

**OSCE 2003 Mediterranean Seminar
Aquaba, 20-21 October 2003**

Conflict Prevention and Confidence building

Statement by Mr. Brendan Moran, Ambassador of Ireland to the OSCE

Thank you Moderator

I would firstly like to join with other speakers in thanking the government of Jordan for the warm welcome and hospitality they have provided us with since we arrived in this fascinating country.

I believe that there is much agreement throughout the international community on certain key fundamental principles which must constitute the framework for proper and thorough debate on Conflict Prevention issues.

These principles are well captured in the EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts, but also complement key UN, OSCE and Council of Europe texts. They reflect a clear and almost universal desire on the part of the international community for peace and security, justice and democracy and equitable and sustainable economic development.

The timing of this seminar is significant in that it occurs at a time of considerable uncertainty and where the problems facing this crucial region of the world seem almost beyond solution. The past two years have been a particularly sombre period in the history of mankind. There has been so much death and destruction across the globe, but especially in this region.

We also heard talk of "a clash of civilisations". Not only is this kind of talk unduly simplistic but more significantly, it implies that are certain conflict situations which are just too intractable and too difficult to solve. It is also ill becoming of our common values and fundamental responsibilities to each other as members of the human race.

The challenge that faces us, and one which is particularly important in the context of seeking to prevent conflict, is to show respect for diversity and differing cultural outlooks, while at the same time continuing to assert the universality of the fundamental values which bind us all.

We must also remain resolute in our determination to counter the threat of terrorism. The OSCE has been to the forefront in

developing strategies to cope with this terrible scourge. As has already been mentioned, the OSCE is currently involved in the preparation of a strategy to cope with new 21st century threats to security, not least of which is terrorism. Everything must be done to make it as difficult as possible for the agents of international terrorism to operate.

In doing so, however, we must be clear that the need to act against terrorism offers no license for action contrary to the UN Charter or against the body of international human rights and humanitarian law that has been so painstakingly constructed.

We must also seek to deal with the causes of terrorism. Terrorism is not some kind of original sin. No child is born a terrorist. At some point in their lives, some people have become terrorists. We have to identify how and why.

If we find that young people are being indoctrinated into terrorism, we have to deal with those who seek to incite hatred and terror. But if we find that they act, however wrongly, in reaction to real or perceived injustice, we have to confront this and, as far as is possible, seek to eliminate the reality or perception of this injustice. To seek to understand the causes of terrorism should not be misunderstood as being soft on terrorism.

On the contrary, it is an essential step in its elimination. And this is not an academic statement - it is the actual experience of developments in my own country.

My own country's difficult national experience shows that there is no such thing as a straight line to peace. Our experience in Ireland clearly demonstrates that far-sighted leaders cannot allow their efforts to be held hostage by terrorists and extremists. They must have the wisdom to look beyond the politics of the last atrocity. What is more, leaders must be prepared to deal with each other. As the Nobel Laureate John Hume once said, "you make peace with your enemies, not your friends".