In this context, I must also highlight the conference that Spain hosted in October in Cordoba on intolerance towards Muslims, as well as the Youth Forum that took place in November in Madrid, which also focused on the fight against intolerance and on promoting mutual respect and understanding, immediately prior to the Madrid Ministerial.

Finally, Spain sees the OSCE ODIHR Report on Common Responsibility, which was submitted to the Brussels Ministerial Council, as an opportunity to offer an instrument by means of which states can restate their political will to meet their commitments.

Chairing the OSCE has been a privilege and a responsibility. It is my hope that Spain has helped the Organization and its participating States take important strides towards attaining the vision that brought us together and which we still share.