

# Closing Remarks

by

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at the  
Copenhagen Anniversary Conference  
“20 years of the OSCE Copenhagen Document:  
Status and Future Perspectives”



Copenhagen, 11 June 2010

*CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY!*

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Twenty years, two decades. The time that has passed since the Copenhagen Document was drafted and adopted reminds me of a wedding anniversary. It may not have been a love marriage, but a marriage of aspiration. There may be some who may not want to do it again, but we must admit: the Document stood at the cradle of some beautiful offspring - the democratization of a sizeable part of the globe.

One of the great achievements of the Document, as I see it, is that CSCE delegations postulated a different understanding of the state. They put forward the notion of an accountable and democratic state based on human rights and the rule of law, on respect for the rights of minorities, and on democratic elections. Today, while implementation gaps remain in our region, this notion is widely accepted in our societies.

The underlying philosophy of Copenhagen was that democracy and the protection of human rights are the best guarantee for creating free and open societies, thereby preventing possible human security threats from emerging or from causing harm to the stability of the OSCE area.

As the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the late Sergio Vieira de Mello has put it: *“The security of States and the region flows from the security of the human being. This security, in turn, is guaranteed by the rule of law and respect for human rights, both of which form a unifying force, a force that can serve to chart a path across difficult terrains”*.

And indeed we have a difficult path ahead of us. So before we open the champagne, congratulating ourselves over the vibrancy of our democracies 20 years after, let us pause for a moment and reflect.

Democracy is not an objective you reach once and can then check off: done; fulfilled; mission accomplished. Twenty years ago, we were, of course, tempted to see things that way. We thought that adopting the historic documents of Vienna, Paris and Copenhagen would suffice, “solemnly and irrevocably”.

Yet the job is far from done. Democracy is a continuum, democratic institutions and governance are practices that go far beyond liberal-sounding constitutions and formally elected assemblies. They never come about without being carried forward from within. They cannot exist or function without a critical mass of people actually requesting, supporting, and protecting them.

We will never live in perfect democracies; yet we shall not give up our efforts to eradicate their deficiencies.

So yes, the Copenhagen Document was the most far-reaching and unambiguous international document by which former ideological adversaries expressed their shared commitments. It reflects a consensus around the meaning of democracy. And yes, it remains a powerful source of inspiration and a guide in our efforts to make the promises at the end of the Cold War realities for all of the more than 1 billion people who call the region home.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This anniversary event was topical. It provided us with an opportunity to look back and reflect. For us, as OSCE, the Copenhagen Document provided a solid basis for ODIHR's work and the work of the High Commissioner on National Minorities. In this respect, the Document was the '*big bang*' of the human dimension: a document conceived in late June 1990, in this city, which expanded the OSCE's universe in its human dimension, and which continues to enlarge, and holds out promises for so many, until this day.