



## **The Trans-Asian Dimension of the OSCE: A Vital Security Link**

**OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Trans-Asian Parliamentary Forum  
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### **FINAL STATEMENT**

**Bruce GEORGE (MP, United Kingdom)  
President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly**

Mr. Speaker,

Distinguished colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me close this Forum by making the following concluding remarks on the themes we have discussed during the past two days.

Central Asia is a region with enormous assets, particularly in its resilient people and, in parts, its natural resources. Yet it has been bequeathed massive problems that we have been hearing about in detail these last few days. There are formidable obstacles to economic, social and political development, yet they are not insurmountable. The brief checklist includes:

- Terrorism and religious extremism;
- Devastating environmental difficulties with shrinking seas, polluted rivers, dumping of radioactive wastes;

- Trafficking of arms and drugs;
- Poverty and social upheaval;
- Acute problems for governments;
- Inadequacies in human rights;
- The search of external powers for advantage – a modern updating of the infamous “Great Game.”

I think it is safe to say that terrorism remains one of the most serious threats to long-term security in the OSCE region, and Central Asia is no exception. We should be prepared that the fight against this most heinous phenomenon will undoubtedly continue for some time to come. We must be aware that this fight is not just about reacting to terrorist acts, but more importantly about understanding and addressing the roots of terrorism, as Minister Tokaev stressed in his presentation during the first session. In this connection, we need to constantly assess the methods we are using in the fight against terrorism and remain ever so vigilant about the dangerous tendency to limit people’s rights in the effort to enhance security. Limitations in fundamental freedoms and human rights in exchange for greater security is not a sacrifice we should be willing to make.

While national governments will bear the greatest burden in the fight against terrorism, we must support efforts to increase cooperation between States and within multi-lateral organisations, like the OSCE. Parliamentarians can play an important role by seeking to coordinate and push through legislation essential to the fight against terrorism, by ensuring close oversight of the actions of our governments and, when necessary, calling them to account when they overstep their boundaries. I fully agree with several of the speakers of yesterday, as for instance Ambassador Pascoe, who emphasized the need to stop the flow of financial means to terrorist organisations. We should be much more aggressive in addressing the financial basis of terrorist organisations. Greater

work in fighting organised crime and trafficking in drugs and arms as well as the development of systems to share intelligence on bank and financial information at a regional and international level, would have a significant impact on this field.

Close international contacts are all the more important because of the inextricable links between security in individual States and in the region as a whole. As Mr. Ismoilov from Tajikistan emphasized yesterday, it was hard to envision long-term security in Central Asia as long as there was turmoil in Afghanistan. Though genuine stability and prosperity in Afghanistan is still a distant prospect, it is now possible to imagine that, with the concerted effort and assistance of the international community, peace and democracy are possible there. This will of course contribute to greater chances for long-term security in neighbouring States. In connection with the new partnership between the OSCE and Afghanistan, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly declares its readiness to work actively with a parliamentary body which may emerge there.

Dear colleagues,

Some economies in the region, including Kazakhstan, have experienced growth in recent years, although such positive tendencies are still heavily overshadowed by the economic hardships felt by most citizens. Economic recovery and longer-term prosperity will only be possible following economic reform on a variety of levels. Close cooperation with economic financial institutions can be most helpful in that regard. An issue of importance for the OSCE - good governance - should also be of paramount significance to Members of Parliament who could play a greater role in addressing the damaging long-term effects of pervasive corruption on the economies of the region.

While the economic aspects of the OSCE's second basket seem to hold our attention the most, we must not lose sight of the link between the economy and the environment. The human consequences alone of environmental degradation are staggering; if we add to the equation the negative effects on the economy, then environmental issues must take a higher place on our parliamentary agendas. As with security and economics, environmental issues – among them the shared use of water – can often be of a trans-border nature and must therefore be tackled in cooperation with other countries and with assistance from international organisations. As discussed in detail during the second session of our Conference the current co-operation between the OSCE and the UN in programmes to fight environmental degradation is an important precedent. Economic issues are directly linked to the well-being of our citizens. Minister Kelimbetov clearly referred this morning to the important challenges faced by Kazakhstan in fighting poverty. This fight is being progressively tackled by means of education and training among others. We must not forget that security in our continent is ultimately linked to economic prosperity and environmental stability.

Dear colleagues,

While all these issues need to be high on our list of priorities, I'm sure you will agree that, as Members of Parliament, there is another thing which is never far from our thoughts – elections. In this connection, I think it is worth to reiterate an important point made by Mr. Veshnyakov who highlighted the relationship between the nature of elections and the level of trust in the authorities. In regard to the last cycle of parliamentary elections in Central Asia assessments varied, although there seemed to be general agreement that they fell short of international standards for free and fair elections. The next parliamentary elections which will take place in most countries of the region in

the next few years can be a unique opportunity to improve on these shortcomings. For this to happen, it is important that the necessary political will be exhibited to hold inclusive elections that give an equal and unhindered chance to all political forces in the country. As for improvements in the electoral framework, the CIS Convention on democratic election standards seems to be a positive step in that direction.

The Parliamentary Assembly is ready to assist and would ultimately like to be able to send parliamentary observers should the minimum requirements be met. I think it goes without saying that among those requirements are a free media, which is of the utmost importance in election campaigns, but more generally, as Mr. Tan so rightly noted, serves to advance democracy and long-term security. Political pluralism, freedom of association, and respect for human rights are also integral parts of the electoral and democratisation processes, as more than one of our distinguished speakers have noted. Although governments don't like to hear the criticism they inevitably will receive from opposition parties and NGOs, it is that feedback which helps our societies develop in the right direction.

Ultimately, it is also important that the end goal be election to a parliamentary body which has real oversight functions and genuine powers vis-à-vis the government. Mr. de Beaufort noted the challenges of parliamentary democracy, although I would certainly agree with his conclusion (and that of Winston Churchill) that we have not yet found a better alternative. In any case, while in every country the relationship between the government and the parliament differs, there must be a certain minimum of oversight functions for the parliament if a genuine balance of power is to be guaranteed.

Ladies and gentlemen,

There are so many governments and institutions, private and public, who are seeking to assist. High amongst these are our Parliamentary Assembly and the OSCE. The region is assuming more attention, but more is needed in the way intellectual input, policy, resources. It would be really helpful to prioritise and evaluate how successful our endeavours have been thus far. It would be even more helpful if other organisations pursuing a similar path to examine where coordination and cooperation might be refined and enhanced.

The region has for over two millennia been a link between Asia and Europe. It has been the route by which the continents have traded, yet the same ease of access has facilitated the march of armies and regimes seeking to impose their world view. The region has been a centre of civilization and scholarship. It has a long and rich, yet turbulent and difficult past. It has made considerable contributions to our world and will give more and more in the future.

Dear colleagues,

I am most pleased to have been involved in the debates of the past few days. As a relative “newcomer” to the region, I have truly been enlightened by the discussions in this room as well as those which I was able to have in the corridors with individual participants in this Forum. Since the main goal of this Forum has been to raise awareness and increase parliamentary dialogue on issues of security in the trans-Asian dimension of the OSCE, I can assure you that it has been a success for me. I hope you can all say the same for yourselves. Of course, the discussions we have undertaken are just a beginning and I sincerely hope that they can be continued at the Second Trans-Asian Parliamentary Forum.

In closing, I would once again like to express my gratitude for the generosity of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan. They have received

us all here in Almaty with such wonderful hospitality and I believe we can expect that to continue at tonight's reception and tomorrow's excursion.

Thank you for your attention.