



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Secretary General Lamberto Zannier

OSCE Mediterranean Conference

Introduction to Session 1

Jordan, Dead Sea, 20 October 2015

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Participants,

It is an honour for me to address and moderate this high-level session on “Common Security in the Mediterranean Region”.

I would like to thank Minister Nasser Judeh for his country’s warm hospitality. Jordan is indeed an excellent venue for this conference since it will address such timely and critically important issues as countering radicalization and violent extremism, promoting interfaith and intercultural dialogue, and addressing some of the challenges related to migration. Jordan stands out as an example of peaceful co-existence of people of many cultures, faiths and beliefs and the Jordanian people have given the world a lesson in terms of humanitarian response.

From memory, this is the best-attended Mediterranean Conference ever convened by the OSCE. The presence of so many representatives at the political level is a clear indication that we all face similar challenges and that we need to step up our engagement, also in the context of the OSCE-Mediterranean co-operation, to address them more effectively.

When looking at the Euro-Mediterranean region today, we see increasing cultural and human bonds between our societies, notwithstanding the diversity that characterizes different cultures and religions. On the other hand, the Euro-Mediterranean region is experiencing renewed and heightened tensions, and is increasingly divided by old and new rifts. As His Majesty King Abdullah II at this year's inaugural session of the UN General Assembly pointed out: "*What separates humanity is minuscule, compared to what we hold in common*". But he also noted that "*a drop of venom can poison a well.*" We must not underestimate the threat of intolerance and radicalization, which attempts to exploit what still divides us.

The current migrant and refugee crisis is another case in point. It is high time for the international community to act collectively and in a comprehensive manner in facing this unprecedented humanitarian challenge. Early next year I will organize – possibly in Rome – an OSCE Security Days event devoted to migration with the aim of stimulating action-oriented discussion and changing the narrative about this issue, and involving other regional and international actors in the debate. I would urge an active role also from the Mediterranean Partners at that event. The reality of international migration as a global phenomenon reminds us that we need to develop shared co-operative, rights-based approaches to ensure that it can continue to act as a powerful catalyst for development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As rightly underlined in all introductory statements, there is a growing recognition that developments in the Mediterranean are inextricably linked to the security of the OSCE area and that the complex and often interrelated challenges affecting the two regions are too great for any single country or region to tackle alone. The current situation requires co-operation and joint action. It is time to consider how to move our Partnership to the next level.

How can we make better use of the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership as a forum for addressing shared challenges, decreasing tensions, correcting misperceptions, and promoting co-operation throughout the Euro-Mediterranean region? We need to relook at the mechanisms that govern our Partnership and consider how to strengthen them, and I would like to put forward a few proposals in this regard. For instance, today we need a Permanent Council decision to implement any individual project with a Partner country. This is a cumbersome procedure, which slows down our practical co-operation. We may wish to relook at this and consider PC authorisation for an entire programme as opposed to a single project. We might also consider extending to Partners the participation in networks of OSCE focal points on issues such as border management or combatting trafficking in human beings or on police co-operation. Also, more active involvement of our Partners in OSCE campaigns such as the one on Countering Violent Extremism would be another positive step. And we could consider establishing OSCE institutes of excellence on trafficking or even migration with a strong focus on the Mediterranean region and with the involvement of Partners and relevant OSCE institutions.

Today's gathering promises to be a turning point for the OSCE and its Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation. In that spirit and with that hope, I now open the floor for discussion, and for your comments.