



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

**Secretary General Marc Perrin de Brichambaut
to the Permanent Council
Vienna, 18 January 2007**

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Colleagues,

With your permission, Mr. Chairman, I wish to make a few points before the Permanent Council on developments in Turkmenistan following the passing of President Nyazov.

Upon news of the death of the President Niyazov, I traveled to Ashgabad to attend the state funeral on the 24th of December 2006 in order to pay the OSCE respects to the people of Turkmenistan on behalf of the Chairman-in-Office.

Since my return, I have continued to follow developments closely, and have been impressed by the public discussions on important policies, which the people hope that the new president will begin to implement. The situation is calm in the country. After the end of the official mourning period, the president *ad interim* encouraged the people to celebrate *Gurban Bayram* (Muslim holiday) and the New Year as usual. These should all be taken as encouraging signs of stability in a moment of transition.

Since 1999, the OSCE Centre in Ashgabad has been active in promoting the Organization's comprehensive approach to security with Turkmenistan, covering the three dimensions. Recent projects of the Centre highlight the range of the OSCE scope of attention -- including support to youth education, capacity building programmes with State Customs Officials and support to the implementation of the national Environmental Action Plan.

In sum, the OSCE has stood by the people of Turkmenistan in the past; it is ready to do so ever more today, and across all three dimensions.

With the opening of a new period in the political life of Turkmenistan, I wish to invite the Government to explore opportunities for greater dialogue with the OSCE's Institutions and units, and closer interaction with the Centre in Ashgabad. Let us take advantage of a new period opening to deepen our relations and to strengthen our dialogue.

The signs are encouraging thus far.

I draw your attention, in particular, to the fact that the Turkmen authorities received a Needs Assessment Mission from ODIHR last week regarding the upcoming presidential election on February 11th. Interaction has been initiated in the spirit of constructiveness and pragmatism. The Mission will produce a report containing recommendations on the concrete ODIHR involvement at the 11 February elections.

The readiness of the authorities of Turkmenistan to engage with the ODIHR Mission represents a possible starting point for deeper co-operation with the ODIHR with regard to future elections and other human dimension issues in Turkmenistan. The step shows that the door is open for further co-operation with the Organization.

The upcoming presidential election on 11 February represents, indeed, a useful point to start strengthening our co-operation, and the OSCE election experts will provide practical advice through the Center for follow-up.

It is encouraging that each candidate in the election campaign has promised that education, social welfare and agriculture will be priorities if he takes office. The people of Turkmenistan have already been voicing their opinion on these important public policies during campaign meetings.

These are also fields in which the OSCE has substantial expertise, and which relate to the Organization's concept of comprehensive security. The Centre's activities can help the incumbent Government and people to uphold the country's OSCE commitments, particularly as they pertain to confidence and security building measures, human rights and the promotion of favorable economic conditions. Here lies the value-added of the Organization.

Indeed, the OSCE's Institutions and units should respond to the existing good will and be ready to offer and provide assistance in a balanced way, acting across all three OSCE dimensions.

Implementing the commitments of the OSCE is no easy task; it is a work of patience and persistence, to use two of the three Ps announced as leitmotifs by the Chairman in Office last week. Certainly, the priorities announced by the Chairman in Office before the Permanent Council offer an additional opportunity to strengthen our dialogue and co-operation. The Secretariat, through the field presence, and the Organization's Institutions and units, stands ready to make full use the Organization's resources, in dialogue with the host Government and people of Turkmenistan, to pursue these goals.

I will continue to keep the Permanent Council informed of the Organization's consultations.