



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the OSCE Experience and its Relevance for the Mediterranean Region

Delivered by Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes
to the OSCE Mediterranean Seminar, Aqaba, Jordan
October 20, 2003

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Since this is the first time I am taking the floor, let me first extend my sincere thanks to our Jordanian hosts for putting together this seminar. This is a unique and historic opportunity for representatives from the Mediterranean Partners and from OSCE participating states to gather, here in the region, to discuss the OSCE experience since 1975 and how we can enhance cooperation among and between us. There are so many things to do in our preparations for Maastricht, but yet, some of those most intensely involved in that process are here.

The Helsinki process, and particularly the early days of the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe, can provide states in the Middle East and North Africa with a valuable model of democratic and economic reform from which to draw. It is especially relevant for those states that are in the midst of profound systemic change or that intend to initiate such a process.

The fact that East and West were able to come together in 1975, despite major disagreements over nearly all political, economic, and military issues, was a remarkable achievement, and one whose success was in no way preordained when the Helsinki process began in 1971. Germany and France, the United States and the USSR, and many others who had been at war – came together to discuss and agree to common commitments and principles in the areas of human rights, economics, and security. This was result of long, patient hard work that continued even during periods of high tension and crisis.

In the three decades since the beginning of the Helsinki process, this dialogue has continued, often through difficult times. The discussions have not always been easy, but the result of our deliberations – a largely democratic and stable Europe – speaks for itself. Former enemies have become allies, and the citizens of our states have been the real beneficiaries.

Mr. Chairman, let us use this opportunity in Aqaba to think not only about how the OSCE experience is relevant for the Mediterranean region, but also about the lessons learned from our existing relationship with the Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation because the OSCE experience includes the Mediterranean Partners.

Over the next two days, I encourage our Mediterranean Partners to consider what exactly they

would like to get out of their partnership with the OSCE. In the Contact Group Meetings, several ideas have been put forward about how cooperation between the Mediterranean Partners and the OSCE participating states could be enhanced. These ideas have never really been further developed or embraced by the Mediterranean Partners.

Like others around the table, we are committed to improving our partnership and making the Contact Group more operational, but we need the commitment and regular participation of the Mediterranean Partners to make this possible. Our partnership cannot grow or flourish if it is one-sided.

I look forward to the discussion we are having that will span two days, and I hope the delegates representing our Mediterranean Partners will be particularly active during the Seminar so they can decide, as the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President Bruce George put it, what they want out of the organization. The opportunity to avail yourselves of OSCE rests with you accepting the hand we extend to you by having accepted your invitation to be here in Aqaba.