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Time Has Come to Build a Comprehensive Partnership between the EU and the OSCE

Foreword by the EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy

As the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) approaches its 30th anniversary, we can take some comfort in the fact that the Europe in which it was created has changed significantly for the better. Old dividing lines have disappeared and more Europeans than ever before live in peace and security. During these thirty years, the European Union has more than doubled its members, significantly increased its population, and gained new neighbours. It is an appropriate time to reflect upon the possibility of building a new and more comprehensive partnership between the EU and the OSCE to meet the challenges and grasp the opportunities of this new Europe in which we find ourselves today.

In the European Union, we are developing new policies and instruments to help us deal with the challenges of the new Europe. The European Security Strategy, adopted in December 2003, commits us to becoming more active, more capable, and more coherent, and focuses on the need for greater involvement in our immediate neighbourhood. In the context of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), we are committed to expanding our capabilities in civilian and military crisis management, aiming to establish a full range of tools for crisis management operations. This process is being conducted in co-operation, and not in competition, with our international partners. Fulfilling the goal we have set ourselves of becoming an “exporter of peace” will require us to work effectively with others. Working together with the OSCE, the EU can further strengthen its capabilities to promote peace and stability on our continent and beyond.

The European Union recognizes the role of the OSCE as an international actor with an essential role to play in propagating peace and comprehensive security from Vancouver to Vladivostok. Thanks to its inclusiveness, the OSCE continues to play an important role in bringing together a wide range of countries that share its global aims. The OSCE has important strengths – its *acquis*, its field presence, and its existing structures – that give it an important role in the European security architecture. It has also continued to make progress in redefining its capacities as confirmed by the important documents agreed by OSCE foreign ministers at the Maastricht Ministerial Council in December 2003. The adoption of its own Security Strategy provides a further basis for our future co-operation.

At the same time, the identification of threats by the European Union through its Security Strategy is the foundation for future EU action. It confirms a broad European consensus over the shape of our response to these threats: ensuring effective multilateralism, building a stable neighbourhood, and acting early to address the causes of conflict.

It is encouraging that there are many similarities between our two security strategy documents. The EU and the OSCE bring a similar message to the rest of the world. Our current co-operation is proof of the willingness of the international community to work together for a better world.

The EU believes that a more united world can only be achieved through effective multilateralism. That is why the development of a stronger international community, well-functioning international institutions, and a rule-based international order remain among the principal strategic objectives of the European Union.

We seek a world of greater unity, but also of greater security. The EU has committed itself to becoming more active in pursuit of security in Europe and in our neighbourhood, particularly in the field of conflict prevention. This ambition requires the European Union to deploy the full spectrum of instruments for crisis management and conflict prevention that it has at its disposal, including political, diplomatic, military and civilian, trade and development activities. In this context, the OSCE's expertise in the field of conflict prevention potentially represents a prime area for enhancing our future co-operation.

Central Asia and the South Caucasus are certainly areas where this co-operation could be enhanced. The OSCE should consider the European Union as its closest and most reliable partner in building security in Europe – the strongest supporter of its values and principles. Following its recent enlargement, the EU now represents 25 of the 55 OSCE participating States, and the EU as a whole is already the Organization's largest financial contributor, providing approximately 70 per cent of its budget. This reflects our belief in the continued relevance of OSCE, and our common vision of the world.

The current modalities of EU-OSCE co-operation are mainly based on practical arrangements that have developed over the years. We have regular contacts and meetings that provide for fruitful co-operation facilitating the guidance, continuity, and coherence of EU and OSCE initiatives. Our structured contacts at political, staff, and field levels are a sound and positive example of how "effective multilateralism" can work.

The European Union is ready to further intensify EU-OSCE relations. The Council Conclusions on EU-OSCE co-operation in the areas of conflict prevention, crisis management, and conflict rehabilitation, adopted on 17 November 2003, represent the first attempt to address the need for a more structured EU-OSCE co-operation. Furthermore, in its Conclusions of 14 June 2004, the Council decided to have an assessment report drawn up on the

EU's role within the OSCE. This report will take into consideration the comparative advantages of the OSCE, the need to avoid duplication, and the EU's overall policy objectives. Through this process, the EU hopes to better define its priorities and, consequently, to improve its presence within the OSCE.

We should continue to advance along this path. The definition of EU-OSCE complementing priorities should encompass both geographical and thematic aspects. The OSCE Strategy Paper adopted at the Maastricht Ministerial Council and the European Security Strategy represent an excellent basis on which to carry this work forward.