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Speech by Terry Davis
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In the course of preparing for my visit I received a long brief with a detailed description of every aspect of the institutional co-operation between the OSCE and the Council of Europe. I think that the idea was to transform this brief into a speech, but do not be alarmed, I am not going to do that for two reasons. First, because I assume that you have received similar information from your own secretariat; and second, because I think we have more important things to discuss than to slap each other on the back and indulge in mutual self-congratulations.

It is enough to say that our co-operation is regular and good and getting even better. As in other areas of life, relations between institutions depend on personalities, and I should like once again to pay tribute to Secretary General Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, with whom I have established a very close working relationship.

If we look at our respective briefs on co-operation between the OSCE and the Council of Europe, we can see that we have many joint meetings and many channels of communication, and that is important. We need to meet and discuss and exchange information, but it is also very important that meetings, discussions and communication result in specific, meaningful and measurable effects. Co-ordination is not a part of our respective mandates - only a method to achieving results.

The real point I want to make is that the true test of our meaningful co-operation is not when we are sitting together at the same table, but when we are not. What really matters is the extent to which we take into account each other's work and potential contribution when we undertake our activities, here in Vienna, Warsaw, Strasbourg or elsewhere.

To make sense, co-ordination must begin in the planning phase - not the execution phase - because usually by that time the best we can do is to pretend we are co-ordinating our work, when what we are really doing is trying to stay off each other's feet.

Much of this co-ordination can and is done at the level of the two secretariats, and I want to refer again to the excellent co-operation I have established with Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, but as we are dealing with two inter-governmental organisations, proper co-ordination between the two is impossible without proper co-ordination between governments - and even more so within Governments. In other words,

every Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Europe has a Council of Europe desk officer and an OSCE desk officer, and when they are different people, we need to make sure that their desks are not too far apart. It is desk officers – not only Secretaries General – who need to face each other.

I think Governments have a clear interest and a clear responsibility to look at each organisation, its working methods and added-values, and decide which one would be best suited to deal with a specific situation.

In the case of the Council of Europe, the added value is clearly our system of legally binding international conventions, starting but not ending with the European Convention on Human Rights. Most of our key conventions provide for formal monitoring mechanisms which regularly report on compliance with the obligations which result from the Conventions. The output from these monitoring mechanisms is fed back into our standard-setting – it helps our member states to decide in which areas we may need new legal instruments or which of the existing legal instruments need to be revised and updated. Monitoring reports also serve as a basis for expert assistance and co-operation programmes in our member states in areas where they have difficulty in meeting our standards. This is what I call the Council of Europe cycle of change with monitoring and assistance programmes on top of voluntarily accepted, but legally binding standards.

The specific Council of Europe approach also combines strict respect for the safeguards contained in the European Convention on Human Rights with measures and procedures to facilitate co-operation in international law enforcement in areas such as the fight against terrorism or trafficking in human beings. It is also worth mentioning that most of our recent conventions – which I call the new generation treaties – are open not only to the member states of the Council of Europe but also to non-European countries. The added value of the open-ended geographical scope in areas such as terrorism or cybercrime is self-evident.

When it comes to the OSCE, we have a very high opinion of your experience in election observation and other field operations.

A substantial amount of joint work has been carried out “in the field” through contact with OSCE field presences and with OSCE Representatives, such as the Representative on Freedom of Media, Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, the Personal Representative of the Chairman in Office to promote tolerance and combat racism, xenophobia and discrimination, the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

I believe the people in these posts are doing an excellent and valuable job, and I think that close co-operation with their Council of Europe counterparts and especially reliance on Council of Europe legally binding instruments in their field of work can only reinforce the effectiveness and the impact of their efforts.

When it comes to election observation, I welcome the close relationship established between the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights - and also the European Parliament. It is important to continue to extend this co-operation -especially in the area of pre-electoral assistance to improve respect for democratic norms and standards across Europe.

In the last year or so, the Council of Europe has successfully implemented Action Plans for pre-electoral assistance in Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine and also conducted a series of specific activities in Albania and Azerbaijan. The Committee of Ministers has already adopted an Action Plan for pre-electoral assistance for the coming presidential elections in Azerbaijan. The Council of Europe is also planning to provide pre-electoral assistance for the parliamentary elections in Georgia and the elections next year in Moldova. Discussions should also start soon to discuss a package of activities with the Russian Federation based on the conclusions drawn from the observation of the recent parliamentary and presidential elections.

These are only a few examples of where we are already working together or where we could envisage more co-operation in future. Perhaps I should add that the development of close working relationships with the international partners is one of my priorities as Secretary General of the Council of Europe. This is why I have recently appointed a new Director of External Relations, Zoltan Taubner, who deals with the United Nations and the European Union as well as the OSCE, and who reports directly to me.

The reality in which we all operate is that we are expected to do more and more while the money is in ever shorter supply. We are all facing budgetary difficulties, and we are also accountable to the taxpayer for every penny we spend.

Close co-ordination between different international institutions is a part of this accountability. It sometimes requires that we do things together, but it should also mean that sometimes we do not.

Personally, I have a problem with the practice of systematically asking several people – or organisations - to do the same thing and then expecting them to sort out any difficulties themselves. I know that in some quarters there is a debate about the merits of necessary duplication versus unnecessary duplication, but I think that a bit more specialisation could help us to do more, to do it better and to do it for less money.

Thank you very much.