



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Statement to the 114th Session of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

Strasbourg, 12-13 May 2004

Mr. Chairman,
Mr. Secretary General,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for the opportunity to add my voice to that of the Bulgarian Chairmanship-in-Office and address the 114th Session of the Committee of Ministers of the CoE. I am pleased to note that in the past period co-operation between our two organisations has progressed well both thematically, in areas and on issues we share a common interest in, and geographically, in the regions where we operate through our field presences.

The Tripartite meetings held mid-February in Vienna offer a good example in that respect. Discussions at the High-level meeting focused on strategies to address threats and challenges to security in the twenty-first century, which on the OSCE side were based on the action-oriented Strategy adopted in 2003 at the Maastricht ministerial meeting. In it, participating States call for a greater synergy and more effective framework for co-operation with international partners towards a more cohesive and effective international system for responding to global threats and challenges. It is increasingly evident that we need to pool our resources and engage in a joint, all-inclusive and more concerted effort to ward off global risks and eliminate the hotbeds of instability and conflict.

The Caucasus being a priority region for both our organisations, I am also satisfied with the results of the Tripartite Target-oriented meeting, which concentrated on activities of and co-operation between partner international organisations in the Southern Caucasus. The meeting provided a forum for exchanging information on ongoing and planned activities among international players in the Southern Caucasus and sought to facilitate co-ordination and identify possibilities for enhanced co-operation.

I am particularly pleased with our co-operation during the recent cycle of elections in the South Caucasus. The ODIHR and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), together with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, have regularly issued joint post-election statements, participated in joint press conferences and in some cases also co-operated on joint follow-up for implementation of election related recommendations. The co-operation with the Council of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE) has developed along similar lines in relevant election processes at the local and regional level. The number of joint activities with the Venice Commission have increased noticeably over the past year and they were not limited to the review of election legislation only, but extended to joint visits to the field, the conduct of round tables on aspects of the electoral process, joint seminars and follow-up on recommendations. The importance of this cannot be underestimated, as it permits the OSCE and Council of Europe's assessment to be delivered in one voice.

And our co-operation covers also other areas. Advice of the Venice Commission concerning Moldova or this week's meeting of Director Buquicchio, Secretary of the Commission in Vienna with the OSCE Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation can serve as examples.

Mr. Chairman,

A continued priority for our two organisations remains the fight against trafficking in human beings. The OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings adopted at Maastricht is aimed at providing a tool to participating States in implementing their commitments in that area and also bears great potential for enhancing co-operation between our two organizations. The ability to efficiently deal with preventing and combating trafficking is a vitally important capacity that the OSCE is looking to develop further. On 5 May Ms. Helga Konrad of Austria was appointed OSCE Special Representative on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and we have started the recruitment for an Anti-Trafficking Unit in the Secretariat. The CoE has been very active in this area, including through the adoption of legal texts. ODIHR, on behalf of the OSCE, is participating in the negotiations to prepare a European convention on action against trafficking in human beings as a member with observer status of the CAHTEH Committee of the CoE.

I am pleased to see the development of good co-operation between our two organisations on Roma/Sinti issues, especially in view of the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area adopted at Maastricht, which we are currently implementing, and the discussions with CoE's Specialist Group on Roma/Gypsies on possible establishment of a European

Forum of Roma and Travellers. The benefit of closer cross-institutional interaction is also evident in the good working relationships between the HCNM and the Secretariat of the Council of Europe, the European Commissioner for Human Rights and the Venice Commission, especially with regard to existing and draft legislation relating to national minorities in a number of countries.

Also, it is the intention of the OSCE participating States to adopt this year a new OSCE Action Plan on Gender Issues. It will focus and enhance the activities of the OSCE and its participating States in this important area, in promoting gender equality.

Tolerance, non-discrimination and integration remain key themes for the OSCE and we are stepping up our efforts and resources to see what more can be done to curb the violent manifestations of racism and xenophobia in the OSCE area. Here I would like to congratulate the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) on their tenth anniversary and extend my gratitude, particularly to Director Michael Head, for the valuable contribution to the OSCE High level Conference on Anti-Semitism in Berlin on 28-29 April 2004. This high-profile event provided an apt forum to participating States to map out concrete steps to be taken to better address this scourge, including through changes in their legislation and introduction of widespread education on tolerance and human rights. The Berlin Declaration and the preceding Permanent Council Decision on Combating Anti-Semitism established a monitoring and follow up mechanism on anti-Semitic incidents in the OSCE area as well as committed the participating States to systematically collect and disseminate information on best practices for preventing and responding to anti-Semitism.

In this connection, I would like to point to two more events, which the Bulgarian OSCE Chairmanship is organising in 2004: the OSCE Meeting on the Relationship Between Racist, Xenophobic and Anti-Semitic Propaganda on the Internet and Hate Crimes (Paris, 16 - 17 June 2004) and the OSCE Conference on Tolerance and the Fight against Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination (Brussels, 13 - 14 September 2004). I am confident that the Bulgarian Chairmanship would welcome the valuable expertise of the CoE to both events.

In addition to this impressive range of new activities, the OSCE vigorously continues its activities in other areas. Our work on the ground, in our field missions or a successful third special meeting of the UN CTC with regional organizations on combating terrorism, co-hosted by the OSCE and UN ODC in Vienna in March this year, bear witness to this.

Finally, I would like to refer to an issue which I believe bears great relevance for the work carried out by the CoE over the past years. Education as an important tool for setting up democratic institutions and securing good governance, for fostering respect for human rights and promoting tolerance was set as a priority for the OSCE in 2004 by the Bulgarian Chairmanship. A Ministerial Conference devoted to the topic *Education as an Investment into the Future* was organised a month ago in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, and a month before that a Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on *Human Rights Education and Training* was held in Vienna. A number of other meetings have been planned until the end of the year, including a follow up to the Tashkent Ministerial Conference in Sofia this autumn. The CoE with its vast expertise and accumulated experience in this area stands as a crucial and logical partner for the OSCE in this new endeavour.

Mr. Chairman,

I trust that the above examples confirm that ample opportunities exist to continue building upon our partnership and co-operation in the political, legal, judicial, electoral and other fields that have developed over the years. In a further effort to intensify our interaction and achieve greater synergies. I agreed with Secretary General Schwimmer that in 2004, co-operation arrangements between the OSCE and the CoE would be reviewed. The *Common Catalogue of Co-operation Modalities* signed in 2000 will consequently be updated and revised, and we plan to engage our participating/member States in this process. In my opinion, we should also consider a mechanism that would enable our memberships to assess regularly whether the two organizations and their activities indeed work for synergy. A regular yearly review meeting, rotating between Vienna and Strasbourg, where our members participate together with the structures of both organizations to review our co-operation and its modalities, could be agreed upon. In this regard, I am looking forward to the coming 3+3 senior officials meeting this summer in Vienna, which would provide opportunities for exchange of opinions also on this subject. And we should also better use the potential of the existing co-ordination modalities, first of all the 3+3 format at the highest level. The fact that meetings convene irregularly does not help us. If the problem is its effectiveness, we should take measures to improve it. We do have examples of successful, well-prepared and focused 3+3 meetings, which not only took stock of our work, but provided guidance.

In closing, I would like to express my gratitude to the outgoing Dutch Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, and in particular to Foreign Minister Dr. Bernard Bot, for all productive endeavours in promoting CoE OSCE co-operation. I would like to welcome at the same time the

incoming Norwegian Chairmanship and Foreign Minister Jan Petersen. I look forward to our further joint efforts. And last but not least, I would like to thank Secretary General Walter Schwimmer for all his excellent co-operation and endeavours to further our joint enterprise.