

ENGLISH only

Address of Mark Sofer
Deputy-Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
of the State of Israel
OSCE Ministerial Council – Ljubljana, 5 December 2005

Chairman in Office, Your Excellencies the Ministers, distinguished guests,

I would like first of all to congratulate the Government of Slovenia for their superb organization and to commend the leadership you provided the organization during the course of your presidency, which is nearing its completion.

Permit me also to wish the best of luck to the Government of Belgium, the new Chairman of OSCE for 2006, and thank them for their effective leadership of the Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation.

We look forward to continue working in the same spirit of cooperation with the Government of Spain, the forthcoming Chairman of the Mediterranean Partners.

Distinguished Guests,

We have heard much, yesterday and today that terrorism has become the world's most dangerous global threat. Indeed even as the delegates spoke, innocent Israeli civilians yesterday once more became the victims of yet another terrorist atrocity. Terrorism will remain a major threat to international peace and stability and to state power in the foreseeable future. It is aimed at the heart of OSCE ideals – the values of peace, equality and human rights and the resolution of disputes through peaceful means. To face this challenge, a global coalition should be formed with a unified approach based on zero tolerance towards terrorism in all its forms as well as eradication of any safe havens or support systems for terrorist activities of any kind.

The weakest links so far in forming such a coalition are those regimes that are able but unwilling to take the necessary actions to dismantle the terrorist infrastructure and put an end to terrorist activities. They give further impetus to terrorism by using rhetoric that legitimizes certain forms of terrorist violence, grants special treatment to particular terrorist organizations, and attempts to justify certain types of violence.

An additional emphasis should be placed on education. The rapid spread of global terrorism can be directly linked with incitement to hatred and violence at the local, national and international levels.

Honored guests,

Anti-Semitism has reared its ugly head over the last few years. We are heartened that the OSCE and many of its member states recognize this and have begun to take steps to counter it. In April 2004, the OSCE Conference on Anti-Semitism in Berlin adopted the "Berlin Declaration" an important milestone in the fight against Anti-Semitism. The Paris and Cordoba Conferences that followed reflected the readiness of the OSCE and the ODHIR to maintain the struggle against this scourge. We support the intention to hold every two years, from 2006, an expert on anti-Semitism and other forms of related intolerance and every alternate year, from 2007 onwards, to hold a general conference on these crucial issues.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the three Special Representatives for their important work in combating Anti-Semitism and the growing intolerance especially towards Islam but also towards Christianity. There must be a coordinated effort in the fields of education, law enforcement and legislation, to combat these ethnic and religious hatreds.

Dear Colleagues,

Israel enthusiastically adheres to the principles and values of OSCE. Within these parameters, it participates in the various activities that are open to the Mediterranean Partners.

Israel views the Partnership as an obligation and not only a privilege. Simultaneously with the need to enhance cooperation and CBM activities within the MPC framework, all of the member states of the MPC are obliged to contribute their part to the OSCE as a whole, while exploiting the knowledge and human resources in the Mediterranean region.

The prime example of this is the annual Mediterranean Seminar, held this year in Morocco.

We propose to host a future Mediterranean Seminar that would concentrate on subjects of prime importance to the Mediterranean region, to all the members of MPC as well as most of the member states of OSCE – namely, water and anti-desertification.

Israel also welcomes cooperation with the OSCE in the economic field. We attach great importance to the economic forum as an additional tool that will increase stability and cooperation.

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Israel is eager to share its expertise in education, economic and social development, science, and other areas, as part of the work of the OSCE in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Our International Cooperation Department at the Foreign Ministry is ready for any joint projects within the organization. Our Ambassador to OSCE will be in contact with the Secretariat to examine the possibilities of cooperation.

Finally, I would like to thank the Secretary General and the Secretariat of OSCE for their good work in facilitating the dialogue between OSCE and its Mediterranean Partners.

We look forward to continuing to work with OSCE in order to pursue our common goals of achieving a safer environment in the 21st century.