



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe**

**Statement by the OSCE Secretary General,  
Ambassador Ján Kubiš,**

**Eurasia Media Forum**

**Almaty, 22 - 24 April 2004**

Your Excellency, President Nursultan Nazarbayev,  
Mr. Chairman,  
Ms. Chairperson of the Organizing Committee,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me personally and for the OSCE to take part in this year's Eurasia Media Forum - an annual meeting that has become a forum of professional journalism and an important instance of international and regional dialogue.

Today, we have a unique opportunity to discuss together with the numerous distinguished guests present various critical problems that we face in a contemporary world and that have a topical relevance also for the work of the media. Prominently among them are developments affecting global and regional security, like those in Iraq, issues such as terrorism and respect for human rights and free media when combating it, problems in interethnic, inter-cultural and inter-religious relations, intolerance and hate speech and interlinked issues of media monopolization, media and elections, journalists' rights, safety and professional development. These are indeed global problems, but taking discussion on them for the third time to Central Asia has a special significance at least from the OSCE perspective.

Moreover, one of the objectives of the forum is to reinforce our common commitment to the democratic principles of freedom of expression and the development of independent professional and responsible media and to seek ways how to implement these lofty principles in practice. It is my sincere hope that fora like this will help meaningfully promote principles of freedom, openness, pluralism, tolerance, and co-operation, also outside this conference hall, will positively influence developments in the whole Central Asian region and enhance its role in global matters.

Kazakhstan, an active OSCE participating State, since its independence has registered remarkable successes in its state building transformation and democratization, in inter-ethnic, inter-religious dialogue and peace. Kazakhstan, which is determined to continue in these processes and which has an ambition to assume the OSCE Chairmanship in 2009, is well placed to demonstrate in practice positive example and the beneficial influence of implementation of these universal democratic principles.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is recognized by all 55 OSCE participating States that independent mass media is crucial for the development of democratic societies. In the 1999 Istanbul Summit Declaration, agreed upon by the OSCE Heads of State, they committed themselves to ensuring the freedom of the media as a basic condition for pluralistic and democratic societies and they underlined the need to secure freedom of expression, which is an essential element of political discourse in any democracy.

To help themselves to live up to these commitments, the OSCE participating States created a unique Institution of Representative on Freedom of the Media in November 1997. Since March 2004, the Representative is Mr. Miklos Haraszti of Hungary.

A well-informed and empowered pluralistic civil society and transparent government helped in this by independent professional, responsible journalists is the most effective way of ensuring efficient responses to contemporary challenges for peace, stability and prosperity, based on strong public support. Treatment of the media and individual journalists provides an important indicator of the democratic health of the society and the political system. This is critically important, notably during the elections.

The OSCE welcomes all steps undertaken by its participating States to promote independent media and contributes to this by the work of its institutions and field operations, through political dialogue of its participating States on how the relevant OSCE principles, commitments and standards are being implemented. It is indispensable for democratic societies to protect the freedom of the media and to provide it with the most favourable legislative framework possible. In this regard, the OSCE has been among those who have followed the latest developments on the new Kazakhstani media law with keen interest – and I will not hide – with concern. The OSCE Chairman-in-Office, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria, H.E. Mr. Solomon Passy during his recent visit to Kazakhstan expressed a clear expectation that all steps be taken to ensure that at the end of this process the relevant OSCE commitments and international standards be fully met and respected.

And I, together with all of you, was only so glad to hear that the law, as prepared, which evoked first of all in Kazakhstan such a wave of concern, was rejected by President Nazarbayev. It is a most welcome development and I congratulate you, Mr. President, with this move.

In conclusion, I would like to thank our hosts once again for convening the Forum and for the opportunity given to all of us to engage in meaningful discussions on most topical issues of regional and global security of today. I would also like to thank most cordially the authorities and the organizers of the Forum for their excellent hospitality, so traditional in hospitable Kazakhstan.