



Check against delivery!

ADDRESS

**by Dr. Dimitrij Rupel, Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE
to the Committee of Ministers' Deputies of
the Council of Europe
23 February 2005**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor to address this meeting of the Committee of Ministers' Deputies of the Council of Europe in my capacity as Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE.

I would like to take this opportunity today to lay out some points of special importance for both organisations and to point out some specific regional questions.

In 2005, special attention will be paid to strengthening and streamlining our relations with the Council of Europe. As you are well aware, our two organisations carry out similar activities in some areas, particularly in the human dimension. This is not necessarily a bad thing. Complementarity can be healthy as long as we do not waste resources, provoke forum shopping, or step on each other's toes in the field.

There are plenty of challenges for us to address in the human dimension, the fight against terrorism and trafficking in human beings, to name but a few of areas of overlap.

In my opinion, co-operation should be strengthened in particular in:

- promoting the implementation of international standards and commitments on democratic elections;
- combating intolerance and discrimination;
- addressing the issue of human rights and terrorism; and
- in the fields of the rule of law as well as freedom of media and information.

As you may know I also appointed three Personal Representatives as part of our overall fight against intolerance and discrimination to address this issue on the highest political level among the whole OSCE region.

The two organisations have comparative advantages and distinctive sets of commitments, which could be used to reinforce and support each other's efforts, and deliver better results. CoE's norm-setting commitments strengthen and intensify OSCE's political and operational activities. But there are also differences between the two organizations like i.e. geopolitical dimension (America, Asia).

The flexibility of the OSCE decision making may open the doors to the Council of Europe for setting legal standards. For example the OSCE discussion in the beginning of 1990s on national minorities indirectly influenced the Council of Europe to start drafting Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

Another issue that needs to be addressed more effectively in Europe is the issue of migration and integration.

That is what I have just done with my Polish counterpart and the two Secretaries General of the OSCE and Council of Europe. It was evident that both organisations have an important contribution to the process of consolidating security and prosperity across the continent. The magnitude and scope of the needs of member states is such that there are little grounds for worrying about having too many cooks in the kitchen.

However, there is room for improvement in the way that we work, and in our co-ordination. The onus is on us, the States involved, to provide the necessary guidance. That is why I welcome the creation of the OSCE/CoE Co-ordination Group on enhanced co-operation. I expect the Group to look at the operational activities of the two organizations and to come up with some concrete ideas and proposals for improved interaction and better spending of the limited resources. The idea of more joint activities is something that I believe the Co-ordination Group should pay special attention to.

OSCE-Council of Europe co-operation will be on the agenda of the Summit of the Council of Europe in May 2005. I support the elaboration of a political document on OSCE/CoE co-operation, which should be pragmatic, substantive and result-oriented.

I am looking forward to the joint meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council and the Committee of Ministers of the CoE. Our organisations might have differing mandates, institutional structures and working methods but we share a commitment to the same values and a dedication to the same goals. I believe that we should give a new impetus to complementarity and co-operation on issues and areas of common interest.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to identify a number of areas where the OSCE is active that may be of interest to the Council of Europe. There are a number of country-specific and regional issues that Slovenia's Chairmanship is looking at with special interest.

We have no magic solutions, but we feel that targeted and pragmatic steps can contribute to thawing frozen conflicts, consolidating peace-building processes, and supporting democratization.

Ukraine is important for the OSCE. Our joint election reporting was crucial in highlighting irregularities that forced a run-off of the second round of the Presidential elections.

As I said during my visit to Ukraine in early January, I believe that the OSCE and Ukraine have a good opportunity to strengthen co-operation across a range of issues including freedom of the media, the economic and environmental, political-military dimensions and regional security. This opportunity should not be missed.

Another priority for Slovenia's Chairmanship in 2005 will be to consolidate work that has been done in the Balkans. The OSCE will take advantage of its regional coverage, and promote solutions to issues with regional significance.

Kosovo will be a major issue in 2005. The OSCE is one of the key players in Kosovo. OMiK is by far our biggest mission. We spend more than 20% of our budget there. As a result, it is clear that the OSCE should be actively involved in the standards review process and any re-structuring of the international presence in Kosovo.

In Serbia and Montenegro, the conditions are set for a continued good co-operation between our two Organisations in areas such as legal and judicial reform, protection of human rights, and media development.

In the countries of the Caucasus the OSCE is actively promoting democratic changes, in particular constitutional reform, amendments to electoral systems, local governance reform, freedom of assembly principles and strengthening of media freedom.

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, including de-mining. I also believe that we should deepen our efforts to assist the governments in their democratization processes, particularly in relation to elections. I have appointed Mr. Alojz Peterle as my Personal Representative for the participating States of Central Asia, who will assist me at the highest political level in identifying areas for co-operation.

I see some grounds for optimism with regard to the OSCE's engagement in conflict settlement activities in the region. The OSCE has long been involved in seeking a solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and will re-double its efforts this year to help thaw this frozen conflict.

In Georgia, the Georgian-Ossetian conflict remains high on our agenda. We will continue to support de-militarization efforts agreed by the parties and to facilitate the political process and to support de-militarization as agreed by the parties. The OSCE welcomes the support rendered by the Venice Commission to the Georgian Government in elaborating concrete status proposals for South Ossetia, as this could move the process of political negotiations forward. In Abkhazia we continue to support the UN-led settlement process. Like others, I regret that the mandate of the Border Monitoring Operation was not extended. I know that Georgia would like to have international assistance in order to improve their capacity and capability for efficient border management and border security. We should be receptive to their call.

In Moldova, the challenge this year is to get the process of dialogue back on track. The OSCE will be monitoring the elections on 6 March, and we look forward to moving the settlement process forward soon after.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In 2004 Slovenia was an active supporter of deepening OSCE partnership with the Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation. I believe that we should build on last year's positive experience in Afghanistan and consider ways of practically co-operating with our Partners, including the newest Partner for Co-operation, Mongolia. I support the initiative of my predecessor to request the Secretariat and ODIHR to send a training needs assessment team to the Palestinian territories. I believe that such targeted operations that make OSCE expertise available to others are in the interests of us all.

Our work does not take place in a vacuum. Just as the OSCE is evolving, so too are other organizations and the world in which we must all work. Slovenia attaches importance to working with international organizations and institutions as well as with civil society in order to make most effective use of our respective strengths and capabilities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for your attention.