



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Secretary General Lamberto Zannier

**Address to the Joint Session of the three General Committees
of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly**

Winter Meeting

23 February 2012

President Efthymiou,
Madame Speaker Prammer,
Secretary General Oliver,
Members of the Parliamentary Assembly,
Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you, Mr. President, for your warm words of welcome. It is a great pleasure for me to address the Joint Session of the three General Committees.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Winter Meeting provides an excellent platform for open dialogue on a wide range of issues on the OSCE agenda.

You have a full agenda, which will address issues across the three dimensions of security. Indeed, your work has already begun, with a very relevant debate in the General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions earlier today. I welcome your willingness to

address head-on difficult issues, where consensus at the intergovernmental level has proven elusive, such as the future of conventional arms control in the OSCE region. It is precisely in such areas that you as parliamentarians can make a concrete contribution to our joint efforts to realize a genuine security community throughout the OSCE area.

Since taking up my post last year, I have worked to strengthen co-operation between the OSCE's intergovernmental and inter-parliamentary branches. My first official trip as Secretary General was to the Assembly's meeting in Belgrade, and I have made a point of reaching out to parliamentarians in each of the capitals I have visited. What's more, I recently travelled to Copenhagen, for what I'm told was the first official visit of an OSCE Secretary General to the PA's International Secretariat. I used this opportunity to promote co-operation, transparency and pragmatism in our interaction, and to make our relationship more operational.

Throughout all of these contacts, I have encouraged parliamentarians to play a more active role in developing new, "outside the box" ideas and providing fresh inputs to the OSCE's intergovernmental dialogue. As this morning's discussions have already demonstrated, your meetings here in Vienna provide a valuable opportunity to do just that.

But the PA is much more than just a forum for dialogue. As parliamentarians, you also play a crucial role within each of the states you represent, reminding your governments of the commitments they have undertaken and working to ensure their full implementation. The PA plays a vital role, in partnership with ODIHR, in promoting free and fair elections throughout the OSCE area. And this past year, against the backdrop of

dramatic transformation processes in the Southern Mediterranean, you have played a key role in sharing the OSCE's experience with our Partners.

The PA's observation of last October's Constituent Assembly election in Tunisia was an excellent example of how parliamentarians can lead by example, blazing trails that OSCE governments and Institutions can follow.

Mr. President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Having been in office for just over half a year, I would like to share a few thoughts with this distinguished Assembly about the current state of the OSCE, and the road ahead.

Our overarching task remains, now and for the medium term, the achievement of the vision set forth in Astana, of a free, democratic, common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community, rooted in agreed commitments, shared values and common goals. At the Vilnius Ministerial Council, we made significant progress toward this vision in a number of areas, against a difficult political background. Consensus was reached to strengthen the OSCE's efforts to address the conflict cycle and transnational threats. The Astana principle that the security of the OSCE area is "inextricably linked" with the security of neighbouring areas found expression in Ministerial Council decisions to strengthen ties with our Partners for Co-operation, and in particular our engagement with Afghanistan. Ministers were also able to welcome Mongolia's application to become a participating State.

All of these decisions are significant because they cut across all dimensions. They underscore the necessity, particularly in difficult financial times, for the OSCE to work in synergy with other international actors. And they recognize the need for greater coherence across the OSCE family in pursuing our common goals.

Despite these important achievements, Vilnius also revealed that much work remains ahead to bridge differences among participating States, and to build the trust necessary to underpin a genuine security community. More must be done to settle protracted conflicts in our region, and I will do my utmost as Secretary General to support negotiation processes, including during my upcoming travel to the South Caucasus. As I noted in Belgrade, Parliamentarians can play a key role in promoting conflict resolution. We must also do more to ensure that the commitments participating States have undertaken in the human dimension are fully implemented, and that those commitments remain up to date as technology continues to evolve. Here again, parliamentary support will be essential.

Mr. President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I look forward to your debates on these and other challenges throughout this Winter Meeting. I hope you will also find time to consider ways in which we can strengthen the ability of our Organization to assist the participating States in addressing them.

You may remember that at the Annual Session in Belgrade, I shared with you some initial ideas on how we might make the Secretariat and the other executive structures more efficient and responsive to the needs of the

participating States. These past seven months, I have introduced some initial reforms within the Secretariat, aimed at strengthening our ability to confront transnational threats and ensuring the preservation of institutional memory. I have travelled to 22 participating States, and have initiated regular informal meetings with ambassadors here in Vienna to allow for a regular and open exchange of views on issues affecting the management and the strategic direction of our Organization.

I naturally intend to continue this effort. Yet I cannot miss this opportunity to highlight several major challenges that remain.

The absence of a reliable, international legal basis for the Organization's activities remains a significant obstacle. It complicates our ability to explore new areas of engagement, and forces us to waste precious resources. I have raised this issue repeatedly with the participating States, and will continue to do so.

The very strict limits on the maximum periods of service of OSCE officials inhibit our ability to preserve institutional memory and to maintain qualified staff. It also wastes money, by increasing recruitment, training and termination costs. Like my predecessors, I plan to propose some modest reforms that would address the most severe implications of the current policy, without changing the fundamental non-career nature of the Organization.

And finally, I must note a worrying trend with regard to the resources that are made available to the Organization. While this year's Unified Budget was approved in a timely fashion, it represented a nominal decrease of some four million euros below 2011 levels. In real terms, the budget of the

Organization has been decreasing steadily for several years. At the same time, many participating States, who themselves face severe resource constraints, have been less willing to provide extra-budgetary resources or to second qualified staff, while the demands placed upon the Organization have continued to grow.

Just as I rely upon you, as parliamentarians, to reinforce the OSCE's efforts to achieve its strategic political goals, I count on your support in ensuring the continued strength of the Organization itself. Your role is essential, in ensuring that the OSCE has the resources necessary to achieve the work that is demanded of it, and in encouraging the governments of the participating States to support sound management practices.

In turn, you will find that my door is always open. I look forward to continued co-operation with the Assembly and with each of you individually, in a spirit of transparency, co-operation and partnership.

Thank you for your attention.