



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

SECOND PARLIAMENTARY FORUM ON THE MEDITERRANEAN

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The Mediterranean Dimension of the OSCE

Keynote presentation by the Secretary General of the OSCE

Ambassador Ján Kubiš

Mr. Alcee L. Hastings, President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly,
Rt. Hon. Bruce George, Special Representative for the Mediterranean of the OSCE PA,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to address the Second OSCE Parliamentary Forum on the Mediterranean. I wish to thank the host country for inviting us to Rhodes and to congratulate the organizers for gathering together Parliamentarians from the OSCE and our Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation.

The holding of this Forum reflects the importance of maintaining our dialogue and co-operation with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation, which is high on the OSCE agenda. Next year, we will be commemorating the 30th Anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, and, consequently, thirty years of the OSCE Mediterranean Dimension. Throughout this time, relations with our Mediterranean Partners have continually evolved. There is now an established framework of co-operation and we are constantly looking for new ways to adapt our work to the new challenges we increasingly share.

Increased interaction

Strengthening dialogue and enhancing relations between the OSCE and the Mediterranean Partners is our common objective. The decisions adopted last year during the Ministerial Council meeting in Maastricht have paved the way for a deeper and broader dialogue with the Partner States. The Ministers decided that 'the OSCE will intensify its co-operation with its Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation, by early identification of areas of common interest and concern and possibilities for further co-ordinated action.'

In 2004, in particular, we have witnessed a record increase in contacts between the OSCE and the Mediterranean Partners, at various levels. Not only have the Partners been invited more frequently as observers to Permanent Council and FSC meetings, they have also attended more regular meetings of the Mediterranean Contact Group which brings together the six Mediterranean Partners and OSCE participating States. Though the meetings of the Mediterranean Contact Group are informal, Ambassadors from the Mediterranean Partners and participating States regularly participate.

This year, several additional events were organized to promote relations with the Mediterranean Partners. For example, on the margins of the Economic Forum in Prague, Partner States joined participating States to discuss human resource development. Similarly, Parliamentary delegations from the OSCE States and the Mediterranean Partners participated in side-events organized both at the Winter and Annual Sessions of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. Next week, during the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw, a side-event will focus on the OSCE's election observation experience.

The OSCE has organized major conferences to promote awareness on tolerance and non-discrimination, key human dimension commitments. These meetings have not only raised the visibility of the Organization but have provided a significant opportunity for further interaction with the Mediterranean Partners. Partner States participated actively in the OSCE Conferences on Anti-Semitism (in May in Berlin), the OSCE Meeting on the Relationship between Racist, Xenophobic and anti-Semitic propaganda on the Internet and other hate crimes (in June in Paris) and the Conference on Tolerance and the Fight against Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination (in September in Brussels).

This year, they also took part in a conference organised jointly by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the Conflict Prevention Centre of the OSCE in Vienna on democratic control and parliamentary oversight of armed forces and police and security forces, as well as a Technical Experts Conference on Border Management and Security organised by the OSCE and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

A simulation event modelled on the Vienna Document of 1999 was organized by the Ministry of Defence of Slovenia. Representatives of Partner States experienced first-hand the implementation of commitments undertaken in the politico-military dimension aimed at creating openness, transparency and predictability. They participated in a simulation exercise of the 72nd Brigade of the Slovenian Armed Forces in Maribor and exchanged views with military personnel. This initiative was truly a great success. I should mention that the Chairman of the Mediterranean Contact Group, and incoming Permanent Council Chairman in 2005, Ambassador Janez Lenarcic, played a lead role in organizing this unprecedented event.

I wish to encourage similar activities in all three dimensions. We in the Secretariat will support them. They shed light on the OSCE's mandate and bring together OSCE representatives and Partner States. This in itself fosters dialogue and closer interaction as well as building confidence and understanding. Benefiting from the OSCE experience and sharing each other's experiences has been at the heart of our relations from the outset.

A possible way forward

So how can we build on this co-operation? Clearly, we cannot attempt to duplicate what is a unique security organization in other regions. However, some aspects of the work of the OSCE may be applicable to the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

Decisions related to the Partner States adopted in Maastricht build on the Charter for European Security (agreed at the 1999 OSCE Summit in Istanbul). Based on proposals put forward by the Mediterranean Partners, the Charter states: 'We will invite the Partners for Co-operation on a more regular basis to increased participation in the work of the OSCE as the dialogue develops. We will encourage the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation to

draw on our expertise in setting up structures and mechanisms in the Mediterranean for early warning, preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention.'

This year, the OSCE participating States have been tasked to identify additional fields of co-operation and interaction with the Partner States for the purpose of enhancing mutual security, and to encourage them to voluntarily implement OSCE norms, principles and commitments as a means to further interaction with the OSCE. A comprehensive document on partnership is being developed based on all three OSCE dimensions as well as suggestions from both participating and Partner States. It is premature to draw conclusions at this stage but further strengthening of our relations is expected.

However, discussions at the informal group of friends chaired by the Ambassador of Finland have revealed a strong interest in the need for consolidating the partnership with Partner States. The results of the debate are expected to be substantiated in a report on practical ways to enhance future relations, that will be presented to the Ministerial Council in Sofia in December.

Any work on a way forward must take into consideration the needs and aspirations of the Mediterranean Partners. Co-operation with the Mediterranean Partners could be increasingly complemented by new activities on broader issues of common concern.

Last year at the Mediterranean Seminar in Aqaba, Jordan, participants discussed the comprehensive approach to security and its relevance for the Mediterranean. I am very glad to announce that Egypt has kindly offered to host the annual OSCE Mediterranean Seminar on 18-19 November 2004 in Sharm-al-Sheikh gathering together high-level officials and experts from both shores of the Mediterranean. This beautiful city on the Red Sea has become synonymous for negotiations for peace and stability in the Middle East. I hope that our Seminar, on the subject of *'Addressing Threats to Security in the Twenty-first Century: Interaction between the OSCE and the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation'* will contribute to peace and rapprochement in the region. Egypt will be hosting the Seminar for the third time, an offer that is highly appreciated and reflects the importance that Egypt attaches to our long-standing relations.

It has become a tradition to invite to the annual Seminar international organizations and institutions, including those that foster relations with Mediterranean Partners. The EU has introduced its new Neighbourhood policy with all the Eastern and Southern neighbours of the enlarged Union. The EU bases its relations on shared values and common interests, as is the case with our co-operation with Partner States at the OSCE.

NATO has launched its 'Istanbul Cooperation Initiative,' offering practical co-operation to interested countries in the broader Middle Eastern region.

We look forward to sharing information with our partner organizations and institutions on their current work at the Mediterranean Seminar. It goes without saying that we also look forward to the participation, as every year, of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

Inter-Parliamentary Dialogue

The Parliamentary Assembly has greatly contributed to raising awareness of the OSCE's Mediterranean dimension, not only within the Organization itself but among parliamentarians from Mediterranean partner states. Parliamentarians from the Mediterranean Partner States have taken part in OSCE election observation missions, the annual Parliamentary Forum on the Mediterranean as well as OSCE seminars, while the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly received an unprecedented invitation to lead a Special Delegation during Presidential Elections in Algeria. The side-events organized on the margins of the Winter and Annual Sessions of the Assembly that focus on deepening relations have also proved to be very useful.

The resolutions adopted by the Assembly in Edinburgh in the context of the Mediterranean will provide further impetus to relations among Parliamentarians. I note with interest, for example, that a discussion on economic-related issues will take place during this Forum.

Conclusion

The future of the Mediterranean and the Middle East is a mutual concern that we share with our Partners. On one hand there is a Mediterranean dimension to European security. On the other hand, we believe that the Mediterranean Partners can draw on the OSCE's experience to foster security and co-operation.

Political dialogue and interaction has evolved steadily over the years between the OSCE and the Partners. There is a new momentum in the dialogue that we need to harness.

An important aspect of our partnership is to listen carefully to the needs of our Partner States and to maintain a constant open channel of communications. Governments, parliamentarians and civil society are partners in these efforts.

I look forward to continuing our work together.

Thank you very much for your attention.