

ENGLISH only

Mediterranean Seminar
Combating intolerance and discrimination and promoting mutual respect
and understanding

Tel Aviv, 18 December 2007

Opening Address of Mr. Magali Wahabee, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of
Israel

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Shalom, and welcome to Israel. The prime example of cooperation between the OSCE Mediterranean partners is the annual Mediterranean Seminar. We were happy to participate in all the Mediterranean Seminars in the past, and are especially proud and honoured to host the 2007 Mediterranean Seminar that concentrates on subjects of prime importance to the Mediterranean region, namely Combating intolerance and discrimination as well as promoting mutual respect and understanding.

Last month in Madrid, the Secretary General reminded us all in his intervention before the Ministerial Council, that "at heart of the OSCE approach to security is the principle that security starts with the inherent dignity of the human person".

Indeed, for the OSCE, security means connecting States among themselves, connecting the human dimension with the economic and the political-military dimensions, and connecting different players, amongst them Participating States, Partners for co-operation, civil society and NGOs. The interaction between them determines the atmosphere in which we live.

Distinguished delegates,

Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia together form the OSCE's Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation. Over the years, the OSCE has been able to

share its experience with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation on a number of topics, including:

- Confidence-building;
- OSCE as a platform for dialogue and the fostering of norms of behaviour;
- The security model for the twenty-first century and new threats to security and stability;
- Migration and integration policies; and others.

The annual OSCE Mediterranean Seminars provide the opportunity to exchange views and contribute to further developments in the relationship between the OSCE and the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation. **Sadly, only a few of them are present here today.** It is in this context that we urge the pragmatic countries of the region to ask themselves what is the greatest threat to their future. Is it Israel, which has no designs on any of them, or is it the hatred and viciousness propounded by those who strive to drag them into a backward world order. The time has come to cease using international forums to vilify Israel and to indulge in point-scoring which merely serves to postpone confidence-building in the region, and to publicly condemn those forces of hatred and violence which, ultimately, undermine everything they stand for.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our region is moving towards a new strategic alignment of the moderates against the radicals. The moderate camp will draw strength from the developments at and after the Annapolis Conference, held last month. The conference was meant to revive the peace-making effort. It is a new beginning for a long-overdue process.

While no core issues or timetables were negotiated at Annapolis, the fundamental commitment to a peaceful solution was reestablished. This is already followed by intensive talks on all outstanding issues, with the aim of finally putting an end to mutual suffering and beginning an era of mutual building. In this regard, it is well to remember the guiding vision of "two states for two peoples" - a new Israeli-Palestinian reality in which two nation-states will exist side by side in peace and

security. Just as Israel is the homeland of the Jewish people, so Palestine will be the homeland and the embodiment of the national aspirations of the Palestinian People.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A Mediterranean Partnership grounded in equality, human rights and democracy will not just be a safe place for its own citizens but an important champion of those values in a very unequal and troubled world. A strong Partnership can bring hope; it can assist the debate on global problems from climate change, to economic globalisation, from international criminality to terrorism, from conflict resolution to disease eradication. These issues do not respect borders. They need international cooperation and debate.

I hope this Mediterranean Seminar will bring us to some extent closer to a better future for us all, and will result in greater momentum and success for the OSCE and for its Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation.

Thank you.