



Vienna

**Statement by ambassador Krister Bringéus, Chair of the IGF on
Combating Terrorism, Meeting of Ministers' Deputies, Committee of
Ministers, Council of Europe on 3 November 2004**

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Secretary General, Distinguished Delegates,

Let me first of all thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your friendly words of introduction as well for the kind invitation to present the case of OSCE and its contribution to the fight against terrorism with you all.

In the hands-on-character that is typical of my organization I hope we will have a good exchange of ideas here today, with a particular view of course on how to improve our cooperation and coordination. In a similar fashion I have had the chance to touch base with the then Chairman of the UNCTC, Ambassador Arias, as well as with the CTC Executive Director Ambassador Rupérez in Vienna recently.

There are, as we all know, both similarities and differences between our organizations also when it comes to the specific issue of counter-terrorism.

To begin with the similarities. We both have the matter extremely high on our respective agendas. Obviously, counter-terrorism is very much a growth market these days. No organization, it seems, can afford not to deal with it. But it's worth noting, since it's often forgotten, that issues related to terrorism was a priority both for the Council of Europe and the OSCE long before September 11th.

Secondly, the gist of our activities is similar: intergovernmental cooperation in order to set up recommendations and guidelines and to offer support and assistance in implementation. Assistance in the field of legislation is only one example.

Thirdly, both organizations have the "human dimension", to use the OSCE terminology, as its starting point. There are certain core values that they see as absolutely fundamental and that they both thus protect, namely the respect for human rights, international law and the rule of law.

Fourthly, the membership - a paneuropean one - is obviously to a large degree overlapping.

Now, to the differences: They are, I would say, of a psychological character as well as of an operational one. The Council of Europe is if not an old - who wants to be characterized as old? - so at least an extremely well established European institution. It has a strikingly well functioning machinery for negotiating international instruments.

In fact, if there is one word to characterize the work of the Council of Europe I guess it is "quality". To us in Vienna the mills in Strasbourg might sometimes seem to grind slowly, but the consequence is that the output is, precisely, "quality". Simply said, there is quite some respect for the work of the Council of Europe in the OSCE-family.

The OSCE for its part is a rather young - sometimes almost impatient - organization, to some extent still finding its way. It is by and large a very informal organization. It has, as experience has shown a remarkable capacity to when need be taking very quick decisions and to act.

To the OSCE tools belong the Institutions: the ODIHR, the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Media Representative all of them directly and indirectly involved in the fight against terrorism. The OSCE has a field organization - some 17 offices in South Eastern Europe, the Balkans, Caucasus and Central Asia - each with a particular and precise mandate.

So let's go to the heart of the matter. What is the OSCE doing in the area of counter-terrorism?

What from a principled point of view makes the OSCE interesting as an actor in the fight against terrorism is of course its mandate; a mandate to deal with issues in a cross dimensional and transnational way. Security does not stop at national borders. For those states who signed up to the Helsinki Charter 1975 it is not a so called internal matter.

Another important factor, there is no secret about that, is that the OSCE family encompasses countries or regions to which it's sometimes not so easy for the International community to reach out to. The OSCE through the political dialogue in Vienna as well as its institutions and field missions thus becomes an important tool in this respect.

A third factor, I touched upon it already, is the rather un-bureaucratic approach of the organization.

As I have hinted, the OSCE for its own reasons has long been actively dealing with issues related to terrorism or the causes of it. And it deals with the issues without always defining it as anti-terrorist work.

Police training in the Balkans and in Central Asia, collection of small arms in Georgia as well as monitoring of the border between Georgia and Chechnya/Ingushetia fall well in to this category. So does the work on minority issues. Here we often talk silent diplomacy. When the High Commissioner has been successful in resolving an acute crisis we seldom hear of it. More so of course when he has offered concrete advice in legislative matters. Our efforts in terms of good governance or anticorruption as defined in the OSCE Economic and Environmental Strategy fall into the cluster of counter terrorism, so does our work on a border concept or the dealings of our trafficking coordinator, Madame Konrad...

Clearly the horrific events September 11th gave the issue of counter-terrorism a very special dimension in our organization. What has happened since - Moscow, Madrid, Beslan – has only galvanized the the political will to do more.

In the first phase after September 11th the OSCE had its focus on normative work. A decision to formally put terrorism on the OSCE agenda was taken in Bucharest 2001, an action plan was adopted, followed next year in Porto by a Charter on Preventing and Combating Terrorism.

In the second phase, i.e, during the last 18 months or so, our work has been concrete and practical.

Now, it's important to stress that the OSCE is not a technical agency nor a police organization but a regional security organization.

This is to say that a very important, if not prime responsibility is to see to that those decisions taken globally, by the UN system but also by the relevant technical agencies like ICAO, Interpol, FATF etc, are implemented in the OSCE region. This duty is a consequence of UNSCR 1373.

The means to promote implementation is normative decisions, awareness raising, specific projects.

I'll mention three very different but also very concrete examples on the latter. The OSCE has assisted one participating State in setting up a new national passport system. The OSCE has given participating states concrete advice in terms of national legislation. The OSCE organized a course for the national police in one participating State on how to deal with a hostage

situation while - and that was the point - respecting fundamental human rights.

In this respect I think it is important to stress that it's not only the countries east of Vienna that is in need of assistance. A workshop on airport security organized by the OSCE recently was quite instructive to the authorities in my own country - I can tell you - as well as a seminar on the intriguing aspects of "Jawalla" - transnational remittance of money based on trust - personal liaisons - rather than on written orders.

Awareness-raising might sound wishy washy but yes it is important. The main issue is of course to perpetually remind participating States that they are obliged to sign up to the twelve UN conventions on counter-terrorism.

But in a typical hands-on OSCE fashion it could also be a political decision to focus on the problem of "container security", where much remains to be done. Such a decision, by the way, is also an example where the OSCE has taken an initiative of its own. It so seems that no other international organizations so far have taken a broad approach to the matter.

I should also say that an integral part of the OSCE mandate is to help in international coordination. This spring the OSCE together with the UNODC organized the annual meeting between the UNCTC and the regional security organizations.

Which is our modus operandi? I have already mentioned the institutions and the field presence. I believe the missions increasingly will be involved in counter-terrorist activities.

In Vienna we are mainly talking two - possibly three - bodies: To begin with the Action Against Terrorism Unit and the Working Group I chair.

The ATU is an integral part of the Secretariat and consists of some ten very competent officials led by the dynamic Mr Brian Woo of the US. It has interestingly enough no formal mandate. It exists sui generis. Its focus is on education in the widest meaning of the word; on seminars, workshops and concrete projects. Its activities and projects are to a large extent funded outside the budget, by voluntary contributions.

The Working Group was established only last year by the then Dutch CiO. It's actually an Informal Group of Friends of the Chair which means that it comes and goes with each Chairman serving annually. In reality it has become the forum for politically negotiating proposals among the 55 participating States for decisions either by our main body the Permanent Council or for the Ministerial. But it also has a mandate to take concrete initiatives of its own.

Last year two important decisions came out of the Working Group. One to establish an OSCE information network among the 55 participating states another one to implement those guidelines on machine readable and biometric travel documents that the ICAO and G 8 had worked out. This a clear example of the OSCE politically cascading out into its region technical decisions taken else where by those who have the technical competence. .

What about the work in the Group this year? During the spring period we handled two decisions; one on the concept of solidarity with the victims of terrorism, the other one about implementing a specific FATF recommendation on further measures to suppress financing of terrorism. The first one was as Spanish initiative, not an uncomplicated one since it dealt with both the issue of defining the crime of terrorism as well as with different social and judicial systems of compensating victims of crime. In a tragic way events of March 11th proved helpful. The second one was a Russian initiative in order to see to that NGO:s are not in an illicit way used for funding terrorism.

This leads me to the third OSCE body relevant in this area, namely the Annual Security Review Conference - a recent innovation, where representatives from capitals review implementation of commitments in the security field but that could also be used as a generator of ideas. This, it provided 25 different suggestions for further action on counter-terrorism.

With my staff and with delegations we distilled the list and picked up four possible ideas to be translated into political decisions for the Sofia Ministerial on:

- reporting of lost and stolen passports to Interpol's database
- a study on the effects of internet being used for terrorist purposes
- support for implementation of UNSCR 1540 on the CBN-threat
- container security

For the sake of completeness I should also mention a recent Russian proposal on a so called Statement on terrorism, a document of a more political character that I believe Ministers will adopt in Sofia.

So at present we are in the phase of negotiating these documents.

Mr. Chairman,

So to the critical issue on the cooperation between our two organizations. What can and should be done?

Let me at the outset say that I personally come very much in I listening mode. But to kick off the discussion, I will try to answer the question with four key words, Why, Which, What and How:

Why?

On the highest level it is of course about finding our respective relevant place in the new European security architecture we see established after the EU and NATO enlargement. For the Council of Europe and the OSCE I think we want to seek complementary, this in order to be able marry our common efforts to in a forceful and coherent way promote our common objectives.

Which are they?

Clearly topics like counter-terrorism, trafficking, organized crime come to mind.

As we are all aware, under the excellent leadership of the British Ambassador a paper signaling these as well as other suggestions for joint action has been worked out here in Strasbourg. In Vienna we are now preparing ourselves for an affirmative decision in mid November.

What can we do?

I believe the first objective must be to get a fair idea of what the other organization is doing. This might sound trivial or banal but I truly believe that there is a mutual lack of visibility that we need to tackle. This lack of awareness is partially reinforced by the fact that activities - and let's be honest about it - of our organization are not always high up on the radar screen of our political masters. And coordination, like charity begins at home.

Secondly of course we should do this in order to avoid wasteful duplication, but even more important I believe is to see if we can mutually inspire each other.

Could, and I throw this out as a question, the OSCE in a much more consequent way draw on the aquis established by the Council of Europe? Take measures to promote implementation among its participating states?

Could the Council of Europe draw on the field organization of the OSCE? I think we are now witnessing something very interesting in Georgia, where both the OSCE and the Council of Europe participate in the European Union rule of law mission.

How do we do it?

Let me here right at the start compliment the Norwegian Chairman for its very important and innovative work on what has now more and more become known as the Norwegian Initiative. We in Vienna of course link up to this. It has met with a very positive response from the Chairman-in-Office. We sense that we are coming to results, creating a review mechanism not only between the secretariats but between member states which is the key point.

But, Mr. Chairman, with your indulgence let me add to this. Although reaching out to member states is the key purpose, for practical reasons I believe we have to stretch out even a little bit further.

We also need to reach out to the relevant functionaries in the organization. Our structures are asymmetric, which not necessarily is a bad thing. But this implies we have to find a working person to working person relationship. To this end I intend of course to follow up my own visit here by inviting to my Working relevant representatives of the Council of Europe.

On a modest level we have in fact already done so. Council of Europe staff will to join us in Vienna on Friday to present to delegations an update on Council of Europe activities and more precisely on the CoE country profiles (i.e. an overview of the legal and institutional framework in member states) which are linked to ODIHR's on line data base.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Secretary General, Distinguished Delegates,

In my statement I have touched upon philosophical and political aspects, technical points, concrete measures, technical, even banal points...

This is not only the way OSCE works, but how diplomacy works.

I thank you for your attention.