



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

**Address by H.E. Ambassador Marc Perrin de Brichambaut
Secretary General of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
to the Second Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions
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Mr. President,
Leaders of World and Traditional Religions,
Distinguished Guests,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This meeting is unique. Such an assembly of eminent public leaders with the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, joining together in Astana from all corners of the globe is testimony to the vision and leadership of the Republic of Kazakhstan. This Congress is also vitally important. As we move into the 21st century, such assemblies as this are key for promoting better understanding and mutual respect between our societies and communities. There are, indeed, few questions of greater importance facing us today. I am deeply honored to send this address to you on such an occasion.

The dialogue of cultures and inter-faith co-operation stands high on the agenda of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. It is one of the top priorities of the 2006 OSCE Belgian Chairmanship. It could not be otherwise.

The OSCE is the world's largest regional security organization. It spans three continents "from Vancouver to Vladivostok." It encompasses major world religions and cultures, and brings together 56 participating States. These States are all different, but they have proved able and willing to work closely together to promote stability and security in the OSCE area.

They have also elaborated an impressive body of commitments in all three dimensions of security. In the human dimension, our commitments are underpinned by the principles of the inherent dignity of the human being, human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In recent years, the OSCE and its participating States have taken additional steps to promote the intercultural dialogue and inter-faith co-operation. Important decisions have been adopted at the OSCE Ministerial Council meetings in Porto, Sofia and Ljubljana. We have conducted four OSCE high-level conferences devoted to promoting tolerance and non-discrimination (in Berlin, Brussels and Paris in 2004 and Cordoba in 2005, as well as the implementation meeting in Almaty in 2006). Three Personal Representatives of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office have been appointed to combat different forms of intolerance and discrimination (anti-Semitism, intolerance and discrimination against Muslims, Christians and members of other religions). These recent steps build on the foundations of multiple activities conducted by the OSCE's three permanent Institutions, field operations and the Secretariat.

In June 2006, I was very pleased to submit with the Chairman-in-Office to the Secretary General of the United Nations the report on the OSCE contribution to the Alliance of Civilizations initiative. This contribution confirms that the OSCE, as an organization of common values and commitments among equals, is in itself an alliance of civilizations in action.

We have started, but the hard work remains ahead of us. In today's world of globalization and diversity, intercultural and inter-faith dialogue, tolerance and non-discrimination are needed more than ever. As Secretary General of the OSCE, I applaud the Organizers of this very timely and highly relevant Congress. I wish you very successful and fruitful work.