



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

ENGLISH only

Address by Mr. Göran Lennmarker,
President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly
Opening Session of the 14th OSCE Ministerial Council

Thank you.

Mr. Prime Minister, Mr. Foreign Minister, Chairman-in-Office, Secretary General, Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

First of all, let me say it's an honour to address for the first time the Ministerial Council and lead the team from the Parliamentary Assembly to this Council. I also wish to thank Belgium for its Chairmanship and leading the OSCE during this year, and I would also in particular thank the Belgian Federal Parliament, who hosted the annual Assembly of our Parliamentary Assembly this summer, and Speakers Anne-Marie Lizin and Herman De Croo.

Mr. Chairman, Europe is doing well. Security in Europe is better, perhaps better than ever. The economy, particularly in its Eastern half, is growing rapidly. Democracy and human rights have made dramatic progress since 1989. In that sense, the OSCE can be proud of these impressive achievements, I think that it's important to note these things.

But plenty remains to be done. There are unsolved conflicts. They are called frozen, but they have high human, economic and political costs.

Terrorism remains a threat to innocent civilians in our countries. Corruption is a main threat to the sustained rapid economic growth which is needed to generate a good European standard of living, also to the Eastern part. Rule of law is essential also for economic and social reasons.

There are still dictatorships in the OSCE in the 21st Century – this we did not expect fifteen years ago. Xenophobia and racism is a scourge that must be combated. I say this to show that we have a big job to do. We

need the OSCE, not least the field missions which are indispensable in many respects. To make the OSCE relevant, we need to work together. I know that the Ambassadors in Vienna are doing valuable work that will be reflected in the documents to this Council. Issues like terrorism, energy security, transport, trafficking, migration and tolerance, just to name a few. We are also aware that on the issue of reform that we from the Parliamentary Assembly have called for throughout the years, there is much work to be done.

Mr. Chairman,

As President of the Parliamentary Assembly, I have listed five priorities for our work inside the OSCE.

First of all comes conflict resolution, where the Parliamentary Assembly and parliamentarians have an important role. Parliamentarians do not engage in actual negotiations – that’s for governments and diplomats to do, to find technical solutions. But, in order to solve conflicts you also need to have the acceptance in the populations, and sometimes, that is where the problems really are. And I can say this because I’ve been Special Representative for the Nagorno Karabakh conflict from the Parliamentary Assembly. I’ve interacted with the two parliaments from the two countries, the Minsk group, as well as Ambassador Kasprzyk, who is the Representative of the Chairman-in-Office, and I must say that this has been a very important experience for me. I think that there is now a golden opportunity for solving the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, and I think that it’s important that this solution will be beneficial to both countries and to their populations, not least the refugees and the IDPs. I hope that the two countries will seize this golden opportunity.

Another priority is respect for human rights and in particular the fight against trafficking, and I don’t have to elaborate more on that, we all know what that will take.

A third point is election observation. This is a common OSCE endeavour. The Parliamentary Assembly and the ODIHR should work as one. Our two institutions have different, complementary tasks, but we share the same goal. The 1997 Co-operation Agreement constitutes the basis of the partnership between the Parliamentary Assembly and the ODIHR on election observation missions. Such a partnership requires that both sides take it seriously. We are certainly ready to do it, and we expect our partner to fully comply with the spirit and letter of this agreement.

The fourth priority is Central Asia. The OSCE includes Member States from Canada to Tajikistan. It's most important aspect is its inclusiveness. I wish to involve Central Asia more in our work. I fully support Kazakhstan's bid for the Chairmanship of the OSCE. The Bureau of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly yesterday unanimously recommended that the Assembly's Annual Session in 2008 be held in Kazakhstan.

Our fifth priority is strengthening the parliamentary dimension of the OSCE. Of course the Parliamentary Assembly is an essential OSCE institution, and it's an asset for the OSCE as a whole. Why is the Parliamentary Assembly, then, so important? This dimension is growing. Today, open, confident nations speak with many voices: not only the voice of the government, not only the voice of the capital, not only the voice from one side of the political spectrum – don't forget that today's opposition may be tomorrow's government. So I think the parliamentary dimension in the OSCE as in other places will be much more important in the future.

Mr. Chairman, let me finally welcome Spain as Chairman for the next year. The Parliamentary Assembly was born in Madrid, and our expectations are high for the next year. We are ready for close co-operation with you. Thank you.