

Speech by the President of the Slovak Republic at the OSCE summit in Astana (1.12.2010)

Mr Chairman,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The speakers before me made positive as well as critical comments assessing the 35 years of the existence of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Having horrible tragedies of wars before my eyes, with their cruel impacts felt throughout most of the previous century, I think it deserves our effort to re-energize it.

It was the post-Helsinki 1975 development that ultimately led to the fall of the Iron Curtain and to unprecedented dynamics in democratisation and socio-economical transition. Our organisation was not only a witness but rather an active player in those cardinal changes in society. Therefore, when discussing the plans for our future cooperation, we should always keep in mind our recent history and learn our lesson from the tragedies of the past century.

I highly appreciate that the participant countries expressed their willingness to meet here, in Astana, at the highest level. We are now entering a new era of security policy cooperation and the situation again requires that we make courageous and strategic decisions. Undoubtedly, the OSCE has yet to fulfil its historical task. It is clear from the problematic development in several of OSCE agendas, including the lack of will to break the stalemate situation in resolving the so-called frozen conflicts, as well as a bitter situation in our mutual dialogue marked by the growing mistrust among us. I am glad, however, that this summit has demonstrated our increasing interest in shifting gears and re-defining the position and tasks of the OSCE in this changing environment.

Despite differing opinions on the future course of the OSCE, I appreciate the willingness to agree on more effective means and measures against the threats that endanger the bases of our society and a comfortable life of our people. However, we should bear in mind that the OSCE has never been, and cannot be, an organisation of collective security in a broader sense of the word, with security guarantees embedded in a legally binding treaty.

Do not waste our time and energy on discussing who contributed more and who less to undermining the basic attributes of the Helsinki Process - that is, solidarity and trust. Such a debate yields no solutions. Let's focus our dialogue on the future, on searching for and defining new basic, vital interests of our

geopolitical zone, on developing a comprehensive approach to security. This is where I see the main purpose of our efforts to revive the OSCE. We have the unique and perhaps the last chance to put a definite end to the era of confrontation and dividing lines. We now can set out the framework for discussions the results of which could lay the groundwork for a new quality in relationships and cooperation in line with the Helsinki spirit. From our perspective, the high-level meeting here in Astana is, above all, about trust.

To that end, I consider essential mainly the approval of the Action Plan, even though we originally wished for a more ambitious document. I am glad that, under Slovakia's presidency of the Joint Consultative Group of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, we managed to get out of the "dead end" where we have been stuck for years on issues concerning armament control and disarmament and that agreement has been reached on the decision that will lead to the commencement of substantive negotiations in 2011. We should equip the OSCE with necessary instruments and a mandate for a more flexible prevention of conflicts and more effective engagement in their solution, and restore the OSCE's position in the security architecture which it deserves. This also requires consent to the presence of OSCE missions directly in conflict-ridden regions.

With a reference to increasingly stronger nationalist trends present in foreign policies of a growing number of governments, Slovakia agrees with the opinion of High Commissioner on National Minorities Knut Vollebaek that the misuse of minorities for expansion purposes undermines the stability and security. We wish to see the OSCE primarily addressing those issues which have real impacts on our security today, not wasting its resources and energy on artificially politicised problems. It is also with respect to this objective that we have been, in the long run, calling for a stronger involvement of the OSCE in energy security which directly affects our national security. It is vital to all of us, regardless of whether we are a supplier, transit or target country.

Here in Astana, we have the opportunity to learn a lesson from our recent past and open a new chapter in our relations. If we fail to agree on the strategic course for the OSCE today, we will pass up the chance to repay our historical debt towards our citizens.

At the NATO summit in Lisbon ten days ago, I could feel an encouraging and constructive atmosphere in negotiations with strategic partners of the Alliance. I wish that this spirit of understanding and consensus on a number of important security issues of the today's world will spread to our summit as well. Investing a good political will into reviving the "OSCE project" will pay back in multiple ways.