

**Address by the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly,
Mr. Petros Efthymiou**

**OSCE Summit in Astana
December 2010**

Mr. President,
Mr. Chairman,
Mr. Secretary General of the United Nations,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure and an honor for me to address this Summit, the first OSCE event of such magnitude in eleven years. I wish to express my great appreciation to the Kazakh Chairmanship for convening this Summit; to congratulate them for a very successful term in office; and to wish equal success to the incoming Lithuanian Chairmanship.

Excellencies,

Today we find ourselves at a crossroads for the entire planet – not just for the OSCE.

The OSCE was created in the 1970s, thanks to the remarkable courage of our political leaders at the time. As the sole organization in the sphere of security that includes 56 countries spanning such a broad geographic region, the OSCE is, indeed, unique. Without doubt, its key achievement is the vital contribution to the transition from a bipolar world to a more integrated security space.

But it is no secret that today the OSCE is facing an identity crisis – and the roots of this crisis can thankfully be identified. The political dialogue that had sustained our organization since its inception has failed to steer us to a common direction. Moreover, the lack of mutual trust prevents our collective decisions and undermines our ability to deal with the regular workload of the Organization. This lack of trust is even more serious when we have to resolve crises, respond to challenges, or exploit opportunities. Thus, we find ourselves here, in Astana, contemplating Hamlet's proverbial question at the Elsinore Castle: "To be or not to be?" - or, even, how to be. In politics, this question needs an answer linked with a plan for the future. Only in such a case can we enter a new historical phase for our Organization - and this decision is in our hands today.

Change must begin at the political level, with true political initiatives. And Ariadne's clue already exists. It came into being with the Corfu Process, nearly a year and a half ago. Political change must rebuild trust among members of the Organization and create a genuine "security community" – a comprehensive architecture for security in the entire Euroatlantic and Eurasian area. Moreover, it must focus on results – as I'm afraid that action-orientation is not among our strongest points.

Change on the political level must be matched by change in our operations. A strong and effective Parliamentary Assembly is critical for our organization. As a forum of open dialogue between elected parliamentarians, the Assembly upholds the principles of transparency and accountability that are essential to democratic governance. It provides original ideas and proposals on issues across all three dimensions. The work of the Parliamentary Assembly has continuously facilitated inter-parliamentary dialogue in the OSCE area, which is an important parameter in building trust. The Parliamentary Assembly is an important asset to the Organization and should be put to better use by its structures. This is why I had requested our relevant proposals to be incorporated in the Astana Document.

And we believe if we are to operate on another level, reform is needed in the decision-making processes in Vienna. We all appreciate the Permanent Council, and the contribution of prominent diplomats in all its ranks – from the post of Secretary General to the heads of our 18 field missions. Yet, the workings of the Permanent Council require transparency and accountability - they can no longer take place behind closed doors. Moreover, we believe that we should function along the lines of other, analogous international organizations. In particular, in the P.A., we believe and we propose that the positions of Secretary General or even the Director of ODIHR should be filled following a major search among top candidates, in order to select individuals of high political caliber. This is, we believe, an additional way to increase the visibility, enhance the functioning, and deepen the role of our Organization.

Excellencies,

There is no doubt about how much lies at stake here in Astana –and we don't have the luxury to let it fail. We need this unique organization because protracted conflicts and their consequences still effect the future of the OSCE, and because force is unfortunately still made use of. We also need this organization because internal strife and division in the OSCE area remains a grim reality and serious violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms remain commonplace. This organization is also needed because democratic development is uneven and at times even reverses; because climate change, illegal migration and technological advancement present us with new challenges and opportunities; and because instability also remains a problem in neighbouring regions. We need it to make a real difference, with its comprehensive, inclusive and indivisible concept of security. As a matter of fact, if the OSCE did not exist, we would have to invent it.

It is clear that the process of revitalizing our Organization has only started –and the challenge at hand is analogous to the birth of our Organization, back in the 1970s. And must succeed.

This challenging task will soon be taken on by the Lithuanian Chairmanship. We look forward to continuing our close work with Lithuania in the coming year, and the Parliamentary Assembly will continue to be a reliable and constructive partner.

Thank you.