



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

The Secretary General

Vienna, 13 September 2007

High-Level Meeting on the Victims of Terrorism

Opening Remarks by
Marc Perrin de Brichambaut
OSCE Secretary General

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to this *High-Level Meeting on the Victims of Terrorism*. I wish to thank the Personal Envoy of the Chairman-in-Office, Josep Borrell, and the Spanish Chairmanship for its role in conceiving this Meeting and the ODIHR for its leadership in organizing it.

This High-Level Meeting highlights the energy that Spain devotes to the struggle against terrorism. It underlines also the importance of the Spanish Chairmanship. This is what Chairmanships do best for the OSCE -- providing impetus and investing political will. In this respect, I remind you of the Technical Workshop on Solidarity with Victims of Terrorism, held in Oñati on 9-10 March 2005, and Spain's role in the *Permanent Council Decision no. 618* of 1 July 2004.

Let us recall also that six years ago today, the 56 OSCE participating States sat around this same table to condemn the terrorist attacks in the United States. Participating States stood together and vowed to collectively fight the scourge of terrorism. Co-operation in addressing such a difficult topic continues to be a vital interest of all States.

The topic we have gathered to address matters urgently, because it touches on the values at the heart of the OSCE.

Terrorism is an attack against the lives and the fundamental rights of innocent people. The horror of terrorism is such that we are compelled to act quickly in response -- to arrest the perpetrators and to prevent further incidents. In our haste to act, let us not forget that protecting the rights of victims of terrorism should stand side by side with the efforts to bring terrorists to justice.

The High Level Meeting is designed precisely to ensure that the victims of terrorism are protected, that their rights are respected, and that the message of fear that terrorism seeks to sow does not take root in our societies.

We have gathered, because we recognize that a key part of the fight against terrorism lies with ensuring that the individuals who have suffered bodily injury and the impairment of health, and dependents and family members of persons who have died as a result of terrorist acts, receive the necessary support and assistance, in accordance with each State's domestic law.

This being said, all the hard work remains ahead, as do the difficult questions.

How can we act together more efficiently to offset the impact of terrorist acts? How should we define *victims of terrorism*? Is the notion different or concordant with that of *victims of violent crime*? Following from this, how can and should the victims of terrorist acts be protected? Are there minimum standards for assisting victims? What are best practices for ensuring the legal rights of victims of terrorism?

These questions will structure our discussions over the next day and half.

The OSCE is a good place for these questions to be raised. The Organization brings together 56 States from Vancouver to Vladivostok on the basis of equality and a

comprehensive understanding of security. The OSCE's activities in the struggle against terrorism are founded on principles that are relevant to our discussions.

The starting point is the 1975 Helsinki Final Act and its emphasis on promoting the 'inherent dignity of the individual.' On a foundation of ensuring respect for the human rights and the fundamental freedoms of the individual, the OSCE has built a strategy to foster greater stability within states and to deepen security between them.

The OSCE approach to counter-terrorism lies on this same foundation. In practice, for the OSCE, this means that national and international measures against terrorism should be implemented in accordance with the rule of law, and with respect for human rights. In the words of the Final Act, the 'inherent dignity of the individual' is the OSCE compass.

The foundation of Helsinki was built further through Permanent Council Decisions. The decision by the *Permanent Council no. 618* of 1 July 2004 was an important step in that regard. The decision recognized that acts of terrorism seriously impair the enjoyment of human rights and also that there is a need to strengthen solidarity among participating States for the victims of terrorism, in accordance with each State's domestic law.

Ensuring solidarity with and protecting the fundamental rights of victims of terrorism raises complex issues. The first line of responsibility lies with participating States. So much already is being done by States, and more is likely to be undertaken.

However, it is true that States can respond best to the needs of victims of terrorism by working together, by sharing their experiences and best practices, -- in sum, by acting together as a *network*.

This High-Level Meeting shows the importance of the OSCE for the creation of such a network across the OSCE area – a network composed of relevant actors from the participating States, including key ministries, along with relevant regional

organizations and including a vibrant role for civil society, which on this question, as with many others, has so much to offer.

The importance of protecting victims of terrorism places a premium on co-ordination and innovation – *co-ordination* between States, regional organizations, specialized agencies and civil society; and *innovation* in our thinking and action.

This is why I am so pleased to welcome our colleagues from the United Nations, the Council of Europe, UNODC and the European Union, along with representatives from the Ministries of Justice and a range of civil society groups.

As a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, the OSCE recognizes that UN Security Council resolutions constitute the legal framework for the fight against terrorism. These commitments constitute the legal and political framework for the activities by the ODIHR as well as the Action against Terrorism Unit, and other relevant parts of the OSCE Secretariat.

On the question we are addressing, the importance of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy is clear. The UN Strategy includes human rights as one of its pillars, and specifically mentions the issue of support/solidarity to victims as a means to prevent terrorism. For this reason, I look forward to the contribution from the UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force to our Meeting.

There remains room for strengthening cooperation between all of us here. On this point, I draw your attention to the 2001 Bishkek *Programme of Action*, organized by the UN and the OSCE (*Enhancing Security and Stability in Central Asia: Strengthening Comprehensive Efforts to Counter Terrorism*), which noted the relevance of providing ‘psychological and social services to the victims of terrorism and to their families’ and of promoting ‘active civil society engagement’ in order to combat and prevent terrorism.

In this respect, I wish to emphasize also the importance of the UNODC, and its Terrorism Prevention Branch (TPB), with whom the OSCE ATU has organized four

high level workshops. In addition, the Council of Europe is performing a crucial task in clarifying key areas of the struggle against terrorism. The 2005 *Council of Europe guidelines on the Protection of Victims of Terrorist Acts* are vitally important.

As for the OSCE itself, I would simply underline the high-quality technical assistance provided by the ODIHR and by the ATU to participating States, as well by as relevant units in the Secretariat. The high-level political conference on the role of private-public partnerships in countering terrorism, organized in Vienna earlier this year, is an excellent example of coordinated and targeted action by the OSCE in a key area of the struggle against terrorism.

Coordination and innovation have started; we can do much more to share experience and practice.

Ministers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy identified the ‘de-humanization of the victims of terrorism’ as one of the factors that is conducive to the spread of terrorism. Responding on the basis of solidarity to offset such de-humanization goes to the heart of the values that underpin the OSCE; it is also essential for crafting successful counter-terrorism strategies.

Terrorism seeks to divide societies and to propagate fear. Our task is clear; it is to solidify the bonds of society and to strengthen the inherent dignity of the individual.

I look forward to our discussions.