



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

The Secretary General

Ambassador Ján Kubiš

Opening statement

OSCE Mediterranean Seminar on the comprehensive approach to security:

the OSCE and its relevance for the Mediterranean

20-21 October 2003

Aqaba, Jordan

Mr. Chairman,
Your Excellency, Mr. Shaher Bak, Minister of State of Jordan,
Your Excellency, Mr. Solomon Passy, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria,
Rt. Hon. Bruce George, MP, President of the OSCE PA,
Your Excellency, Mr. Lubomir Ivanov, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and pleasure for all of us to participate in this year's OSCE Mediterranean Seminar hosted by Jordan, which became a Partner for Co-operation in May 1998. Ever since, Jordan has always been an active and reliable Partner respected by all in the OSCE – participating States and Partners alike.

This is the second time that Jordan has offered to host such annual seminar – in 1999, we met in Amman to discuss the implementation of human dimension commitments, the promotion of the democracy and the rule of law as well as the role of civil society.

Our gathering here, on the topic of the OSCE comprehensive approach to security and its relevance for the Mediterranean region is, first of all, an important sign of our commitment to deepen relations between the OSCE and the Mediterranean Partners. I also consider our OSCE Seminar, which brings together countries of the region and adds to their own contacts and dialogue, a modest contribution by the OSCE to the overall peace efforts.

Numerous proposals have been made to further enhance our relations with Partners. Notably this year bears witness that this effort is sincere, pragmatic and that it brings results. The intensive and substantive work of the Mediterranean Contact Group, led by Ambassador Petrov, the visit of H.E. Mr. Habib Ben Yahya, Foreign Minister of Tunisia to meet the Permanent Council, the participation of the Partners at the Annual Security Review Conference or the consultative process engaging them in the preparation of the OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century are good examples of this, as is the establishing of the Parliamentary Forum on the Mediterranean by the OSCE PA, which had its successful first meeting in Rome a week ago. With great interest I listened to the opening statements of His Excellencies Minister Bak and Minister Passy and to their ideas and suggestions how to improve ongoing joint work with the Mediterranean Partners, and I hope that they will be taken up by the OSCE participating States.

Also the OSCE Secretariat contributes to this effort and, *inter alia*, intends to go ahead with its 'outreach activities'. We look forward to working together with MPCs in this new evolving mechanism of co-operation, which brings OSCE expertise to the Partner countries, to their experts, public and academia. I and my colleagues are at the disposal of representatives of our Mediterranean Partners for their suggestions and input and hope for their positive engagement – it is indeed needed. The outreach programme is one way of disseminating and exchanging information, with the largest possible number of participants in the Partner Countries, in all areas, covered by the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security. I am confident that these activities would be mutually beneficial – it is indeed a two-way street and the OSCE is also very interested in the views, input and opinions of its Partner States. The first activity of this kind is envisaged to take place in the coming months in Algeria for the Maghreb countries on the topic of 'Freedom and Responsibility: the Media'. If successful, we would like to replicate it covering other topics and other groups of countries. And I have no doubts that the event will be a success – it has strong potential for it.

When speaking about the Mediterranean dimension of our work, the expanding dialogue on Mediterranean Issues with our European partner organizations, notably, the EU, the Council of Europe, NATO, and with the United Nations system, but also with a growing number of regional organizations out of the OSCE area must be underscored. In many of the out of region organizations, most of our Mediterranean Partners are members. They could also, through this inter-institutional co-operation, benefit from increased contacts with organizations like the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), the League of Arab States or the African Union. Moreover, they could introduce to their work experiences they have gained from working with the OSCE, from our joint activities, they could positively contribute to inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue of civilisations. That would indeed be most welcome – it is so much needed in today's world.

To illustrate – I represented the OSCE at the Summit of the OIC in Kuala Lumpur where I delivered a statement – for the first time ever. My impressions from the Summit are very mixed – we still face a lot of problems and misperceptions. But that makes it even more important to continue with our dialogue. Delegations from the OIC and the Arab League visited our Secretariat to learn more about the OSCE experience, principles and procedures, about our approaches and values. Experts from the OSCE institutions and the Secretariat will soon make reciprocal visits to their headquarters. Along similar lines, relations with the African Union have been underpinned by a visit in Vienna of Algerian Minister for African and Maghreb Affairs, H.E. Mr. Abdelkader Messahel. He discussed with the OSCE an exchange of information and possible co-operation with regard to an 'Africa Centre on the Research and Study of Terrorism' to be based in Algiers, with the objective of assisting African States in implementing their anti-terrorism commitments. Other topics in which we share our experiences with the African Union are early warning, conflict prevention as well as confidence-building in the politico-military sphere.

We will have the opportunity, here in Aqaba, to exchange views on conflict prevention and confidence-building; capacity-building and poverty reduction, as well as democratic institutions and civil society. These areas represent the daily work of the OSCE and its participating States. I am confident, that ahead of us are two days of productive joint work. I also wish to express my sincere gratitude to the host country, for the warm welcome and excellent hospitality extended to all participants in this event.

Thank you for your attention.