



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Speech of the OSCE Secretary General, Ambassador Ján Kubiš, at the 4th Winter Meeting of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly *Vienna, 24 – 25 February 2005*

Mr. President,
Members of the Parliamentary Assembly,
Mr. Secretary General,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It has always been a great pleasure and honour for me to have the opportunity to address meetings of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. Today, my feelings are even more heartfelt. As you know, it is likely that I am standing in front of you for the last time in my current capacity. I have always admired your vision and determination to see that the OSCE lives up to its potential. The history has taught us that parliaments and parliamentarians can provide a valuable asset to organizations like ours. The OSCE has benefited a lot from parliamentary oversight and guidance. There is no doubt that the Parliamentary Assembly is one of the key driving forces pushing this organization ahead. Your contribution is vital, especially in the current transitional period. I am delighted to see that under the able leadership of the Hon. Alcee L. Hastings the Assembly is working hard to cope with the contemporary challenges.

OSCE at the crossroads

The OSCE is once again at the crossroads. The rapidly changing security environment has created new dilemmas for the OSCE. Like other international organizations dealing with security we do not know yet where we should go from here. What we know, however, is that we cannot ignore calls from within and without the Organization for reform and re-definition of its role in the new context and changed politico – security realities in the Euro-Atlantic area. Although, I believe that the debate is much about the future shape of relations on our

continent as it is about the reforming the OSCE, your contribution to it is essential. The changes in the OSCE area, in particular the EU and NATO enlargement and new threats to security and stability dominated by the terrorist plaque affected number of OSCE participating States. We need to deal with present-day political realities and appearance of new differences. The OSCE is criticised by some participating States for promoting double standards, distorting balance between the three dimensions and gradually losing its comparative advantage by promoting “teachers and pupils” attitude instead of co-operative dialogue. Several conflicts still remain frozen. The language of the Cold War has re-appeared in our dictionary. Despite numerous re-affirmations of adherence to OSCE values and commitments, the implementation record sometimes shows deficiencies and differences in the interpretation of how to fulfil them. The OSCE has no budget for 2005 and no scales of assessment. The Border Monitoring Operation in Georgia is being closed down despite the calls of the host country to continue its activities. The existing differences in views on many issues erode consensus within the Organization and limit its capacity to act.

We have to act and we have to act now. We need to define a new strategic vision for the OSCE. I subscribe to what President Hastings said at the Sofia Ministerial - the OSCE must continue to reform and adapt its mechanisms and procedures with a view to upholding efficiency and credibility. In fact, the debate on transforming the OSCE is in full swing. The inaugural meeting of the Panel of Eminent Persons on Strengthening the Effectiveness of the OSCE in Ljubljana showed that the panel could be an important catalyst of the reform process and that it could serve as a creative incubator of ideas for a high-level political debate.

We need to take calls for the change seriously. I see a *raison d'être* behind the appeals and critical statements, which I regard as an invitation to action. Unlike some sceptics both East and West of Vienna, I do not want to over dramatize the current situation. The OSCE is not in irreversible crises yet, however there is a growing sense that something needs to be changed to protect the Organization for losing relevance and credibility. For me, the current situation represents unique opportunity to analyze where we stand, where we should go and what should be done to remedy the OSCE and develop its capabilities. Let us not forget that abolishing the OSCE would not help us to get away with problems we have to cope with. It would only deprive us of valuable and time-tested instrument for dialogue and confidence building.

There cannot be more fitting occasion to look back and draw lessons than the current year of anniversaries. This is nothing new. Since 1975 the OSCE has been in constant transition, it had to be adapted many times to deal with new challenges and political realities. I am convinced, however, that the OSCE has the potential to once again become an instrument which unites its participating States irrespective whether they are or they are not members of the EU, NATO or CIS and which provides effective platform for collective action.

Prepared to cope with change

My optimism is based upon the intimate knowledge of the OSCE, its activities, institutions, field operations and above all its people. In terms of management the Organization is in very good shape. This year saw the completion of the reform I have initiated in 2001. The Organization improved its ability to implement and operationalize political decisions taken by the participating States. Thanks to the roll-out of IRMA (Integrated Resource Management System) we have now in place common and fully integrated management system which not only increases the speed and flexibility of our operational activities but also substantially improves transparency and accountability to the participating States. As a last component of the management changes we are now looking at the principles to govern the streamlining of the administrative support services. It is envisaged that this exercise could result in significant savings in administrative and common costs. Later this year I intend to provide a detailed assessment of the long-term impact of IRMA on the administrative and support costs in the Organization. IRMA has received praise from the external auditors and has drawn attention from other international organizations recognizing the OSCE for its trailblazing leadership. The team led by Mr. von Schulenburg has managed to implement the system, which from a policy and technology standpoint is head and shoulders above the norm. The successful launch of IRMA sparked a debate on the creation of standards around government and inter-governmental organization management and administration processes.

The reform process needs to move ahead. The OSCE needs continuity, coherence and co-ordination. These have been advanced by the strengthening the role of the Secretary General at the Sofia Ministerial Council - powers of which I hope my successor will fully exploit. I welcome that the participating States strengthened my role in supporting the political dialogue. Besides that, expectations have been increased about Secretariat's ability to support the participating States as well as the Chairmanship. Hence, soon I intend to present a

proposal on the restructuring the Secretariat, which should ensure increased efficiency, enhanced co-ordination and extended capacity to support the political management.

We need budget and scales

As the Chief Administrative Officer I am deeply worried that the OSCE has entered the 2005 without new Scales of Assessment and approved 2005 Unified Budget. The budget process has been significantly improved as the management reform has brought more transparency and efficiency also in this field. Each fund budget proposal contains clear objectives, outputs and justifications. For 2005 we have prepared a good budget proposal, which fairly reflects political priorities and takes on board restrictions expressed by the participating States. The increasingly active role of the Secretariat, not only in administrating the Organization, but also in supporting the Chairman-in-Office in political management, continues to mirror itself in relative shift of the resources from the Field to the Centre. I maintain, however, that this trend is not a consequence of the growing bureaucracy. Another visible tendency is that of the relative decline of the South-Eastern Europe share, while, on the other hand, the Eastern European and Central Asian regions show a slight increase. It is unfortunate that due to the closure of the Border Monitoring Operation in the Mission to Georgia, the Caucasus Region reflects a relative reduction. Overall staff numbers continue to show decline over the previous years indicating that the management reform works as we are able to deliver more with less people.

The lack of consensus on budget and scales has political rather than technical motives. Thus, it needs to be addressed with political courage and wisdom, and it needs to be resolved now. The OSCE budget should not be held hostage to the political differences. After the recent visit of the Chairman-in-Office to Moscow I have more hopes that agreement could be reached soon. Strangled OSCE would not be in anybody's interest. The current situation has negative impact on our credibility and moral of our staff. The absence of the approved budget has prompted me to issue an interim bill for 2005 at the level of 50 % of the 2004 Budget. I have acted in line with the Financial Regulations and in the best interest of this Organization. Surely, I would welcome if the participating States provide more clarity on interpretation of the existing Financial Regulations, however as a responsible manager I had to proceed as I did in order to keep the Organization working.

We have delivered

Despite all difficulties and uncertainties the work had to go on. A number of important developments occurred since your Annual Session in Edinburgh last July.

We have been working hard to increase security awareness of the OSCE staff members across the Organization. All security issues have been placed under my direct supervision. Security Management Unit was established in my office. In December I have brought into force the new Security Management System, the aim of which is to provide guidance in dealing with security and safety related matters in more efficient and consolidated way.

Specialized units in the Secretariat continued to enhance expertise in horizontal issues, which are generally recognized as particularly useful for increasing the capabilities of the participating States to fight present-day threats to security. Secretariat is taking a leading role in the implementation of the decisions in the field of combating terrorism and improving capacities of the participating States to address threats possessed by criminal activity. Further to the respective decision of the Maastrich Ministerial Council, an anti-trafficking unit has been created and is now fully operational. Increased attention is devoted to border-related issues; a strong emphasis is on combating intolerance and discrimination. We are trying hard to increase activities in the economic and environmental dimension through implementation of the OSCE Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension. Since the last year's Economic Forum, the OSCE is also engaging in a review process of economic and environmental commitments. A key partner in this effort is the UN Economic Commission for Europe, with whom I signed Memorandum of Understanding at the Sofia Ministerial Council.

We continued to strengthen links with other partner organizations at all levels. The relations with the EU and NATO were particularly dynamic. I welcome the declared wish to enhance co-operation with the OSCE on the side of our key partners. A common understanding was reached with the Council of Europe that there is a scope for enhanced co-operation to avoid unnecessary duplication. Hence, a review mechanism was established with the aim to assess the co-operation between the two organizations and make concrete proposals. The two organisations have their own comparative advantages and distinctive sets of commitments, which could be used to reinforce and support each other's efforts, and deliver better results.

I am particularly delighted to note that for the first time the OSCE reached out to a Partner State in election monitoring. In October 2004, an OSCE Election Support Team of close to 50 election experts was sent to Afghanistan for the country's first ever Presidential election – a milestone for both Afghanistan and the OSCE. Neither time pressure nor lack of experience prevented the Secretariat-ODIHR team to do the job as tasked and to fulfill its mandate with professionalism and dignity. This was the first time the OSCE launched such operation out of the OSCE area. The OSCE has long ruminated over how to enhance its outreach effort. Providing assistance for elections in neighboring regions is one effective way of doing so. I believe that we should build on our experience and further enhance our partnerships with Afghanistan and other partners.

We continued our close co-operation with Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation, and welcomed Mongolia as the newest Partner. We also strengthened co-operation with other regional and sub-regional organizations, like the Shanghai Co-operation Organization, Organization of the Islamic Conference and African Union. It is encouraging to see the level of interest from outside of the OSCE area for our organization.

To attract a wider target audience and make information about the OSCE activities easily accessible, the OSCE website was redesigned and scheduled to be re-launched early 2005. We also plan to use the forthcoming anniversaries to generate more attention and higher political visibility of the Organization.

My personal lessons learned

In conclusion, allow me to sketch out few lessons I have learned during my long attachment to this Organization.

First - and perhaps the most important one – I am now more than ever convinced that the concept of comprehensive approach to security works. We are effective in building security through dialogue and political commitments based on consensus. The success story of the newly admitted members of the EU and NATO along with recent changes in Georgia and Ukraine provides clear evidence that soft multilateralism can make a difference.

Second – political commitments need to be underpinned with action and determination to implement them. This can be achieved only through consistent policy both of the States and International Organizations. Ignorance undermines the credibility of the Organization as a whole. Even more dangerous is the formally critical standpoint on the non-compliance within the OSCE on one hand and demonstrative tolerance of such behaviour on the other. OSCE should not serve as a framework for international acceptance of non-democratic regimes and legitimization of their policies. We will not prevail the contemporary challenges with old language and traditional flexibility. Hypocrisy can cost us dearly.

And thirdly – the OSCE has been underutilized. Despite numerous declarations it has never become a primary tool for conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. The OSCE lost attractiveness particularly to those participating States who no more believe that the Organization can make a change. Concerned are those who could not get rid of conflicts on their territories or failed to improve their economies, but also those whose governments feel uncomfortable with the OSCE values and commitments particularly in the Human Dimension. We have to address these concerns. Otherwise, the survival of the Organization will be in stake. We know very well that the risks and challenges we face today cannot be met by a single State or organization. If we lose the OSCE we will be more vulnerable to these risks.

I have been around the OSCE for more than a decade. I am leaving with pride and satisfaction. The OSCE is now much more operational, more responsive and better organized. Its missions and institutions have proven that creativity and boldness can pay off. What we need now is to re-unite ourselves around common values and seek the best way for bridging the gaps before it is too late. The OSCE is the best vehicle for doing so. If we do not have it, it would have to be re-invented, so let us use it to the maximum.

Thank you for your attention.