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Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Statement by the OSCE Secretary General,

Ambassador Ján Kubiš

12th Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council

**Sofia,
6 December 2004**

Mr. President,
Mr. Prime Minister,
Foreign Minister Passy,
President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to address this Ministerial Council meeting, my last as Secretary General of the OSCE.

Thank you, Bulgaria, and thank you, Solomon, for hosting us here in your wonderful capital. It has been a pleasure working with you and I have been impressed by your personal engagement, enthusiasm and leadership in running the OSCE. I applaud the boldness of your vision and your determination to see that this Organization lives up to its potential.

I will not dwell here on the OSCE's or Secretariat activities in 2004, as I will be circulating a comprehensive report. Allow me merely to highlight two points from this year which I consider important because they reflect challenges and hopes for our Organization.

Mission Accomplished in Afghanistan

The first is our participation in the Presidential elections in Afghanistan.

The quality of our staff and management structure were tested through the OSCE's involvement in Afghanistan. On the 29th of July the PC took a decision to send an Election Support Team to Afghanistan. Soon thereafter an Advance Team was on the ground, making all of the necessary preparations for the deployment of over forty international team members who arrived in September and were deployed to a number of locations across the country.

This operation was launched into a dangerous environment, in a country outside the OSCE area, during the summer holidays. Together with ODIHR, we did the job asked of us, contributed to the success of the process of the elections, and all staff returned safely.

I believe that we should build on this experience, and at least in some cases we should not hesitate to reach out of the area of the OSCE participating States and engage in concrete operations and activities, notably with our Mediterranean and Asian Partners and their organizations. I have noted an invitation of Afghanistan requesting the OSCE's engagement in the parliamentary election in spring 2005 and a similar invitation concerning the upcoming Palestinian elections. And I welcome Mongolia as our new Partner for Co-operation.

Reaping the Fruits of Management Reform

The second point that I would like to bring to your attention is the management reform that I initiated in 2001, and which is now almost complete. It is known throughout OSCE structures as IRMA.

IRMA is up and running. For a relatively modest amount of money, we have put in place a system that allows us to effectively manage our material and personnel resources, provides transparency and accountability to participating States, and allows us to quickly and flexibly transform political decisions into action. As of next year the OSCE will fully benefit from this new, highly effective and modern management tool.

Why do I stress this rather technical point?

Because I want you to know that your tax payers' money is being well spent and that your decisions are being effectively implemented.

For me, this year's mission to Afghanistan and our internal management reform show that the OSCE is able to do what few others can: operate quickly, effectively, and relatively cheaply. Multi-lateralism can be effective!

The Need for Reform

However, the job of management reform is not over. We need to go further in improving management of OSCE business. That is why I have promoted the clarification and strengthening of the Secretary General's mandate and the restructuring of the Secretariat.

An enhanced role for the Secretary General is not for my benefit. I am leaving.

But I have witnessed first hand how the burden placed on the Chair has increased, how effective management requires a multi-year perspective, and how the Secretariat has become a useful, yet under-used, resource for assisting participating States to implement their decisions. A strengthened role for the Secretary General will improve the management of the OSCE, make its work more co-ordinated and coherent and provide additional support to the Chairmanship and the Organization.

Also the Secretariat should be reformed, based on the proposal of the Secretary General, as it is the Secretary General who is directly responsible and accountable to you for its performance and management. And this reform should take into full account the new political priorities of the participating States and the new management system and culture, for example by giving higher priority to substantive units that are currently clustered in the Office of the Secretary General or to our field activities. The Secretariat could provide more analytical capability in line with existing decisions and increasing expectations from the Chairmanship and participating States. Before my departure I will develop further my ideas and discuss them with the participating States and, hopefully, with my successor. And I urge you to appoint the new Secretary General as soon as possible – the excellent candidates available to assume this post enable you to make a good choice soon.

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,

I would like to bring to your attention two things that still are – in my opinion - fundamentally wrong in the internal workings of this Organization.

The first is our personnel policy. The fact that all senior-level contracts are limited to a few years encourages brain-drain in an organization that should be trying to retain its best people.

Why should we hire top quality people, train them, and give them years of on-the-job experience, and then force them to leave after limited terms, sometimes as short as three or four years? This is bad and short-sighted management. For the sake of improving the effectiveness of the OSCE I invite you to think again about some aspects of the staff rules. As the minimum, the Secretary General should be given the right to exceptionally extend contracts by, say, up to one or two years.

Secondly, I invite participating States to refocus budgetary discussions at a political level. We should not get bogged down so often in budgetary debates about relatively limited amounts of money, or waste time micro-managing the details of implementing approved decisions, while the broader question of how – and whether - they achieve their objectives is addressed with much less attention and vigour.

The Road Travelled, and the Road Ahead

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,

I have been around the OSCE from the 1986 Stockholm Conference and Vienna Follow-up Meeting, through the Czechoslovak Chairmanship in 1992, then as Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre and now completing my second term as Secretary General.

I have witnessed the evolution of the OSCE from an instrument to bridge a Cold-War divide to a tool for building a united Europe on the basis of shared democratic values, from a conference into an organization. We are much more operational, better organised and managed than we were a decade ago. OSCE Missions and Institutions are a proven success.

But are we as dynamic in responding to the new security challenges without abandoning our common values, principles and commitments? Are we indeed relevant to all our participating States? Do we work as a real security and political organization for co-operation of equal partners or have we turned into a set of instruments used in a selective and fragmented way? These questions have been asked of us this year and deserve our serious consideration and a clear position – be it affirmative or negative.

In my opinion, we need to re-invigorate the OSCE as a forum for high-level political dialogue on the most topical issues of security in order to prevent the opening of new dividing lines in Europe. We need to do it notably at this time, when enlargement of the EU and NATO highlights certain differences between members and non-members of these organizations, also in the OSCE area. I think, for example, our role in Ukraine is very important.

Let us engage in a dialogue which should result in measures bringing us back to our unity of purpose while fully implementing our acquis. I think that in the process we will discover that our common ground is bigger than we think. Or when our differences are appearing, we will find enough will to co-operate to overcome them, if working together as partners.

Thus the task is not about building bridges or establishing the lowest common denominator. This would suggest that there are again two divided worlds of different values and objectives to be linked, with a gulf or a grey zone of competing interests between them. This is where we were in the 1970s and 80s. But this is not the new united Europe to which we all have committed ourselves fifteen, if not thirty, years ago.

For fifty years Europe was divided between East and West. That should not be our future. We must build on common ground, and seek to expand that space. The OSCE is the best placed organization to do this. Only the OSCE can be a platform for “Europe whole and free,” embracing equally our European, Central Asian and North American states.

Mr Chairman,
Excellencies,

The OSCE Secretariat, field missions and Institutions are your tools. If you cherish the OSCE, give it a clear political will and guidance as well as resources to do what it does best in places where it can make a difference.

For my part, I will use my last few months in office primarily to consolidate internal reforms and move ahead with restructuring. I will play an active role in support of Slovenia’s Chairmanship, and do my part to make 2005 a successful anniversary year for the OSCE.

I look forward to consulting with my successor so that achievements of the reform are solidified. And I look forward to continued co-operation with all of you to live up to our high expectations for the OSCE.

Thank you all for support over the past years, and for your attention today. It has been an honour to serve the OSCE.