

Check against delivery

Finland's Foreign Policy: European Ambitions and Global Challenges

H.E. Mr Ilkka Kanerva
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland at the
Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars
February 11, 2008

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all let me express my warmest thanks to Director Lee Hamilton for inviting me to speak to you today, and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for hosting this event. It is a great pleasure to share views with you on several pressing issues on the international agenda.

The United States is in the middle of a hectic campaign period. The whole world is following the campaign process, and even in Finland everybody knows the candidates, their parties and their rhetoric. The choice of the American people is equally important to this nation, to Europe and the world as a whole, and we follow it with great interest. The unique character of the primaries and the whole process demonstrates how the tradition of democracy works in this country.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the Chairman in Office of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, it will also be a great pleasure to address the Helsinki Commission here in Washington DC on Wednesday.

First and foremost I am proud to lead the organisation that helped to bridge the East - West divide during the Cold War and promote a historical change in Europe. The OSCE is animated by a strong commitment to our common values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

It is a forum for open and inclusive dialogue among its 56 participating States. In my view, the importance of dialogue - also on difficult issues - cannot be overemphasized. This is how international relations should work.

My turn at the helm of the **OSCE** started off with a difficult situation concerning the observation of the presidential elections in Russia. I have to deplore the fact that in spite of my hard efforts there was no agreement and no observation will take place.

Observing elections is one of the cornerstones of the OSCE's mandate in strengthening democracy and the freedom of people to choose their leaders. The recent events between Russia and the Office for Democracy and Human Rights of the OSCE, ODIHR, should not lead to an erosion of these commitments that we all as participating states value.

I trust that this will not be the last of challenges ahead as Chairman in Office, but I'd rather say as Henry Kissinger said in the New York Times in 1969; "There cannot be a crisis next week. My schedule is already full."

The Finnish Chairmanship also emphasises the OSCE's fundamental role in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. Many tend to forget that the OSCE has been the first responder in many crises and developed a range of capacities in this respect. Its 19 field operations play a pivotal role in early warning and conflict management.

There are disputes in the OSCE area to be settled. I am personally committed to promote the peaceful resolution of the protracted conflicts in Transnistria in Moldova, South Ossetia in Georgia and Nagorno-Karabakh between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

You see, Washington is not the only exotic destination for the OSCE Chairman in office. I admit that it is a relief to be able to communicate without an interpreter. A long speech like this can be a challenge, especially if interpreted - and not only for me and the audience: as my interpreter fell asleep in Baku. But that was 20 years ago.

The OSCE is and must remain an important political forum dedicated to building pan-European security. Its work on developing democratic institutions and promoting rule of law at all levels of governance has considerably contributed to regional stability and paved the way of many countries towards Euro-Atlantic integration.

The **European Union** is deeply committed to our common values of peace, freedom, democracy and prosperity. Here we can also face also the fundamental purpose of the enlargement of the union. The enlargement process has helped to transform applicant countries into functioning democracies, market economies, and true partners in meeting our common challenges. The EU has strengthened its capacity to carry out its responsibilities also outside its borders, on a global level. The union is a reliable partner to the United States in our common efforts to strengthen peace and stability.

In doing so, we need a variety of instruments, political, economic and crisis management tools. The EU is engaged in the process and is developing its capabilities, particularly its ability to respond to crises.

The new EU treaty will reform the external action of the union. The EU aims at becoming a more efficient and coherent global player. It is a key player in trade and development, and it has led the fight against climate change. We monitor elections, support democratisation processes and provide crisis assistance globally.

In other fields such as the EU's common foreign and security policy, our instruments are relatively new. But they evolve rapidly. The Treaty reforms should bring more coherence on how we operate and a more strategic approach to the union's external action.

Just before coming to Washington I visited **Kosovo**, where key decisions on the status are now right at hand. We can expect the declaration of independence very soon. The Kosovar people have waited years to fulfil their aspirations. We cannot and we will not close our doors in front of them. Both Serbia and Kosovo belong to Europe, and Europe must and will assume its responsibilities in bringing the kosovar people to the road of democracy and prosperity, and in offering Serbia the path to integration.

It is equally important that Kosovo commits fully to the implementation of the comprehensive status settlement, in particular respect for human rights and the rights of the communities.

The European Union is ready to assume a leading role in constructing a viable Kosovo and strengthening their European perspective. The EU is ready to launch its biggest civilian crisis management mission ever as well as substantially contribute to the economic development there. Finland will actively participate in this, as we do also in KFOR, NATO's crisis management operation. Both commitments will be needed for a substantial time to come.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The international community is engaged in the huge effort of bringing **Afghanistan** to the modern age. Afghanistan is still fragile and its democratic development has not yet reached all the necessary standards. But nevertheless it is a democracy, which is a historical step forward. The reign of terror that once ravaged Afghanistan and expanded far beyond its borders cannot be allowed to creep back. Afghanistan needs the support of the international community for years.

My country is committed to long-term assistance to Afghanistan. We have participated in ISAF since 2002, and are presently deployed in Northern Afghanistan together with Sweden. In addition to our military engagement, we are actively developing civilian crisis management activities both within ISAF in the Provincial Reconstruction Team and in the European Union's police mission EUPOL.

To be able to do more, we are intensifying our efforts together with our Nordic partners. We wish to deepen our cooperation in crisis management, in our engagement in the international organisations and in our national preparedness. In Finland, as in our partner countries Norway and Sweden, we need to convince our people of the need for a substantive and long-term commitment to Afghanistan.

Let me still say a few words about **Nordic cooperation** in general. Our countries have participated in maintaining international security for decades, in the UN, with NATO and recently with the EU. Our contribution has been high when counted per capita.

International crisis management has grown more demanding and we need to be

better prepared, properly equipped and well trained.

Two recent examples of our joint efforts are our shared responsibilities in the NATO-led ISAF operation and in the EU's Nordic Battle Group.

In the defence sector, the rising costs of military procurement and growing qualitative requirements call for intensified cooperation. Finland, Sweden and Norway are currently exploring possibilities for closer practical cooperation, for instance in the field of training and procurement.

In the security policy field the Nordic cooperation benefits both the European Union and NATO. The Battle Group concept enables the EU, with its partners, to intervene rapidly in crisis situations. At the same time, NATO partner countries like Finland will now have the possibility to play a role in the NATO Response Force NRF. We hope to decide on our participation in NRF this coming spring.

We share many common interests in the northern regions, in particular in the Baltic Sea and the Barents Sea regions. The Baltic Sea region requires special attention from all of us. The stability of this area is crucial for Finland's security but also for our Nordic partners. Here too, we need to work together. Moreover, the Baltic Sea has become a prominent supply route and the volume of oil shipments has grown manifold. This is a major ecological and maritime safety challenge.

One could almost describe the Baltic Sea as an internal lake surrounded by the European Union Member States. But not quite. In addition to our long land border we share our fishing waters with Russia.

Thanks to her energy resources the Russian economy has been growing fast, and this has given Russia new possibilities. Today, Russia is much more active

in foreign policy and seeks to position itself as a super power - not only regionally but more globally, too. Moscow is pursuing its interests with determination and Russia's military posture has become more active also in our region.

The Russian internal developments keep giving us mixed signals. During the past decade we have seen many positive changes, of course. The country has left the totalitarian past: people can travel freely, express their opinions. Much of the economy and property are also in private hands. But building a democracy and a civil society has turned out to be much more difficult than many thought during the early years of reforms. Maintaining political stability seems to be a main concern now. The change of power in Moscow seems to be almost completed.

Despite the growth figures the challenges the Russian economy faces are huge. Much will depend on whether Russia is able to make use of its new energy resources, modernize the economy and infrastructure, tackle corruption and stop the negative demographic development.

Even if it is difficult at times, I do not see any other possibility than trying to engage Russia in dialogue and cooperation. We need to try to engage Russia in addressing global and regional challenges and encourage full implementation of international commitments. Russia's contribution is needed in combating terrorism and arms proliferation, in many regional conflicts as well as in fighting climate change.

Our bilateral relations with Russia are in good shape, and the problems we face are mostly technical. For Finland Russia is first of all a neighbour. We have seen how the transformation during the last decade has changed Russia profoundly. It

has also fundamentally changed the ways we can interact and cooperate with Russia.

Are we worried of some of the most recent developments in Russia? Such as cutting the freedom of press and expression, or their tone when dealing with some of their neighbouring countries? Of course we are. But still I do not see any other possibility than trying to get Russia on board. While Russia has become more open, its dependency of the outside world has grown. It is a member of the G-8 and the Council of Europe, and wants to join the WTO and the OECD. The EU and Russia have an ongoing dialogue on different issues. We hope this process will bind Russia to international norms and at the same time encourage its political and economic reforms.

Hearing the presidential candidate Medvedev's speech, I was assured of his thoughts and his plans. As long as this is the future envisaged for Russian development, I believe the country will be on the right track.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Transatlantic cooperation runs through Finnish activities in many fields. It is a priority for our Government, and it is a central element in the EU-US relations.

There is practically no area I have mentioned today where good and well-coordinated transatlantic efforts would not be needed. The good thing is that the EU-US cooperation has broadened to cover all important issues on the global agenda. The dialogue has been enlarged from political and economic issues to new areas such as justice and home affairs and energy and climate issues. We are very pleased with this development.

Transatlantic dialogue should not focus on what we think about each other or how many family arguments we occasionally have. We have to be more efficient and more innovative. We need to work together to find solutions. The basic line is - we face all these complex challenges together, and they can be effectively solved only if we work together.