

MC.DEL/66/06  
5 December 2006

ENGLISH  
Original: ITALIAN

**STATEMENT BY MR. VITTORIO CRAXI,  
UNDERSECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF ITALY,  
AT THE FOURTEENTH MEETING OF THE  
OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Mr. Chairman,  
Distinguished Secretary General,  
Distinguished Ministers,  
Dear Colleagues,

Italy is in full agreement with the statement made by Minister for Foreign Affairs Tuomioja in his capacity as acting President of the Council of the European Union. I shall therefore limit myself to a few remarks reflecting the specific Italian point of view.

First of all I should like to thank the Belgian Chairmanship, not only for its hospitality but above all for the wisdom, energy and efficiency with which it has succeeded in guiding the OSCE in the course of this year.

For some years now we have been discussing the need to strengthen the effectiveness of this Organization with a view to enabling it to cope with the threats and challenges to security confronting it in this new century: occasionally the debate on this subject has seemed almost harmful to the common purpose and political will of the participating States. Italy hopes that the results obtained now will be appreciated at their true value.

We are giving favourable consideration to the possibility of completing the transformation of the CSCE into a fully fledged international organization; this being so, we feel that it would be useful to begin work on the text of a convention according the OSCE international legal personality and capacity.

Italy has supported with conviction the efforts undertaken to strike a better balance in the activities of the Organization in its three dimensions. This improved balance is due to a strengthening of activities in areas indissolubly linked with the new concept of security — for example efforts to combat trafficking in human beings, tolerance and non-discrimination and the fight against terrorism — with particular emphasis on human rights — as well as problems connected with migration, strengthening of the economic dimension and, to the extent appropriate, environmental protection as well. In 2005 Italy promoted an initiative designed to strengthen co-operation among participating States in the legal sphere with a view to enhancing international legal co-operation in the fight against terrorism, as foreseen in the Ministerial Declaration which we are called upon to adopt today. Indissolubly linked with terrorism is the nature of the criminal activities which support it. In this context, we have continued the co-operation begun last year with the OSCE's field missions by organizing a

further study visit to Rome in connection with the problem of combating money laundering. Italy has also participated with great interest in the meetings organized by the OSCE on the subject of trafficking in human beings, an area where we are convinced we can make a substantial contribution on the basis of our own national experience and the legal instruments that have been adopted, most recently with a view to treating the exploitation of human beings in the work place with greater severity.

Italy is profoundly convinced that one element essential to the relaunching of the Organization is an adjustment of geographical balance designed to overcome the obsolete concept of “countries to the west and to the east of Vienna”. The countries to the east of Vienna must be in a position to consider themselves fully fledged protagonists in the activities of the OSCE. It is with this thought in mind that Italy regards Kazakhstan’s wish to assume the chairmanship of the OSCE with strong sympathy.

The work of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in the human dimension continues to be of fundamental importance. We want to express our appreciation for the exhaustive report recently submitted by the Director of the ODIHR, Ambassador Strohal, and we are confident that on the basis of the suggestions and proposals set forth in that report the ODIHR will become stronger and will be able to improve its activities yet further, whether in matters of election monitoring — an area where its professionalism and experience already acquired are indisputable — or in other sectors of its competence. In order to help improve the election monitoring activities, Italy recently made an additional contribution to the fund for the diversification of election observation missions.

In the report we have also noted with approval that the ODIHR has further developed its Programme on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination. In thanking the Government of Romania for its offer to host the next conference in Bucharest, we should like to record our belief that this would mean strengthening a holistic approach in the battle against intolerance, while avoiding the establishment of fixed hierarchies among various forms of discrimination or between religions and declining to accept items for discussion upon which no previous agreement has been reached.

But apart from the ODIHR and the other institutions, the field missions still represent a distinct advantage for the OSCE in comparison with other organizations. Strengthening of the resources made available to the Missions in the Caucasus and Central Asia is beyond question a welcome turn of events among other things from the standpoint of bringing about a fresh adjustment of geographical balance. In the short term, however, this must not take place to the detriment of the OSCE presence in the western Balkans. Italy believes that our Organization must continue to play its crucial role for the stability of the region, all the more so in view of the important forthcoming developments in Kosovo.

Italy remains firmly convinced that it is the OSCE’s absolute responsibility to prevent and resolve crises and to collaborate in institution building during the post-conflict phase. The fact that what are termed “frozen conflicts” remain unresolved for a time does not in itself constitute evidence of inadequacy. The OSCE is beyond any doubt an effective instrument, but only to the extent that participating States display the political will to make it so. We see this particularly clearly in the case of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The Special Representative and the three Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group did a fine job in creating the conditions needed for a decisive turning-point in the negotiations. We hope that the parties will be astute enough to make use of this historic occasion.

The Mediterranean dimension of the OSCE, to which Italy has always devoted particular attention, is ripe for a quality leap: the countries of the southern shore are being encouraged to consider their partnership not only as a forum for dialogue, but as a process in which specific commitments related to the “acquis” of the OSCE can be singled out for immediate implementation in the interests of the stability of the region and a balanced development of their societies.

We feel certain that in this area as in many others a great deal of energy and creative thought will be deployed by Spain in the course of its Chairmanship, and so we wish Spain every success.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.