



President Riccardo Migliori
Remarks to the Ministerial Council
6 December 2012 | Dublin

As prepared for delivery

Chairman, Excellencies,

The Parliamentary Assembly believes in the full potential of the OSCE. As we declared during our Annual Session in July “the OSCE’s comprehensive approach to security remains a key concept for successfully addressing the security challenges of the twenty-first century.”

The negotiations on decisions for this Ministerial Council begs a question: As we approach 40 years after Helsinki, why can’t we do better than put reshuffled diplomatic formulas on Ministerial Council paper?

I am still optimistic, however, that we definitely can do better. I urge you to take note of the recommendations we adopted at our Annual Session this year and ask that they be taken seriously and considered in the constructive spirit in which they are offered.

In an age of austerity and a time of damaged trust in international organizations and governments, we need to refocus on our strengths. One of those strengths is the OSCE’s parliamentary dimension, based on the Charter of Paris, which needs to be recognized and utilized in the best interests of all. The Parliamentary Assembly will continue to make useful recommendations as well as constructive criticisms to strengthen our organization. And, more importantly, we can offer the oversight that is sorely lacking today.

The backbone of the OSCE is the field missions and their programmes, which emanate from the policy decisions you take here and through your ambassadors in Vienna. Our Assembly has consistently called for protecting the budgets of the field missions and to avoid constructing a large bureaucracy. The OSCE has to demonstrate its responsible use of taxpayer’s money by focusing on what its added value is, and that is done by its field operations.

During our Fall Session in Tirana, Secretary General Zannier briefed the Assembly on his vision for next year’s OSCE budget. I am deeply concerned that it appears to take needed resources away from the field missions to invest more in the Secretariat.

The OSCE should also operate with the same transparency and accountability that we all expect from our own governments. As we have respectfully urged for several years, accountability needs to be guaranteed through outside, independent, professional auditors. Who can be against that?

Transparency can also be enhanced by letting NGOs know they are welcome at the Permanent Council and that input from civil society is not relegated to two weeks in Warsaw but year-round at the permanent seat of the OSCE.

You will be disappointed if I do not mention our election observation activities and the problems we have with the ODIHR.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has, ever since the first Russian Duma elections in 1993, led OSCE election observation. We have completed more than two hundred election observation missions with the participation of thousands of parliamentarians.

Parliamentarians' expert political judgment as practitioners of politics and elections is critical to the credibility of our observation work. They also add great visibility because of their link with the media in their respective countries. This autumn alone we have led six election observation missions and provided the OSCE with experienced political leadership.

As I said in Warsaw and Vienna, I have insisted on an orthodox implementation of the 1997 Co-operation Agreement. Genuine cooperation with the ODIHR adds value for OSCE election observations. But this cooperation must be based on an honest implementation of the Agreement. The Parliamentary Assembly has adhered to this agreement in letter and spirit for fifteen years. Unfortunately, the ODIHR has not. Our opinion, therefore, is that this agreement is no longer valid and is no longer operative.

Finally, if we look at the future, we need to look beyond the current OSCE territory. We welcome Mongolia as the OSCE's 57th participating State. It is an encouraging sign that we have countries that want to join our organization.

The PA has helped the OSCE deepen its partnership with those on the southern shore of the Mediterranean. This summer at our Annual Session, the Deputy Foreign Minister of Libya mentioned a long list of areas in which his country needs our support – and they were all related to core OSCE activities. This type of engagement is critical to raising the visibility of the OSCE in a region where we are badly needed and in places where stability today is vital to our whole region's security tomorrow. Let us not miss this opportunity.

Let me end by thanking the Irish Chairmanship for its cooperation throughout the year and by welcoming Ukraine as next year's Chairmanship.