



2004 OSCE Mediterranean Seminar

“Addressing Threats to Security in the Twenty-First Century: Interaction between the OSCE and the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation”

Sharm El Sheikh, 18-19 November 2004

S T A T E M E N T

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

Mr. Chairman,
Mr. Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt,
Mr. State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia Andrej Logar,
Mr. Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and honour to address this major OSCE Mediterranean forum. I am grateful to the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt for offering hospitality to the seminar in Sharm El Sheikh. This magnificent city in South Sinai is a symbol of the creative might of peace, stability, good neighbourhood and international co-operation which have converted for only two decades a deserted area into famous world resort and venue of historic Summits and diplomatic conferences.

I highly appreciate that for a second consecutive year the OSCE convenes its Mediterranean Seminar in a Mediterranean Partner State. By holding again the annual seminar in the Middle East and by exposing its longstanding experience in confidence building, reducing risks, tolerance and non-discrimination the OSCE unequivocally reiterates that it may also contribute to the international endeavours to halt violence, improve the overall atmosphere for just and lasting peace in the region.

The OSCE is a significant component of the contemporary European security architecture. Co-ordination between the OSCE and other regional security-related bodies is based on identifying comparative advantages and added value, effective complementarity and synergy.

International terrorism poses the most serious threat to international peace and security. The October 7 attacks against tourists in South Sinai exposed once again the ugliest and barbaric nature of terrorism. I would like to stress that the Bulgarian

Chairmanship is placing a particularly strong emphasis on undertaking further practical steps to effectively counter terrorism.

I personally believe that there is a deep generic connection between three of the major challenges to world security nowadays. Namely, between international terrorism, the Middle East problem and the situation in Iraq. And the sustainable security solutions might be only those addressing the three of them in-depth.

I would like to underscore that our Mediterranean seminar precedes with only a few days another important event in Sharm El Sheikh - the expanded regional conference on Iraq. We expect that the conference will adopt important decisions on promoting security and stability and transition to democracy in Iraq which is a neighboring country to the OSCE.

Only a few dozen kilometers to the north of this place is the summit of the Gebel Musa or Mount Sinai. Muslims, Christians and Jews associate this holy summit with such moral values as non-violence, tolerance, mutual understanding, respect and positive attitude. These principles have constituted the moral pillars of human civilization since ancient times. And we are proud that nowadays the OSCE keeps them firmly on its agenda. This year the Organization had a high-profile conference in Berlin on anti-Semitism, a pioneering meeting in Paris on hate crimes on the Internet and an inspiring conference in Brussels on tolerance and the fight against racism, xenophobia and discrimination which also clearly denounced attacks against the Arabs and the incitement against Islam and its followers. The Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in October agreed on a broad follow-up to these three important conferences. I appreciate that these outstanding achievements of the OSCE in the human dimension in 2004 will be presented and discussed at the seminar.

Mr. Chairman,

I was privileged to attend and address 2003 OSCE Mediterranean seminar held in Aqaba, Jordan, which worked out a wide spectrum of proposals on fostering interaction between the OSCE and its Partners. I was truly satisfied that some of these proposals were subsequently incorporated in the Maastricht decisions.

The Bulgarian Chairmanship of the OSCE regards fostering co-operation and interaction with Mediterranean Partner States among its priorities in 2004. We believe that sharing with the Mediterranean Partners the Organization's vast expertise in addressing the existing and newly emerging threats such as terrorism, organized crime, xenophobia, discrimination, economic disparities, environmental degradation, etc. unite more closely the OSCE participating States and their partners from the Mediterranean.

Our Chairmanship values the increased involvement and noticeable input of the Mediterranean Partners in the overall OSCE activities this year. Pursuant to the decisions made under the Dutch Chairmanship in Maastricht we invited the Partners for Co-operation on more frequent basis to the Permanent Council and we are glad that Partners followed closely deliberations in the Council. We appreciate the strengthening of Parliamentary dimension of the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership.

In 2004 the OSCE has developed a number of innovative forms of interaction which proved its usefulness - participation of observers from Mediterranean Partners during the parliamentary elections in Georgia, last March, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly presence in the international observation mission for the Presidential elections in Algeria, last April.

At this point I wish to draw your attention to the deployment in Afghanistan – another Partner for Co-operation, of an OSCE Election Support Team upon the invitation of the Afghani government. The team successfully assisted in the election process and facilitated realizing the aspirations of the Afghan people to choose its President and Vice Presidents in a free and fair manner. This was the first-ever out-of-area mission of the OSCE which demonstrated its substantial capabilities to offer valuable assistance to a neighbouring country in need. It proved the potential of the OSCE as an important player in the globalizing world and opened new horizons for the Organization in the years to come.

I believe that the OSCE should keep the door open for new Mediterranean Partners for co-operation in future. The framework of OSCE Mediterranean Partnership could not be regarded as completed when a number of South Mediterranean States are not encompassed. In this context it is noteworthy that possible applicant countries should explicitly express their readiness to share OSCE principles, objectives and values, including adherence to functioning democratic institutions, supremacy of law and respect for human rights.

The Bulgarian Chairmanship attaches particular attention to consolidating co-operation of the OSCE with the EU and NATO as well as with other regional organizations, such as the League of the Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference which play an important role on issues of international stability and security and where most of our Mediterranean Partners enjoy membership.

Our Chairmanship acclaims that the Contact Group with Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation, chaired by Slovenia, serves effectively to strengthen the ongoing dialogue and co-operation between participating States and the Partner States, as well as among the Partners themselves. I commend the excellent work of the informal Group of friends on the implementation of Decision 571, under the exemplary chairmanship of Ambassador Heikki Aleksi Harkonen of Finland which has prepared an in-depth report with recommendation to be formally presented to the Permanent Council and the Sofia Ministerial meeting.

Mr. Chairman,

I believe that our seminar today and tomorrow will contribute to elaborating a more comprehensive and pro-active approach of the OSCE to the Mediterranean Partnership.

I look forward to welcoming the Mediterranean and Asian Partners to 12th Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council which will be held in Sofia on 6 and 7 December 2004 and in particular to the Ministerial Troika meetings with Partner

States that will take place on 5 December 2004. This will be the right moment to assess results of our partnership, to discuss a way forward together and provide impetus for our work next year.

I wish you all fruitful deliberations and a successful outcome!

Thank you for your attention!