

Speech
by
H.E. Dr. Solomon Passy, OSCE Chairman-in-Office
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria
at the
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Edinburgh, United Kingdom
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Mr. President,
Distinguished Members of Parliament,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be with you in Edinburgh. I am honoured to address this Annual Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

First of all, my sincere thanks go to our highly esteemed President Mr. Bruce George who has so ably led this Assembly over the last two years. I could only wish myself, dear Bruce, to be privileged to maintain also in the future our long-standing friendship. Let me wish to your successor to build upon the tremendous achievements during your tenure and to keep the trans-Atlantic link active, as you have done.

The Parliamentary Assembly has considerably strengthened its role as an important OSCE institution during the last decade. The Bulgarian Chairmanship has identified further advancement of mutual political support and continuous interaction with the Parliamentary Assembly among its main priorities for 2004. I would like to specifically commend the joint successful efforts of the OSCE institutions and the Assembly in the field of monitoring elections, most recently in Georgia, Russia and Algeria. This cooperation is receiving growing international recognition and support and, in the future, I hope to see OSCE parliamentarians helping to strengthen democracy in other regions.

Let me start by sharing my impressions from the first half of the Chairmanship and looking ahead to the future.

Implementation

In January, at the outset of the Bulgarian Chairmanship, I said that our priority would be on implementation. The OSCE has a thick catalogue of commitments and a toolbox full of instruments and we should ensure that these are effectively applied to promote security and co-operation in the OSCE area.

It is important to take stock of how our capabilities match our political expectations, to consolidate what we have done in the past few years of rapid growth, and look at how the OSCE can be transformed to deal with the evolving international environment.

To do this I have been travelling extensively throughout the OSCE area. I have also tried to take an active role in as many OSCE meetings and events as possible, the Parliamentary Assembly's meetings being the most important among them.

One of the main conclusions which I draw from my visits to Central Asia, the South Caucasus, Moldova, Belarus and the Western Balkans is that the OSCE is in a position to contribute essentially to the reinforcement of a positive perspective for these regions and countries, and can stimulate the mobilization of their potentials to this end.

OSCE Missions and Institutions are geared towards democratization and conflict prevention. Events earlier this year in Georgia and Kosovo demonstrated that the OSCE has a role to play by providing concrete contribution to deescalating the situation and finding a peaceful outcome. Being on the ground enables us to respond quickly and to act accordingly together with our international partners. Our 18 field presences should

continue to enhance the co-operation with the host countries and to be instrumental in assisting these countries to achieve their national priorities and meet OSCE commitments.

The OSCE made a difference in a number of other cases recently – in promoting dialogue and contributing to conflict resolution in Moldova and Nagorno-Karabakh, in stimulating the release of prisoners in Azerbaijan, in the adoption of a moratorium on death penalty in Tajikistan, in supporting the return of refugees and IDPs, in re-possession of property in the Western Balkans, in securing financial support for the OSCE Academy in Bishkek and in resuming open dialogue with Belarus. These are just a few specific examples.

The Bulgarian Chairmanship continues to pay particular attention to the problems of intolerance and discrimination. We have had a high-profile conference in Berlin on anti-Semitism and an innovative meeting in Paris on hate crimes on the Internet. I look forward to the conference in Brussels in September on racism, xenophobia and discrimination. The Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in October should provide an opportunity to discuss follow up to these three important meetings.

Following the decision taken at Maastricht, I have appointed Dr. Helga Konrad as Special Representative of the CiO against Human Trafficking. An anti-trafficking unit is currently being formed in the Secretariat. Following extensive consultations among participating States, Mr. Miklos Haraszti has been appointed OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media.

Trafficking is the type of issue – like so many in the OSCE – that affects all participating States. We have to be cautious of creating the wrong impression that there are some countries that live up to their OSCE commitments and other less fortunate neighbours who have all the problems. Security and prosperity in Europe are inter-linked. We need joint approaches to common problems.

We have tried to raise education up on the political agenda. In Bosnia and Herzegovina and elsewhere the OSCE is doing good work in this field. We had a conference on education in Tashkent in April and I have suggested a follow-up in Bulgaria this fall. By focusing on education, young people can learn from the lessons of the past and have a better chance of building civil and peaceful societies with developed market economies.

A new means of strengthening implementation is the Annual Security Review Conference. The second annual meeting took

place two weeks ago and provided considerable food for thought on reshaping and enhancing the political-military dimension, strengthening our counter-terrorism capability, developing border security and management cooperation, and consolidating our police assistance programmes. We will now have to consider how to turn these initiatives into “deliverables” for the Sofia Ministerial Council.

In the economic and environmental dimension, progress is being made on improving monitoring, reviewing commitments and strengthening early-warning indicators and mechanisms. It is important that we move ahead in this field. On the other hand, however, there is a need to ensure that the Economic Forum has a measurable practical impact on those participating States which most need it.

As can be seen, the OSCE has done a lot and has made a good progress, but a lot remains to be done.

Let me turn now to the future. Allow me to share a few thoughts on the transformation of the OSCE.

Transformation

We need to look at the OSCE in the light of contemporary security priorities, EU enlargement, NATO's transformation, and the evolution of other organizations.

We need to continue our joint efforts to improve further the efficiency of the OSCE. To do this, some hard questions must be asked. What should the current priorities of the OSCE be? How can we ensure that the OSCE further develops as a forum for political dialogue and action that is relevant both East and West of Vienna? What other additional efforts are needed to provide security, stability and economic prosperity in the vast OSCE area? What can be done to have a dynamic exchange of views on the most topical issues of the day?

Against this background, I believe that the OSCE is in need of transformation. Moreover, I think that the transformation process should start right away. I am a politician like all of you here and I am convinced that we should try to humanize the Organization and bring it closer to the people and our constituencies, thereby better responding to their needs and expectations. I have the strong feeling that the OSCE is embedded in a sort of bureaucratic *status quo* which should be addressed with vision and political leadership.

We should look at where the money of participating States is being spent and whether this is an accurate reflection of our political priorities. I hasten to add that I do not question the amount of our expenditures, which are modest, but rather the priorities which should be redefined. Indeed, I think that we need to better assess the extent to which we are matching resources to priorities by increasing financing for areas such as antiterrorism, combating trafficking, border control and management, policing, education. I draw your attention to the fact that there are huge geographic misbalances in the distribution of the budget among different areas – Europe as a whole, South Eastern Europe, South Caucasus, and Central Asia. Maybe you are aware that almost 50% of our field resources go to South Eastern Europe, while only 6 % is spent on our work in Central Asia and 15% in Caucasus. We have had these proportions for already several years. We need both a new balance and new optimization of our spending.

We should have a fresh look at where our institutions are located - the excellent, sometimes luxurious venues to the West of Vienna where we convene our major events. Shouldn't activities be refocused and some of them gradually be relocated to capitals like Baku, Yerevan, Tbilisi, Dushanbe, Bishkek, Ashgabat, Astana, Tashkent, Moscow, Kiev, Minsk, Chisinau or

other places to better reflect the Organization's wide horizons and rich diversity?

The role of the Secretary General needs to be upgraded while strengthening the political leadership of the Chairman-in-Office. Unlike holders of similar posts in other international organizations, our Secretary General has too limited political prerogatives which practically boil down to advising the CiO. The Chairman-in-Office, for his/her part, rotating as he/she does every year, is hardly in a position to achieve much in such a short period of time. Ironically, he/she is not even ensured against being replaced, due to internal political changes at home during his/her tenure. These characteristics engender the notorious lack of institutional memory in our Organization.

The Secretary General has made management reform one of his highest priorities. The changes being introduced will put the Secretariat in a stronger position to support the participating States and the Chairmanship. This should be welcomed and taken full advantage of. Deep structural reform cannot, however, be done without the involvement and support of participating States.

As you are aware, our distinguished Secretary General Jan Kubis is going to leave us next year after having successfully

accomplished his second term in this position. I intend to open soon a procedure for the appointment of his successor. I hope that the process will result in the selection of an active Secretary General, with high international standing, looking to bring forward the transformation of the Organization.

We need to improve the effectiveness of OSCE field operations as well. I am glad to see that more efforts are being put into training.

We are exploring how to make our relations with our Partners for Co-operation more fruitful and better share OSCE norms, principles and commitments. Our relations with Afghanistan deserve particular attention. More generally, it is worth considering closer interaction with regional organizations in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and South America.

Our rules of procedure are thirty years old, codified in three pages of the so-called “Blue Book” of 1973. These need to be dusted off and reconsidered in the light of contemporary realities. As agreed, the scales of contribution need to be reassessed before the end of this year. I hope that this can be done in a way that is fair and equitable, and in a constructive spirit. I would appreciate the fresh ideas of all of you, the OSCE parliamentarians, as far as budgetary issues are concerned.

Our goal should be to reach an agreement on the main elements of the process of transformation of the OSCE at the Ministerial Council in Sofia in December. What the Organization needs is political leadership. Increased attention to OSCE, at the political level, in capitals, in the run-up to Sofia would be a necessary and welcome development. The whole process, if so agreed, could be endorsed and further developed at an OSCE Summit.

Working Towards Sofia

Dear Members of Parliament,

The transformation process requires the input of parliamentarians and foreign ministries, the interest of the press, and the awareness of the public. You, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, play a vital role in generating fresh initiatives and influencing decision-takers to use the OSCE to tackle contemporary challenges and to transform it to be better equipped in the future.

We would welcome your ideas and dynamism to enhance the Organization so that it can live up to the expectations that we all hold for it.

I firmly believe that the importance of the theme of the Annual Session in Edinburgh will ensure fruitful debates as well as elaboration of substantial recommendations. I also look to the deliberations of this session as a meaningful contribution to the preparation of the Sofia Ministerial in December. I wish you a successful outcome of the meeting.

Thank you for your attention.