

# **Bruce GEORGE, M.P.**

**President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly**

**Parliamentary Conference on the Mediterranean: Building Democracy, Peace,  
and Prosperity in the region**

**Madrid, 3 – 4 October 2002**

## **OPENING REMARKS**

**(Thursday, 3 October – 10:00)**

Madame Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies,

Mr. Deputy Speaker of the Senate,

Distinguished colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me, as President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, to open this **parliamentary Conference on the Mediterranean: Ensuring Peace, Democracy and Stability in the Region.**

I would like to **thank once again our Spanish hosts**, the Spanish Cortes, for inviting us to hold this conference here in Spain in the premises of the Chamber of Deputies, and for their hospitality in welcoming us in Madrid, and also for the excellent work in organising this Conference.

Dear colleagues,

When talking about OSCE commitments, including democratic development and the building of civil society, **Spain stands as an example to most of us in the OSCE.** Spain, and its people, represent today a model to follow for those countries that seek democratic stability, economic development, and integration in the European structures. This country has successfully achieved in the past twenty-five years all those objectives that many countries in the OSCE are fighting so hard to obtain. And this has all been possible by the democratic will and strength of the Spanish people and its leadership. Also – let us not forget in this age of globalisation – Spain has historically been a unique link between continents, between peoples, and between cultures.

Geographically located in the Mediterranean Spain has played a key role in the initiatives to establish co-operation policies between Europe and the rest of the countries in the Mediterranean basin. **The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership** that started in Barcelona seven years ago, is just one example. The key objectives of the **Barcelona Conference** were:

- To establish a common Euro-Mediterranean area of peace and stability based on fundamental principles including respect for human rights and democracy;
- Create an area of shared prosperity through the progressive establishment of a free trade area between the EU and its Partners and among the Mediterranean Partners themselves, accompanied by substantial EU financial support for economic transition in the Partners themselves, accompanied by

substantial EU financial support for economic transition in the Partners and social and economic consequences of this reform process, and

- Develop human resources, promote understanding between cultures and rapprochement of the peoples in the Euro-Mediterranean region as well as to develop free and flourishing civil societies.

The **Fifth Euro-Mediterranean Conference** held in **Valencia** last April signified a great impulse in the implementation of the Bracelona Process and in improving the relations between the European Union and the twelve countries from the South-Mediterranean

Distinguished colleagues,

The Mediterranean dimension to European security has also been recognised in several key international instruments. The chapter on the Mediterranean contained in the **Helsinki Final Act** was a clear recognition of shared historical, cultural, economic ties with the then CSCE region (today's OSCE). This relationship has been reinforced since, enabling the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation – as they are now called – to participate regularly in OSCE events, including those in the Economic and Environmental Dimension.

Therefore the involvement of the OSCE in Mediterranean affairs is not new, dating back to our founding documents of 1975. The OSCE in its comprehensive approach to security, its focus on conflict prevention and eliminating risks to security stemming from socio-economic and

environmental factors as well as human rights violations provide an adequate framework for co-operation between both shores of the Mediterranean.

Solidarity and co-operation are **fundamental OSCE values**. The OSCE is a unique organisation, including 55 participating states from Europe, Central Asia, and North America. All these 55 participating States share and uphold the same values and work together toward a common objective, the creation of a free, democratic, prosperous and undivided Europe. Continuous dialogue and the free exchange of views and ideas aimed at enhancing co-operation, building confidence and security between states and societies as well as within societies are important assets of the OSCE.

Over the last years the OSCE has engaged in an increasingly intensified **dialogue with its partners for co-operation** from the Mediterranean region and Asia. It also strengthened its working relationships with numerous other international organisations and institutions. I believe there is a growing awareness in the OSCE that only a free, democratic, prosperous and undivided Europe will be able to promote security, stability and prosperity in the adjacent area and also that European security will benefit from positive developments in other regions, including the Mediterranean.

**Security in the OSCE area is ultimately linked to security in the Mediterranean area.** However, the great diversity of States included in the Mediterranean which may be divided in four sub-regions:

the **Mediterranean EU, the Balkans, the Middle East and the Maghreb**, complicate the level of negotiations and political dialogue.

Furthermore, three sub-regions that were previously regarded as different political spheres – **South Eastern Europe, the Eastern Mediterranean and the Near East** – must now be regarded as a complex security arena in which the OSCE has a general interest.

As the Strategic Defence Review of the House of Commons Defence Committee has stated:

*“The States of North Africa are a security concern not because of immediate tensions but because of their vulnerability to a range of other pressures; environmental stress which may lead to uncontrolled migration, economic breakdown, crises within states which have some of their symptoms in Islamic militancy, the easy transit routes for crime narcotics, and terrorism”*

Increasing communication and co-operation among the different international organisations focusing on security in the Mediterranean is essential to harmonise such a notion of security while increasing confidence between Western Countries and countries in the Southern Mediterranean.

It is also widely recognised that huge **disparities of wealth and environmental resources** between the countries on the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean are potentially destabilising. Poverty breeds resentment and alienation thereby fuelling support for radical Islamic movements.

Madame Speaker of the Congress of Deputies,  
Madame Speaker of the Senate,

I thank you very much again for welcoming the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Madrid to discuss about security and co-operation in the Mediterranean.

I am convinced that the Conference that is now starting and that brings us together in Madrid will provide answers to some of these important questions regarding security and co-operation in the Mediterranean.

The work ahead is not easy, but we must always remember that we, as parliamentarians directly elected by the people can provide an important input to the process. **The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly**, as a unique OSCE institution promoting parliamentary involvement in the activities of the OSCE and facilitating inter-parliamentary dialogue – will do its most to enhance the Mediterranean dimension of the OSCE and the relations with our Partners for Co-operation in the South Mediterranean.

**Thank you very much**