

**2004 Mediterranean Seminar on Addressing
Security in the Twenty-First Century: Interaction Between
the OSCE and the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation**

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**Presentation Paper on
Cooperative Security – Reducing Risks and Building Confidence**

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Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like first to thank the organizers for their kind invitation to attend and participate in this important conference. For me it is a great honor and pleasure to be here and I should say that on participating in this event I am hitting two firsts in my practical life: It is the first time to be in Sharm el-Sheikh, this beautiful city that becomes in few years a meeting point for dialogue and mutual understanding; and first time to attend an OSCE gathering with all the great heritage of this organization in building security and stability across Europe and in other parts and regions of the world.

My talk will focus on how cooperative security in Mediterranean region can address emerging threats to stability and security in the Twenty-First Century. Actually, by the end of the nineties many negative developments have accumulated leading to a considerable loss of trust on most of cooperation fronts. The Arab-Israeli peace process came to almost complete halt. The US and Europe had abandoned Egypt and practically all southern and eastern Mediterranean countries in their fight against terrorism. In addition to that the double standard exercised in dealing with the issue of nuclear and WMD proliferation ended with a regional race in both conventional and unconventional armament. However shortly after, at beginning of the new century came the September 11th attack, followed by the Afghani and Iraqi wars to ensure that it would be long time before mutual trust and cooperation can be restored to its initial levels. Indeed, cooperation and dialogue schemes across the Mediterranean during the nineties had been betrayed by all partners on both the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean and across the Atlantic. Simply all partners failed to seize the historic opportunity to transform the region to true space of stability, prosperity and progress. The results of that failure was expected and logical. Cooperative strategies were replaced by

unilateral policies not very much relying on law, treaties, or regional arrangements.

At that point, and on the light of many other changes in the region, it seems essential that Mediterranean partners should come again and redefine cooperation, redefine threats and also to redefine the Mediterranean. Many of the threats which we face today needs reliable information, a legal basis and moral grounds to support effective responses against these threats. Unilateral action can't for example prevent WMD proliferation effectively, and can't be the right answer to terrorism and non-state actors. The challenges of the 21st century, include in addition to the “hard” threats of terrorism, genocide, and weapons of mass destruction, “soft” threats such as poverty, hunger, unsafe drinking water, environmental degradation, endemic and infectious diseases. These soft threats kill millions every year and cannot be adequately resolved without international cooperation, and often lead to political and social conflicts that demand responses from collective security mechanisms. All these threats and risks are global problems. Only the global community as a whole can effectively act to resolve them.

That solution is only possible by redefining cooperative security through strengthening international regimes not ignoring them and creating new ones if we find that necessary. The target is to raise the effectiveness of cooperation in time and in space. Cooperation should be decisive, adaptive, and flexible with minimum collateral damage and side effects. Cooperative security should benefit from networking and should be armed by technology advances. Redefine cooperation needs dealing with root causes and collectively searching for solutions and together working to implement them. A permanent security forum should be established in the Mediterranean to deal with the current and future security problems. This will help realize the global objective of combating terrorism and prevent non-state actors from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. A nuclear-weapons-free zone needs tremendous collective work and will, and would increase stability and security in the region and in the world at large.

Today's security environment in the southern Mediterranean is so changed from the prevailing in the 1990s. The potential geographic space for security cooperation has expended eastward all the way to Afghanistan and possibly beyond. Today's threats by the nature of time and progress are such that physical boundaries are increasingly meaningless and we all operate in the same system. Egypt, Jordan and Morocco for example have already worked during the nineties in the

Balkans for peacekeeping and nation building, the same countries might now consider sending troops to Afghanistan or Iraq or to combat terrorism and WMD proliferation in the Mediterranean, the Red Sea or in the Indian Ocean. The security environment in the region after the Afghan and Iraq wars appeared to have accelerated the pace of change within the region and led to a series of indigenous initiatives including plans of social, democratic and human rights reforms in many countries and the Libyan unilateral decision to give up its plans for acquiring weapons of mass destruction. Also, the traditional geographic lines regarding American and European engagement and role in the Mediterranean are becoming much different than before.

Finally, at the current moment I am able to see a new variable on the international arena and in the Mediterranean which is the gradual emergence of a common Arab-Islamic-Western-Global perspective that is still in its beginning stage confirming that terrorism is a common threat to all, and regional disputes must be solved if we are to root out terrorism, as well as the prime importance of dealing with the issue of WMD as it could very well mean the destruction for all. The slogan "work with the world", "work with the allies", "work with the partners", "work with the UN", is beginning to appear as lesson from the Iraqi experience. This vision will be practically materialize in this city of Sharm Al-Sheikh in the 23rd of November by the Egyptian sponsorship of the Iraq Conference, with the participation of foreign ministers from Iraq, its neighbors including Syria and Iran, the G8 Nations and representatives from the Arab League and Organization of the Islamic conference. This is new birth of a true cooperative security thinking in the region.

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