



STATEMENT

**by OSCE Chairman-in-Office Dr Dimitrij Rupel
at the OSCE Mediterranean Seminar
*Rabat, 8 September 2005***

Minister Benaissa,
Minister De Gucht,
Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to take part in this OSCE Mediterranean Seminar. I applaud the Government of Morocco for its initiative to host this event, and for the organizational skills that have been demonstrated in putting it together. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Belgium on Chairing the Mediterranean Contact Group.

We usually talk about the OSCE area in terms of East and West, from Vancouver to Vladivostok. But we should also consider its north-south axis, from the Arctic to the Mediterranean. A number of OSCE States, including Slovenia, border the Mediterranean. All of us are affected by what flows across it: ideas, goods, people. And all of us have an interest in the security of the Mediterranean region. It is therefore good to talk, and to co-operate on issues of common concern.

At meetings like this, the OSCE plays the role of a bridge linking Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. That bridge has been made more permanent by the OSCE partnership process.

I welcome the fact that this process is becoming more pragmatic. At this meeting we will talk generally about the OSCE Mediterranean partnership, but also more specifically about two issues that concern us all, namely migration and integration.

As was discussed at this year's Economic Forum, migration presents challenges for the countries of origin and the countries of destination. For the countries of origin – including the Maghreb – there can be problems of “brain drain”. For the recipient countries there can be

challenges of integration. These are complex and contentious issues which affect security, social cohesion, human rights and economic development. That is why we need to work together and to search for common solutions.

Slovenia chose migration and integration as one of the main themes for its Chairmanship because we see it as one of the OSCE area's greatest challenges. Many aspects of our work relate to these themes, for example border security and management, tolerance and non-discrimination, national minorities, trafficking, and the economic and environmental dimension. It is a classic comprehensive security issue.

I therefore hope that this issue will not be considered fashionable this year and then replaced by something else next year. We have a common interest in devoting more attention and resources to these issues over the long term. The problems will not go away.

On the contrary. The world is becoming more inter-dependent and movement is becoming easier.

As a result, the demographic balance of our cities and societies is changing, presenting us with new challenges.

We need to manage the process of migration, and to control illegal migration. The OSCE, Council of Europe and others need to help States to meet the challenge of integrating diversity.

Handled properly, migration can be beneficial to all. Handled poorly, it can be the source of tensions, disparities, prejudice, racism, populism and even violence. This is as big a challenge West of Vienna as it is in the Eastern part of the OSCE region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you know the OSCE is going through a process of transition. After some self-reflection and external advice – particularly from the Panel of Eminent Persons – we are about to embark on a process to strengthen the effectiveness of the OSCE. Next week, in Vienna,

there will be high level consultations. These will be followed by expert-level discussions to prepare for the Ministerial Council.

I hope that at the high level consultations participating States will clearly articulate their views on what the OSCE's strategic priorities should be and how its effectiveness can be strengthened. It will then be necessary to identify which issues should be the focus of reform in the short, medium and long term.

This includes the question of where we want to go in terms of out of area activities. I encourage you – our partners – to put forward your views on this question.

At the Ministerial Council I aim to do two things. One is to have a Ministerial Declaration which addresses the central point of the Panel report, namely to create a stronger sense of common purpose, to make all States feel that they have a stake in the Organization, and that they are treated as equals.

The second is to reach agreement on a blueprint for strengthening the effectiveness of the OSCE. By our agreeing on common objectives, reform can become a unifying rather than a dividing issue.

I am quite satisfied with how the reform process has progressed so far. Within half a year we have gone from a pessimistic sense of crisis to a constructive sense of expectation. I believe that this process has been useful, and, as a result, we will come out stronger .

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am a strong proponent of the OSCE's activities with adjacent regions. As you know, we currently have an Election Support Team in Afghanistan. We have assisted the Palestinian Authority on election-related issues.

The OSCE has a great deal to offer, whether it be expertise in policing, anti-trafficking, counter-terrorism, confidence- and security-building measures, peace-building, democratization and preventing ethnic conflict. I believe this expertise should be put at the service of our partners, and others who subscribe to our values and are interested in our way

of doing things, which has been tried and tested over thirty years. It is in our interest to share with our friends and neighbors that thirty year heritage of making Europe a united and more stable continent.

I hope that when we next celebrate a major OSCE anniversary, perhaps ten years from now, people will look back at this period in the Organization's history as one in which it opened up to the wider world and took a more active role to promote peace, co-operation and security.

I look forward to hosting all Partners at the Ministerial Council in Ljubljana in December.

Thank you for your attention. I wish you a successful seminar.