



CIO.GAL/22/05
24 February 2005

ENGLISH only

ADDRESS

**by Dr. Dimitrij Rupel, Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE,
at the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Winter Session,
Vienna, 24 February 2005**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to address the 2005 Winter Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

As the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, I appreciate the importance of the parliamentary process and democratic and representative government. I value the work of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, through its election monitoring, its ad hoc groups, the advocacy work of senior officials like President Alcee Hastings and Secretary General Spencer Oliver, and – not least – the discussions, ideas and recommendations generated by your Winter and Annual sessions.

You have the reputation of being an incubator for fresh ideas. At a time when reform is so high on the OSCE agenda, I urge you to live up that reputation.

Thinking Outside the Box

The OSCE is facing a difficult moment, or an opportunity depending on how you look at it. Significant changes in Europe, with EU and NATO enlargement and new challenges to security, have changed the way that we look at security in Europe, and, as a result, the role of the OSCE.

These are interesting and dynamic times in the OSCE.

Changes are required and necessary. I have pointed out this fact on many occasions already, and intend to work actively on the process of reform. By the time that the Parliamentary Assembly meets in Washington at the beginning of July the panel of eminent persons that I appointed last month will have concluded their report with recommendations for strengthening the effectiveness of the OSCE.

The Panel met for the first time in Ljubljana last week and has already begun to consider some fundamental issues. As the Focal Point for the Panel I have encouraged the seven members of the panel to think “outside the box” and to consider root and branch reforms for the OSCE.

In line with a decision taken at the Sofia Ministerial Council, the Panel’s mandate is to give new impetus to political dialogue and provide strategic vision for the Organization in the twenty-first century. I have suggested that the type of issues that they consider are:

- What should be the strategic vision for the OSCE?
- How can the organization stimulate high-level political dialogue?
- What is it that participating States can do together through this organization that they can not do through other channels?
- The role of the OSCE after EU and NATO enlargement. How is the Organization positioned in the European security architecture?
- How can we strengthen the sense of co-operation among us and widen the common ground on which we stand?
- The Panel is also mandated to review the effectiveness of the Organization, its bodies and structures and provide an assessment in view of the challenges ahead.

We need to be bold, to come up with a new vision for the OSCE. There should be no taboos, no sacred cows, except of course for our common standards.

I look forward to working with the eminent persons on the Panel and to reading their recommendations which will be passed, through me, to the Permanent Council at the end of June. This will be followed up by High Level Consultations in autumn.

The Panel is a key, but only one, element of the reform process that is underway. There is a working group on reform – which is looking, for example, at updating the rules of procedure – and a working group on improving the functioning and effectiveness of OSCE field operations. I understand that the Secretary General is coming forward with proposals to restructure the Secretariat.

This is consistent with the Triple R agenda that I outlined at the beginning of the year: namely to revitalize, reform and rebalance the OSCE.

On the issue of scales, there is still no agreement. I have had talks with a number of participating States including the Russian Federation on this issue. I will not go into the technical details here, but I believe that the agreement has to be reached really soon. It is essential for the future of this Organization. The current situation is untenable.

We should not dedicate too much energy too the internal problems. There is the world outside that needs our attention.

Nevertheless, we need a new Secretary General. Jan Kubis's term expires in June. He has served the OSCE with distinction for over a decade, including more than five years as Secretary General. His management reform is now starting to bear fruit. He is a good consul to me, and doing a great job as the Organization's Chief Administrative Officer during difficult times.

But the rules are as they are, and we therefore have initiated a process of finding his successor. This is not easy. But I am confident that a clear favourite will emerge in the near future, and that he will have sufficient time to prepare for taking up his responsibilities to help guide this Organization into a new era. Clarified and strengthened mandate of the Secretary General, decided upon in Sofia, will hopefully help him in his endeavours.

Main Topics in Focus

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to give you an overview of some of my recent activities and some of the main issues that we are engaged in at the moment.

I began the year by visiting Ukraine. Following on from the momentous events over Christmas and New Year, I wanted to meet the incoming President to immediately establish a good rapport with one of the OSCE's most pivotal participating States. I see an opportunity for a new era in OSCE-Ukraine co-operation and will pursue this agenda with the newly appointed Government.

A democratic, united and stable Ukraine is vital, not least for regional security and co-operation. For example, Ukraine is one of the key players in the settlement process of the Transdnistria issue. I will be visiting Moldova soon after the elections there on 6 March and I hope that changes in the region will be a catalyst for thawing a long-frozen conflict in the eastern part of Moldova.

The elections in Ukraine highlight the importance of free and fair elections. The OSCE role was crucial in restoring the faith of the people of Ukraine in the integrity of their democratic system. I would like to thank the Parliamentary Assembly for its involvement in this process, and urge you to strengthen your engagement with the newly elected Parliament in Ukraine.

On the issue of elections, as you know there has been some debate about reviewing the OSCE's work in this field. Bearing in mind the fact that the OSCE Copenhagen Document is almost fifteen years old, I see merit in considering whether additional commitments are needed. This is sometimes referred to as "Copenhagen Plus". But this process should not roll back existing commitments, or call into question the OSCE's high reputation in election monitoring. In other words, no "Copenhagen Minus". That being said, we need to talk and to see if and how things can be improved. Elections will also be discussed in the context of human dimension implementation meetings.

In a national capacity, as a member of the EU, as an advocate of regional development in South Eastern Europe and as the OSCE Chairmanship, Slovenia views the stabilization of South Eastern Europe as a high priority. There are a range of things that the OSCE can do to promote this end: supporting capacity building and inter-state co-operation on war crimes proceedings; protecting minority rights and strengthening inter-ethnic integration; refugee return; police training; assisting with legal reform; border management; as well as elections.

We should be actively involved in the discussions on the future of Kosovo whenever the present or the future role of the OSCE is affected.. I visited Pristina in January and saw for myself how fragile and complex the situation remains. Expectations are high among Kosovo Albanians about their political future, while their socio-economic development is lacking behind. As we saw last March, this is a potentially explosive cocktail. I impressed upon the Kosovo Albanian leadership the importance of protecting the rights of non-Albanian ethnic communities. At the same time I stressed to the Serb minority the need to be involved in the political life of Kosovo. I must say I was pleasantly surprised that many of the Serbs that I spoke with agreed with this view.

There is a regional dimension to this issue, which is why an improvement of dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina is a key.

There is also a broader European dimension. I have recently visited Serbia where I met President Tadic and Prime Minister Kostunica. Earlier in the year I hosted Foreign Minister Draskovic at Bled. In all of these meetings I was impressed by the European orientation of my interlocutors and their understanding of the need for a European solution to issues in Serbia and Montenegro that have wider implications. The OSCE should continue, and even deepen, its co-operation with Serbia and Montenegro and other countries of the region in order to mobilize all possible resources for the sake of sustainable peace and development.

The South Caucasus is also a high priority region for the OSCE. Like others, I regret that the mandate of the Border Monitoring Operation in Georgia was not extended. The BMO was a success story and a vital confidence-building measure in a volatile region. But we could not

reach consensus on the prolongation of its mandate. Instead, I hope we will open a new chapter in our co-operation with Georgia by deploying a border guard training mission to strengthen Georgia's capacity to protect its borders.

The conflict around South Ossetia is high on our agenda. The OSCE has a clear mandate and is on the spot. We will continue to support de-militarization as agreed by all parties and to facilitate the political process for the resolution of the conflict. Confidence-building and economic rehabilitation should be part of a concerted approach to bring sustainable peace to this long-troubled region of Georgia.

The OSCE has long been involved in seeking a solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and should re-double its efforts this year to help thaw this frozen conflict. A lot has been done in the past year, the so called Prague meetings of the Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan have had a positive effect and they brought new momentum in the resolution of this frozen conflict. Recently a fact-finding mission under OSCE auspices visited the occupied territories of Azerbaijan to clarify the situation on the ground. I look forward to the report of the Co-chairman of the Minsk Group on this visit.

In 2005 I would like to focus activities in Central Asia on a number of issues: migration, human rights education, and border management and security. I also believe that we should deepen our efforts to assist the governments in their democratization processes, particularly in relation to elections. I have recently visited Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, and intend to return to the region in April. I appointed a Personal Representative for Central Asia, who will strengthen our dialogue with senior officials in the region and provide added impetus to the OSCE's programmatic activities there.

The agenda for political-military activities has been set in large part by decisions taken at Maastricht and Sofia. The main guidance comes from the OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century. Pursuant to the Strategy and a decision taken at the recent Ministerial Council we need to complete the elaboration of a border security and management concept.

I believe that this Concept would be well complemented by operational border-related activities, in Georgia, along the Moldova-Ukraine border or in Central Asia.

A proposal has been made for the OSCE to host a seminar on military doctrines. I believe that this is timely, and the OSCE is the right place to discuss this topic. Disarmament, arms control, non-proliferation and confidence and security building measures have long been central elements of the OSCE's work, and the CFE Treaty and Open Skies are within the framework of the OSCE. Bearing in mind the changes in the world order, technology, and warfare, it would be useful to compare notes on contemporary military doctrines.

This year, as a matter of priority, the OSCE's Forum for Security Co-operation will continue to pay significant attention to the implementation of decisions aimed at strengthening the control of participating States over export and trafficking of small arms and light weapons, including MANPADS. The OSCE will also engage in concrete projects designed to assist participating States in improving the management, security and destruction of surpluses of small arms and conventional ammunition stockpiles. In that regard, close PC-FSC cooperation is of importance.

As always, the Annual Security Review Conference will be to an excellent opportunity to exchange views on these and other cross dimensional issues.

Preventing and combating terrorism is high on our agenda. The OSCE should promote the implementation of existing commitments, as well as explore new ways to promptly address the threat to terrorism, while ensuring respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. I am encouraged by recent steps taken in the OSCE to join the international effort to strengthen container security.

Our work in the economic and environmental dimension should be strengthened. We are open to new initiatives, and support the idea of a conference on energy security. The first two preparatory seminars for the Economic Forum in Trieste and Almaty have gone well and we look forward to the third meeting in Kyiv in March, followed by the Economic Forum in

Prague in May on the themes of demographic trends, migration and integrating persons belonging to national minorities.

In the human dimension we are building on the considerable work that was done in 2004 on tolerance and non-discrimination. Three personal representatives – including PA Vice President Gert Weisskirchen – have been appointed and are beginning their work. We also look forward to a Conference on anti-Semitism and on other forms of intolerance that will be held in Cordoba in June.

Trafficking in human beings remains a concern and the OSCE has developed considerable expertise in anti-trafficking that should be fully utilized. This year we will pay added attention to the special needs of child victims of trafficking.

At Sofia we committed ourselves to further develop OSCE activities in regard to migration. Migration and integration are main themes of Slovenia's Chairmanship, and is directly related to themes like cross-border security management, human trafficking and integrating diversity in multi-ethnic communities.

Of course, these are not issues and challenges that we can tackle alone. The OSCE needs to work with all partners – inter-governmental and non-governmental. I strongly support the Assessment Report on the EU's role vis-à-vis the OSCE, I have spoken with NATO colleagues on our co-operation, I am aware of the views of the CIS, and just yesterday I took part in meetings in Strasbourg with the Council of Europe. We should look for further ways to improve our co-operation. The recent creation of an OSCE-Council of Europe Co-ordination Group is a good example.

Outreach and Anniversaries

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I find it paradoxical yet encouraging that at a time when there is such internal self-reflection on the relevance and future role of the OSCE, others outside the OSCE area look to us for inspiration and assistance. Last autumn the OSCE successfully deployed an Election Support Team to Afghanistan, and we have been invited to carry out a similar role in this year's parliamentary elections. Earlier this week it was said in Brussels that OSCE is indispensable. In January we sent a needs assessment mission to the Palestinian territories, and there may be scope for further co-operation with the Palestinian Authority.

Mongolia has joined us as the latest Partner for Co-operation, and relations with longer standing partners are deepening, thanks in part to initiatives like President Hastings' visit to Morocco, Tunis and Algeria last December.

This year of anniversaries should be an opportunity for us to recall and recapture the spirit of the Helsinki process and the hope of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe, and to use the active debate on reform to channel our energy into making a better OSCE for the future.

Let me say that practically all the international organizations are "under construction", UN is undergoing reforms, EU is ratifying its constitutions, OSCE is working on its reform. All these organizations are reorganizing to be able better to address the challenges of the international community.

I encourage you to be active in drawing attention to the OSCE through your parliaments and to stimulate the process of strengthening the effectiveness of this organization. And I urge you to use all possible opportunities – particularly the Annual Session in Washington – to reflect on the all mentioned issues and to celebrate the rich history and potential of this unique organization for building security and co-operation in Europe.

Thank you for your attention and I stand ready to take your questions.