

***OSCE MEDITERRANEAN SEMINAR ON THE COMPREHENSIVE
APPROACH TO SECURITY: THE OSCE AND ITS RELEVANCE
FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN***

***Opening Ceremony
Monday, 20 October
Aqaba, Jordan***

***Address by Daan Everts
Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office***

Your Excellency, Minister Bak

Your Excellency, Minister Passy

Rt. Hon. Bruce George

Your Excellency, Secretary General Kubis

Excellencies, Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This seminar has barely begun and already congratulations are in order. Congratulations to you, Minister Bak, and to you, Minister Passy, for having succeeded in bringing the OSCE's Mediterranean Seminar back to where it belongs: to the territory of one of our Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation.

Nobody would question the Mediterranean credentials of Portoroz, Dubrovnik, Malta or Rhodes. Also those locations confronted the participants in previous seminars with striking cultural crossroads and fascinating political context, but our Mediterranean dimension requires the full exposure to a partner state to be really effective. And those of us who arrived already on Friday have learned a lot about Jordan's fascinating past and its dynamic present.

So let me thank you, Mr. Minister, as representative of the host country, for the marvellous hospitality which we are enjoying here. And, because a trip with the Chairman-in-Office to the Caucasus prevents me from attending the final session of the seminar, allow me to complete these

words of gratitude by underlining the crucial role played by Ambassador Touq and Counsellor Al-Shamayleh in bringing us all here.

Nobody can feel offended when I state that Jordan has been the most active of the Mediterranean Partners in the past year or so.

But, of course, Jordan is not the only Partner which has shown real interest in giving substance to OSCE's Mediterranean dimension.

We, as Chairmanship of the OSCE, very much welcome this increased interest, which we think is validated by the substance of OSCE's changing agenda. The active part that Partner countries are presently taking in the drafting of OSCE's new Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the 21st Century is a clear case in point, as has been the active involvement of our partners in amongst others the Annual Security Review Conference, the Conferences on Anti-Semitism and on Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, our Economic Forum and the seminars on different aspects of trafficking, the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting and various special sessions of the Permanent Council to which they were invited.

It is obvious that terrorism, organized crime, trafficking and intolerance are topics in which our Partners have a keen interest. We are, therefore, looking forward to your very active participation in the Maastricht Ministerial meeting, where we have scheduled your contributions already for the first day, so as to facilitate onward travel to the EUROMED Foreign Ministers Conference in Naples.

Now, on the theme of this seminar: the relevance of the OSCE experience for the Mediterranean region. Here, I think we should start out by acknowledging that there is no single OSCE experience, but that OSCE represents a process which has greatly evolved over time. What phase of OSCE's historic development is most germane to the conditions of your region today? you must ask yourselves.

When the Conference on Security and Stability in Europe started, this constituted in the eyes of one group of participating States, and particular one very large participating State, a confirmation of the status quo. In 1975 the political geography of Europe had reached its final form, or so it seemed. Well, let us compare the political map of Europe in 1975 with that of Europe today and conclude that little has proven final. The presence or absence of outstanding territorial issues can hardly be termed a decisive factor in determining the feasibility of an OSCE type of initiative.

What about our unique OSCE acquis, the commitments and common values which unite us? Were they a precondition for starting the Helsinki process or were they the end result? No, we must conclude, a precondition they were not. If one wants to see how rapidly the normative aspect can evolve, one needs only to remember the Third Human Dimension Conference in Moscow, in the Fall of 1991.

Preparations for this conference were badly disrupted by the coup d'etat that shook Moscow, which could have led to the cancellation of the conference and a lot more. But after the coup had failed and the Conference was able to convene it produced some rather revolutionary documents, which contain norms which still guide our work today.

If you want another example of how outside events have impacted on the OSCE, remember how the various armed conflicts in the former Yugoslavia have caused our field activities to mushroom and have inspired the mandate for the High Commissioner on National Minorities. Or trace the considerable impact that 9/11 is still having on the strategic thinking on new threats and challenges.

Some would argue that the OSCE has never really become an international organization, and still carries many features of the old Conference. OSCE always seems to be work in progress. It's the quality and intensity of the participation of its member States which defines the real meaning of this membership. Status is secondary, our primary focus should be on substance.

Again, there is enough substance before the OSCE that should entice the Partner countries to move closer to us. And, I would submit, the substance of these current issues may be more interesting when assessing the relevance of OSCE's experience for the Mediterranean region than this or that historical phase which we have left behind us.

Let us get analytical, I would urge you. Let us hold the various elements in our work against the light and assess their relevance for your purposes. Could you employ a High Commissioner on National Minorities and a Representative on Freedom of the Media? How much of ODIHR's election activities suits your needs? Can you use a strategy document for the economic and environmental dimension as a yardstick for assessing progress in your region?

And in terms of our partnership relationship: where can it lead in substance? Not to membership, as we all know. We may be able to obtain consensus among participating States to offer you observer status, access to the Permanent Council. How would you fill this status with substantive content? To what matters would you occasionally want to direct our attention? What contributions would you care to make?

It seems to me that this seminar has enough questions in front of it. I wish you fruitful deliberations.