



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Opening of OSCE Wallnerstrasse Premises OSCE Secretary General, Ambassador Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, Vienna, 21 November 2007

Your Majesty,
President Fischer,
Ministers, Mr Mayor,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Together with the Representative on Freedom of the Media Miklos Haraszti, allow me to thank you for honouring with your presence the opening ceremony of the Palais Palffy-Erdödi in Wallnerstrasse.

This moment represents a milestone in the history of OSCE. For many years, the OSCE was a conference that travelled from capital to capital. Fourteen years ago, its participating States accepted the Austrian invitation to meet permanently in Vienna. Five years ago, Chancellor Schüssel proposed this splendid building as the future home of OSCE, and the Porto Ministerial Meeting ratified the generous offer. Today, Your Majesty, as the Head of State of the participating State that is the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, you will receive from President Fischer the symbol of this building, thereby inaugurating it in its new role.

The OSCE has always been more of a project than an institution. From its earliest days at the 1975 Helsinki Conference, the purpose of this project has been to build a Europe that is whole, free, and at peace with itself and the rest of the world. Today, thanks to the generosity and far-sightedness of the people of Austria this project has a home and it has a face, in the heart of greater Europe.

OSCE is proud to be in Vienna and grateful to the Viennese for their warm welcome.

All 56 participating States, spread across Europe, Eurasia and North America but linked by a common history and a core set of values, are honoured by this prestigious venue which will inspire their cooperation.

At the heart of the OSCE is the principle that security starts with the ‘inherent dignity of the human person’. Security requires political-military co-operation between States, the development of healthy economic and environmental governance, and the protection of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of the media. This ‘cross-dimensional’ view of security is the OSCE’s signature strength.

This approach is manifest in the OSCE's Institutions. The Secretariat and the Representative on Freedom of the Media will continue to work side by side under the same roof at Wallnerstrasse. I also wish to acknowledge the presence today of Ambassador Knut Vollebaek, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, and Ambassador Christian Strohal, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. Together with the 19 Field Operations, these Institutions stand together and embody the unique connected security vision behind the OSCE project.

The OSCE reflects greater Europe as it aspires to be, but also as it is. The OSCE holds up a mirror to the difficulty that States face in addressing complex challenges and in working out differences.

The Spanish Chairmanship of the OSCE, guided by the dedication and leadership of Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos, has addressed these challenges with courage. The Madrid task force and the Spanish delegation in Vienna are leading the Organisation towards its ministerial meeting next week in Madrid. Success will reward their efforts.

It is impossible to thank appropriately all those who have made this moment possible. Allow me simply to mention the dedicated teams of the Ministry of European and International Affairs, as well as those of the Ministry of Economics and Labour, and the City of Vienna. I also wish to thank Mr Herbert Ablinger, the architect who made this new home so splendid, and all those who worked on the renovation of this building.

Thank you for this object of beauty; it will remind us of the lofty values that guide OSCE.

Mr. President, your presence here along with that of His Majesty King Juan Carlos I, is recognition of the strong ties that bind Austria, our host country, and OSCE. It is also an encouragement to all 56 Ambassadors which are the heart of this organisation. Allow me to convey their gratitude to the people of Austria.