



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Statement by the Secretary General of the OSCE to the 115th Session of the Committee of Ministers of the Council in Europe

17th November 2005, Strasbourg

Mr. Chairman,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year the OSCE celebrates the 30th Anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, the document which laid out the founding norms, principles and commitments of our organisation. These were reinforced at the Paris summit in 1990, which ended the Cold War. Most of what was agreed in Helsinki has become a reality. The process of democratisation and market reform in Europe has advanced enough to allow for the biggest ever enlargement of the EU. The zone of peace and prosperity has expanded considerably. Without the commitments of the Helsinki Final Act, a Europe whole and free would have hardly been possible.

Thirty years after Helsinki, the OSCE has become the largest and the most inclusive transatlantic organisation, serving as a forum for political and security dialogue among its 55 participating States. The OSCE has built up a substantial operational capacity, adopted a number of key documents and developed a versatile set of instruments in all three dimensions to tackle the new challenges. In addition, the OSCE shares its experience with the Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation, offering them to voluntarily implement its commitments.

New global challenges and the process of OSCE reform

The 21st century has brought new global threats, as last week's attacks in Amman sadly reminded us. Terrorism, organised crime, economic disparity and environmental degradation pose new and unprecedented threats to global peace and security.

We need to look at our strategic priorities and adapt them to the fast-paced changes in the world. The OSCE, like the rest of the international community, is going through a process of reform. The Panel of Eminent Persons' Report, which came out in June, was followed by High-level consultations in September and a Working Group on Strengthening the Effectiveness of the OSCE began its work in October. The goal is to strengthen the effectiveness of the OSCE by making it more operational, more flexible and better equipped to respond to the new challenges. Most importantly, we need to create a stronger sense of common purpose and ownership of the organisation among our participating States. This, however, should not be done at the expense of compromising our common principles. Only in this way the OSCE will be able to better deliver on its mandate and retain its efficiency in the new century.

Concerted international effort is essential for our success

Mr. Chairman,

Stepping up co-operation with the rest of the international community is at the heart of OSCE's vision for the future. A number of key documents, most notably the OSCE Strategy to Combat Threats to Security and Stability in the 21st Century, have sought to strengthen the Organisation's capacity to work with its partners, highlighting the need for collective action of the international community to counter the extraordinary inter-connectedness of today's threats and challenges. Instability in one region inevitably contaminates others. In order to achieve maximum efficiency, we need to support each other towards our common goal, build on each other's strengths and advantages and foster an effective partnership.

Achieving a concerted and capable international effort is now high on the international agenda. At the recent UN Summit, as well as at the 6th High-level meeting with Regional Organisations (ROs), and ultimately through the UN Security Council Resolution 1631, the UN called for closer and more harmonious co-operation with ROs.

I know that the CoE is in the process of preparing a MoU with the EU, as tasked by the Third CoE Summit in May. We too are considering such possibility. Also at the CoE Summit, the OSCE and CoE participating and Member States respectively, signalled their intention to

enhance the complementarity of our two organisations through the simultaneous adoption of the Declaration on Co-operation. Now we need to take practical steps to translate their political will into practical steps to boost interaction.

The OSCE and the CoE: natural partners in promoting democratic reform

Mr. Chairman,

The OSCE and the CoE are natural partners. For the challenges the world faces these days may have changed but our shared values remain as compelling today as at the signing of the Helsinki Final Act. Democracy, good governance, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law, and tolerance and non-discrimination are at the core of our activities. They are the best defence of our common security and the most solid basis for our co-operation. Indeed, the absence of these results in instability, unrest and violence. The more we can assist the dissemination of our values in the regions where we operate, the better our long-term prospects of achieving lasting peace and stability will be.

We have already taken some important steps in streamlining our interaction. I would like to highlight the creation of the OSCE – CoE Co-ordination Group. Its potential, I think, lies mainly in that fact that it engages participating and Member States more actively in the process of OSCE - CoE co-operation. Successful co-ordination starts in capitals and it is of paramount importance what messages the two organisations receive from there.

Such co-operation could usefully complement the excellent rapport between our two Secretariats. I am happy to say that in the three months since I became the SG of the OSCE I have met SG Terry Davis on several occasions and we have managed to develop a close and cordial working relationship.

This morning, for example, we met to sign the Local Government Agreement for South-East Europe, which is another case in point of practical co-operation on the ground. It is focused, it is pragmatic and it sends the right message to capitals on our willingness to work together. It also gives good signals to host countries on our common goals and purposes, and finally, it gives the necessary institutional support to our field presences.

The main argument in favour of our closer co-operation remains our complementary institutional structures, strengths and advantages. Often the OSCE political mandate works in support of key CoE commitments. We are working on several important decisions, which make reference to and support key CoE legal instruments. We hope to adopt some of them at this year's Ministerial meeting. Thus, we have a draft decision on endorsing the broad objectives of the *Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism*. The draft decision on Human Rights and Terrorism makes reference to the *CoE Guidelines on Human Rights and the Fight against Terrorism*, as reflecting basic international standards of human rights in the fight against terrorism. In addition, the draft decision on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings refers to the *Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings* as corresponding with the OSCE's objectives in that area. Finally, *the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* is a key document also for the work of the HCNM.

I am particularly pleased with the active participation of the CoE at the recent Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, for we are close partners in our efforts to ensure participating States keep their commitments in the Human Dimension.

In this context, I am particularly mindful of our co-operation on tolerance and non-discrimination. The issue is one of the priorities of the OSCE Chairmanship in 2005. It was also the main subject of the high-level Conference in Cordoba. Recent events aptly show that marginalisation, non-integration and prejudice may lead to violence and instability.

The OSCE and CoE can assist participating and Member states to implement economic, migration and education policies especially targeted at young people. In that regard, I would like to commend the very close and fruitful contacts between ODIHR and the European Commission on Racism and Intolerance. The ODIHR are currently developing the Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Information Base (iBase), which will assist and support participating States in implementing practical initiatives related to tolerance and non-discrimination.

I am delighted at the working relationship between OSCE/ODIHR and PACE in election observation, the latest example being the recent parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan. It is of key importance that the international community speaks with a single voice to ensure a consistent message goes to governments, civil society and citizens throughout our Region.

We also need to ensure better follow-up of recommendations by election observation missions. ODIHR experts have been tasked by the Chairmanship to elaborate elements for a Copenhagen Plus document on international election standards, which we hope to adopt at the Ministerial Council in Ljubljana.

As you see, there are issues both of fundamental, as well as of very practical nature, where our organizations can and should work very closely together and with other organizations, so that an international net of measures, instruments and commitments is created. For my part, I would like to assure you of my committed and whole-hearted work to move forward the agenda for partnership between the OSCE and the CoE.

Thank you for your attention.