



***Statement by the Permanent Representative of Malta to the
OSCE,
Ambassador Walter Balzan***

On the occasion of the

**2003 Mediterranean Seminar - Aqaba
'The comprehensive approach to security: The OSCE experience
and its relevance for the Mediterranean region.'**

Aqaba, Jordan

20th October, 2003

Mr. Chairman
Distinguished delegates.

For someone coming from a Mediterranean country, visiting another Mediterranean country is always *déjà vu*. The warmth, the hospitality, the generosity are *sine qua non*. It makes us what we are. In Aqaba, we find all this in abundance. To this and more, we thank our Jordanian hosts.

Mr. Chairman.

Discussing the comprehensive approach to security and its relevance for the Mediterranean - at a time like this and in such a venue - is truly an act of faith and courage. May I extend my country's appreciation towards Jordan's unremitting resolve to undertake this challenge. It distinctly confirms - if any confirmation was required - Jordan's unwavering commitment to peace and stability in the region, notwithstanding the difficult circumstances that prevail.

For indeed it is in trying times that a country's resolve is truly demonstrated.

Jordan's vision for this tormented part of the world has always been one wholesomely reliant on the virtues of committed dialogue, prudent understanding and peaceful resolution of differences, based on the fundamental principle of universal human dignity and respect.

Mr. Chairman

Were not these the quintessential foundations upon which the CSCE was founded and which enabled it to survive the winds of change throughout the last 30 years ?

Were they not floated in the Final Recommendations of the Helsinki Consultations of 1973 - or the Blue Book as elders recall it - and eventually inscribed in the Helsinki Final Act - that stable point of reference of the Organisation ?

Could not these common values serve as the basis for further dialogue between the OSCE and its Mediterranean Partners in an attempt to consider adopting - sooner rather than later - a common set of universal fundamental norms, principles and commitments ?

Are not the words of Shirin Ebadi - winner of the Nobel Peace Prize - stating that: (and I quote) : 'There exists no contradiction between human rights and Islam' (unquote) - be a road sign and an inspiration for future work ?

Mr. Chairman,

When Malta – thirty years ago to date - introduced the principle linking inextricably security and stability in the Mediterranean with that of mainland Europe, it was unknowingly contracting the Syssiphus complex. For decades – we vainly pushed the rock uphill only to be driven back by its overwhelming weight. But we believed in the principle, although we perceived the problems that it could raise.

Today, it is upheld universally and its relevance is perhaps more poignant than it was back then. But its endorsement will only be platonic, if its realisation fails to materialise, in practice.

Mr. Chairman,

Malta always maintained that security does not artificially stop with geographical borders or politically dividing lines. We also maintained that while security starts at home with the respect for the human person, human security can be adversely affected both through weaknesses within the internal security of state and also through threats emanating from beyond traditional limits of landmass and territorial waters. For these reasons – albeit under totally different political and military circumstances – we still failed to comprehend how European security could ever be detached from its southern Mediterranean flank. We struggled to understand how one can conceptually separate what is otherwise physically connected through land, water and human contact. Or better still, how could security predicaments afflicting any of our Mediterranean Partners, be insulated in a such a way that their effects would bear no direct influence on European security? We never harboured such illusions, Mr. Chairman, and if anything, that was our message throughout.

Mr. Chairman,

Malta is of the view that the geographical proximity neighbouring Europe with its southern Mediterranean flank is otherwise asymmetrical in terms of religious and cultural differences existing between them. Notwithstanding, the urgent need for co-operation on present day threats affecting both, overrides such differences.

In this respect, it would be folly for any of us to persist in playing ostrich.

Mr. Chairman.

It is essentially because of this and more such stark realities that the OSCE sought to address security through a wider, more comprehensive approach, cognisant that unorthodox 'new' threats to the well-being of the common European citizen, offshoot from sources and in forms altogether different than those prevalent when Malta's linkage principle was born. Meanwhile, threats of old did not disappear.

Mr. Chairman,

It has been frequently adduced that considerations on European security no longer deals only with the threat of war between states. On the contrary, they also deal with the threat of non-state actors on the stability of states. Non-state actors seek vulnerable weaknesses in state structures and transform them into fertile ground for illicit practice. Such practices gnaw at the very foundations of government institutions. This is the phenomenon of 'weak' or 'failed' states, where from the main security threats of the 21st century, derive. Their main characteristics: the absence of the rule of law, absence of the dignity of the human person, the absence of a functioning economy, absence of a future in freedom, together with the presence of chronic unemployment and substandard living on the poverty line.

Trafficking in human beings, drugs and arms, all forms of discrimination or exclusion, corruption, police abuse, systematic torture and impunity, threats to the independence of the judiciary and the media, are but *some* of the means which non-state actors employ in their otherwise highly sophisticated and organised operational networks. Terrorism - an old scourge given a new skin and meaning ever since 9/11 - remains the most heinous of them all.

Mr. Chairman,

Where the fundamental principles of democracy take root, the threat of war, expires. Likewise, where the rule of law, respect for human dignity, tolerance and the structures for a vibrant economy prevail, negative phenomena find it hard to take root. This is one lesson which the OSCE has learnt, though not without pain.

Another is that modern communication technology and efficient transport enables these non-state agents of instability to wander and seek new havens and markets to operate to and from. Borders are no longer obstacles. Their illicit gains amount to the losses incurred by states and suffered by their citizens. Their manpower are the discriminated, the impoverished and the forsaken elements of society.

They thrive on corrupt practices and bad governance – prevalent in transition economies, though not completely absent in developed ones.

Mr. Chairman,

The logical question arising from all this is the following: Given that the linkage between security and stability in Europe with that of the Mediterranean is no longer in contention, what immediate impact do such negative phenomenon have on the Mediterranean region and how can the lessons learnt by the OSCE be of benefit to the Mediterranean Partners ?

Mr. Chairman,

The so-called ‘new threats to security’ exempt no one. They are afflicting all states, directly, indirectly, to a greater or lesser degree. We do not have a choice but to engage in a collective response - one based on the exchange of best practices and unreserved co-operation.

We do recognize that the Mediterranean region is a crucial transit region *through which and where from* the scourge of trafficking, enacts. Such recognition is reason enough to raise our collective concern. This threat is no longer at Europe’s doorstep, but is prevalent within.

This very synthesis – vindicates Malta’s linkage principle enunciated over 30 years ago, and brings it full circle.

Mr. Chairman,

In this context, Malta welcomed the adoption last July of the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings by the Permanent Council with a view to examine the need for the setting up of a new mechanism. This and more are envisaged by the OSCE as part of a broader spectrum of threats - and measures to counter these threats – which combine in the future OSCE Strategy Document to be adopted in Maastricht by the Ministerial Council.

Fittingly – given that such threats equally affect the adjacent regions of the OSCE area – the Mediterranean Partners have been invited by the Dutch OSCE Chair, by the Chairperson of the Group of Friends of the OSCE Strategy Document and the Bulgarian Chair of the Contact Group to attend, to contribute and to make recommendations to enhance the OSCE Strategy document currently under discussion. Malta interprets this collective call as : a) a recognition of the importance which the OSCE attributes to its Mediterranean

dimension and : b) to the valuable input which its Mediterranean Partners – through first hand experiences – could contribute to its future Strategy.

In the spirit of progress, Malta has tried to take this invitation one step further. Departing on the premise that a strategy cannot be effective unless it is inclusive, and that in order for it to be inclusive, dialogue should be as open to as many interested state actors as possible, Malta believes that its elaboration and effective implementation would be incomplete unless it enables Mediterranean Partners to be able to observe on a regular basis the OSCE's main operative fora – the Permanent Council and the Forum for Security Co-operation.

In this context, but more importantly in the context of the post-9/11 international security situation, we believe that it has become imperative that security dialogue has to widen its co-ordinates.

Mr. Chairman.

My last word goes to our Mediterranean Partners. Malta has always been in the forefront to promote the enhancement of their status of participation. At present, there seems to be a growing consensus for such a status to be enhanced, while this could possibly be adequately reflected in the OSCE Strategy Document which our Ministers will endorse in Maastricht.

In this light, I can only echo what my dear friend and current Bulgarian chairman of the Contact Group, exclaimed during our last Contact Group meeting in Vienna, when he addressed our Partners saying: “ The door is open and the opportunity has been offered. Grab it.’

Malta is confident and hopeful that with their presence amongst us the Mediterranean Partners would be able to benefit from our experiences and at the same time enlighten us with their own.

We look forward to that.

Thank You