



Opening Address

**to the OSCE Permanent Council by the Chairman-in-Office,
the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Republic of Bulgaria,
H.E. Dr. Solomon Passy**

Vienna, 15 January 2004

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The OSCE has come a long way in the past decades. Looking at the distance covered and casting a glance into the foreseeable future, I think we can state with conviction that the OSCE remains relevant and important for all of us.

Significant EU and NATO enlargements are taking place this year. Together, they will constitute a landmark move towards improving security and co-operation and strengthening stability for the wider area of the OSCE. The enlargement will enhance common security and mutual co-operation, both of which are fundamental OSCE concerns. It will also open up new perspectives for tackling security matters with a greater range of instruments and in closer cooperation among international organizations. At the same time the OSCE will have to take into account and adapt to the new modalities. Its cohesion will have to be enhanced to pass this test. All participating States will have to pull together to prove that the OSCE is up to the mark.

My distinguished predecessor Jaap de Hoop Scheffer in his new capacity remarked that his organization is going through a continuous process of transformation to be able to meet new challenges. I think that such an approach is also relevant for all international organizations that have the intention to play a role in the 21st century. This Chairmanship will try to promote a similar process which, I am aware, will continue beyond 2004.

The new Chairmanship will take full account of lessons learned. It will aim at a more comprehensive understanding of the broad spectrum of opinions when articulating OSCE policies and taking specific decisions.

The time-honoured principle of continuity in the work of successive Chairmanships will be adhered to. The working priorities set by the Netherlands in 2003 will be pursued in 2004 as well. Active use will be made of the existing mechanisms for consultations and building up a consensus. The Chairmanship will rely both on its own consensus-building capacity and on the support of all participating States. At the same time, due attention will be paid to preserving the ability of the Organization to react flexibly and swiftly to new challenges, not least by identifying acceptable approaches for rapid decision-making.

Before outlining concrete priorities of the CiO, I would like to express my wholehearted thanks to the Netherlands for its work and achievements in 2003. The personal dedication of Minister Jaap de Hoop Scheffer contributed decisively to the success of the Dutch Chairmanship. Drawing on Dutch experience will be crucial for successful consultation and co-operation work in the Troika. Once again, a very warm "Dank U wel !".

The Maastricht Ministerial meeting produced a number of key Strategies to guide us in the years to come. Their implementation must start immediately and this will be the overriding priority for the Chairmanship in 2004.

In preparing the agenda of the Second Annual Security Review Conference in 2004 the Chairmanship intends to focus on ways and means of implementing the new OSCE comprehensive Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century. Besides, we need to explore additional practical measures that the OSCE could undertake in response to existing and potential threats. The Chairmanship will work to maintain and enhance the well-established close interaction between the Permanent Council and the Forum for Security Co-operation.

Of particular importance is also the implementation of the OSCE Charter on Preventing and Combating Terrorism, the Bucharest Plan and the Bishkek Programme. Again, what is called for are practical robust measures to fight terrorism, to be implemented to a large extent in co-operation with other international agencies. At larger international forums their adoption might not be feasible, but they could well be within realistic reach of the OSCE.

And again, no efforts are to be spared in getting the implementation of the Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings to a speedy start. The Maastricht mechanism should be put in place quickly. Having its own experience in countering trafficking, my country will promote maximum synergy of multilateral co-operation in this field.

The Chairmanship will be also actively involved in the OSCE police-related activities and programs.

Mr. Chairman,

Many of the issues brought up above – human security, trafficking in arms, drugs and human beings and organized crime activities – inevitably highlight the problem of adequate border security management. This year we will carry out follow-up to the Ohrid Conference on Balkan Border Security. However, I believe that an UN/OSCE Conference on border monitoring and security should be convened in 2004. The range of matters to be discussed in this broader format could include illicit trade in arms and drugs, and trafficking in persons and nuclear and other radioactive materials. In the opinion of the Chair, a new departure of this kind would be a valuable contribution to security dialogue in the OSCE area. Participation of the OSCE in other forms of relevant cooperation might prove useful.

Such an approach will be fully in line with the Istanbul Platform for Co-operative Security, and the Bulgarian Chairmanship intends to pursue persistent promotion of wider and more effective co-operation by the OSCE with the UN, EU, NATO, Council of Europe and other relevant international organizations. I would stress in particular the positive trend of building closer interaction with the EU and NATO as organizations of key importance for the security, stability and democratic prosperity in the Euro-Atlantic area.

Education, in the widest sense of the word, will be one of the priorities of the Bulgarian Chairmanship. Education is a major tool for setting up democratic institutions and securing democratic governance, for generating respect for human rights and for promoting tolerance, for sustainable economic development and raising human resources for successful market economies. Education is vitally important for empowering individuals and groups and for developing their capacity for the peaceful resolution of conflicts within and among nations. The Chairmanship is fully mindful of the OSCE limitations in providing direct assistance for education and training. At the same time we all know that the OSCE has immense political potential for enhancing awareness and mobilizing resources. In this context the Chairmanship will co-ordinate OSCE activities with other specialized international agencies /e.g. Council of Europe, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP/, and financial institutions, as well as with bilateral donors.

The CiO considers the implementation of the Maastricht Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension as another priority task. Considerable work lies ahead in these domains: strengthening good governance, ensuring sustainable economic and

social development and protection of the environment, and increasing States' capabilities to address challenges and threats adequately. Our intention is to encourage all participating states to actively contribute to the implementation of the Strategy.

We all need to pursue further OSCE objectives in combating aggressive nationalism, racism, chauvinism, xenophobia, anti-semitism, and other forms of discrimination. The main focus will fall on preparing the three major forums: in Berlin on anti-Semitism, in Brussels on tolerance and the fight against racism, xenophobia and discrimination and in Paris on the relationship between racist, xenophobic and anti-Semitic propaganda on the Internet and hate crimes.

The Chair welcomes the calm and orderly manner in which the extraordinary presidential elections in Georgia were held and wishes the President elect Saakashvili every success in managing the challenges his country is facing. The CiO endorses the work of the International Election Observation Mission and believes that the forthcoming parliamentary elections should be a further major step towards the development of democracy in Georgia. Along these lines the Chair hopes that the President elect, the authorities and the people of Georgia will keep their commitment to building democratic institutions and pursuing market economy reforms. At this juncture, I wish to stress the importance of the territorial integrity and national unity of Georgia as a major prerequisite for all of the above, as well as for the improvement of the overall climate in the volatile region of southern Caucasus. The CiO will continue to do its utmost, together with other relevant actors of the international community, to ensure the necessary assistance for Georgia in tackling the present complex situation.

In 2003 progress was achieved towards finding a solution for resolution of the Transdniestrian conflict and this is something the CiO will build upon. I believe that the joint efforts of the mediators, the Republic of Moldova and the representatives of Transdniestria within the five-sided format should continue in order to facilitate the elaboration of a formula for a constitutional arrangement that would meet the expectations and win the support of the overwhelming majority of Moldavians. Only such an arrangement could be viable and lasting. The Chairmanship stands ready to underpin the political settlement with adequate international guarantees. We expect that the withdrawal of the ammunition and equipment from Transdniestria will continue and the implementation of the Istanbul commitments will be completed without further delay.

In this particular context, mention should be made to the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE). The Agreement on Adaptation, signed in Istanbul on 19 November 1999, ensures the

continuing validity of the CFE Treaty as a cornerstone of European security and stability. The Chairmanship believes that the Agreement's ratification could be finalized in 2004 and will support initiatives aimed at its early entry into force.

As regards the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the CiO welcomes the recent activities of the OSCE Minsk Group and its Co-Chairmen aimed at re-establishing direct dialogue between the parties, both at presidential and lower levels, and at elaborating new ideas to supplement existing proposals tabled in past negotiations. The CiO intends to give further support to the Minsk process in close co-operation with all interested parties.

The Chairmanship will whenever necessary provide political guidance and issue-oriented leadership, and will fully support the field presences. It will give encouragement to their endeavors to take maximum account of the concerns and wishes of the host countries and to assist them in fostering modern democratic rules, procedures and institutions, and in meeting OSCE standards. Placing special emphasis on the rule of law in the activities of the missions will promote improvements in stability and security, respect for human rights and good governance as prerequisites for sustainable economic growth.

The Chairmanship supports increased OSCE attention and allocation of more resources to the regions of Central Asia and Southern Caucasus. Central Asia specifically is an important region for intensive OSCE work. We have to generate impulses which will make both governments and international institutions pay greater attention to problems of education. The CiO will strive to increase the effectiveness of the OSCE field missions by consolidating the programme-approach in their activities. Successful regional co-operation in fields of common interest could play a significant part in overcoming inherited and new difficulties.

The Chair considers it important to continue the OSCE field activities in South Eastern Europe in order to ensure comprehensive implementation of the assigned mandates. The CiO will take due account of ongoing processes targeted at future membership in Euro-Atlantic structures and their implications across the broad spectrum of OSCE activities.

Particular significance will be attributed to consolidating interaction with our Asian and Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation. We welcome Slovenia in the OSCE Troika and look forward to its active role in chairing the Contact group with the Mediterranean partners thereby building upon the work started in Aqaba.

The Bulgarian Chairmanship would be also ready to explore possibilities for relevant OSCE activities in adjacent areas provided a consensus could be reached.

The Bulgarian Chairmanship intends to further promote the mutual political support between the OSCE and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, which strengthened its role as an important OSCE institution under the able leadership of its President, the Honorable Bruce George. The participation in our meeting of Mr. Tosho Peikov, Head of the Bulgarian Delegation to the Assembly is another manifestation of this commitment.

The CiO will continue to focus on administrative and legal issues related to the functioning of the OSCE, especially those identified in recent years. The work on the comprehensive management agenda will be followed up. In general, special attention is to be paid to all issues related to the internal reform of the Organization and its permanent structures.

In taking over the Chairmanship, Bulgaria relies, inter alia, on the experience it has gained in its own process of transition to democracy. In spite of the substantial socio-economic dislocations resulting from the transition to market economy, my country has successfully safeguarded internal peace and mutual confidence between the different ethnic and religious communities and has set up an indigenous democratic model of tolerance.

Mr. Chairman,

Your Excellencies,

Colleagues,

"Implementation" is probably the word I have used most often in my present statement. And indeed, the Chairmanship of 2004 will put implementation before the elaboration of new commitments. Fulfilling this task will not be easy. Many challenges will confront us in the year ahead. However, united by our common values, keeping together in the spirit of solidarity and drawing strength from our diversity, we will not spare efforts to make the Organization stronger.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.