

Address by OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President Petros Efthymiou
Informal OSCE Ministerial Meeting, Almaty, 17 July 2010

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Mr. President,

Ministers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I think that as already President Nazarbayev has indicated in his speech, today we find ourselves at one of the most challenging times of the OSCE. This is a time of turbulence – a face of deep, almost tectonic changes globally. And at such times, we can not limit ourselves to contemplation. We have to opt for action.

There is no doubt that our Organisation has accomplished a lot over the years. Yet, we all know there is even more to be done if we wish to make the most of our true capacity. I believe that is the time for major restructuring. Time for re-engineering.

Our meeting in Corfu a year ago was primarily important, because it put the OSCE once again on the agenda of politicians. The OSCE is fundamentally a political organization, based on political commitments. Without political engagement, the OSCE is therefore bound to lose its way.

This is precisely why I am so pleased that this meeting could be arranged by the Kazakh Chairmanship. I am also pleased, that precisely one week ago, parliamentarians from 50 OSCE countries gathered in Oslo, passing resolutions on a range of key OSCE-related issues. The Parliamentary Assembly's Oslo Declaration clearly prioritises discussions within the 'Corfu process,' and has a number of practical recommendations on how to reinvigorate dialogue and ensure that the OSCE remains an effective organization.

If the recent crisis in Kyrgyzstan shows us anything, it is that economic and human rights abuses by a government have very real security concerns for the entire region. An appropriate balance between political-security, economic, environmental, and humanitarian concerns must remain at the heart of all of our discussions. Unfortunately, in recent years the OSCE has not always proven effective on many of these issues.

In the past, the OSCE's flexibility was its strongest asset, reacting when necessary, adapting as appropriate. But the lack of political will, bureaucracy and unmanageable decision-making processes have stood in the way. We must do better. We have to enhance our political decision-making procedure, at the top level, in order to upgrade the level and the efficiency of the every day work of our representatives in Vienna.

Increased accountability must also be put in place if the OSCE is to regain the public confidence that is so critical to being an effective organization:

- Critical audits can no longer be covered up if we want public and political support.
- Parliamentary oversight would go a long way to increase public confidence in the Organization.

The Corfu process was an excellent start to bringing relevance back to the OSCE through dialogue. It is very important that focus has rightly moved towards strengthening the organization's capacity for early reaction to evolving crisis situations. A strengthened OSCE Chairmanship should be able to rapidly deploy fact-finding missions and negotiators. In this regard, the contribution that OSCE parliamentarians can have in crisis situations should be considered. The Parliamentary Assembly already has a well-established network of ad hoc committees and Special Representatives who are involved in fact-finding activities and who work to facilitate inter-parliamentary dialogue.

Election monitoring is the most relevant work that the OSCE conducts these days, and it is the activity which constantly draws strong public attention. The leading role by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, particularly in bringing credibility and visibility to this work, has played a key role in keeping election observation relevant. Visibility and political engagement have helped here – we should use this model in other OSCE activities.

Our mission is to concentrate on those issues that will maximize our efficiency, promote the aims of our Organisation and emphasize our key role: to stay in tune with people and add value to their life.

To that point, I applaud our effort of moving dialogue forward in the Euro-Atlantic and Euro-Asian dimensions of security, but it will require engagement by us, politicians, if we are to see real success. It is for this reason, that the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has in recent years been a consistent and vocal advocate of an OSCE summit.

I look forward to fruitful discussions today, as we consider how to move ahead on all of these important issues.