

**OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Conference on the Mediterranean: Ensuring  
Peace, Democracy, and Stability in the Region**

**CONCLUDING REMARKS**

**By**

**Bruce GEORGE, MP**

**President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly**

**(Friday 4 October 2002)**

Distinguished colleagues,

The Mediterranean is at the same time a hub, a crossroad, as well as a frontier – it has regrettably also been a battle field. Therefore, when talking about the Mediterranean region one should bear in mind various approaches to what countries exactly the region consists of. This Conference has provided a broad and flexible approach to this question and have also considered non-littoral interested states as being essential to Mediterranean affairs.

The Mediterranean region today bears a certain resemblance to the situation faced by CSCE participating countries when the Helsinki process was first initiated. The CSCE was initiated to bridge socio-economic, political and human rights practice gaps. The non-judgemental approach which this entailed could perhaps serve as a model to explore the prospects for greater rapprochement in the Mediterranean region of today.

When considering strategies to improve the security situation in the Mediterranean region, we should bear in mind the three baskets of the **Helsinki Final Act** and

understand that only holistic strategies and solutions are likely to succeed. A breakthrough in one of the dimensions will not necessarily lead us to the desired results of shared prosperity and stability. On the other hand, a comprehensive approach to the question can yield unexpected results.

- Taking into account the unique status of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly as a forum of representatives of 55 countries, the PA should strive to make use of parliamentary diplomacy in order to prevent disputes from arising, further prevent existing disagreements from escalating into conflicts and to, in the last resort, limit the spread of conflicts when the latter occur.
- Dialogue between PA members and other parliamentarians from the Mediterranean region has been very positive. It should be aimed at the sharing of expertise regarding members' experience of instituting economic and political reforms.
- OSCE Mediterranean initiatives should be given due political support by parliamentarians. Use could be made of parliamentary diplomacy, which not only complements governmental diplomacy, but is also unique in that it can open doors closed to governmental officials.
- The governmental and parliamentary sides of the OSCE should contribute to the development of confidence-building measures in the Mediterranean area through use of their long-established expertise in this field. Consideration could be given to possible working-level meetings between appropriate OSCE officials and representatives from Mediterranean states on such measures.
- The Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE should continue to promote inter-cultural, inter-religious and inter-ethnic dialogue in the Mediterranean in order to ensure enhanced, open, transparent and effective communication between members, and a

better understanding of each other's positions in the hopes of developing constructive and viable proposals to deal with issues relative to all three OSCE dimensions. This dialogue should be undertaken both on the formal inter-parliamentary level, as well as more informally, through exchanges, seminars, and conferences.

***Observations on the Conference:***

- In all aspects of its activities the OSCE should keep in mind the necessity to preserve the national, cultural and religious identities of Mediterranean people.
- OSCE countries should enhance regional security by working, among other things, for the non-proliferation of nuclear, chemical, biological and conventional weapons through adherence to and compliance with relevant international agreements.
- The OSCE should work to promote the compliance of non-member states with commitments contained within the OSCE confidence and security-building documents such as the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security and the Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons.
- The OSCE and the OSCE PA should encourage a diversification of the topics for discussion within the context of Mediterranean security. No particular issues, not even the Arab-Israeli conflict, should monopolise dialogue agendas at the expense of other concerns, regardless of how vital these issues may be.
- The OSCE should closely co-ordinate its work with other international institutions in order to avoid wasteful overlap in their activities in the Mediterranean. Additionally, a co-operative approach to Mediterranean issues

would give more credibility to proposals, which if proposed by a single institution, may not have the same impact.

- To ensure that inter-parliamentary dialogue and co-operation on Mediterranean issues reach across and beyond the region, member parliamentarians should ensure that due attention is being paid to Mediterranean affairs in Assembly discussions and resolutions. Additionally, Committee Rapporteurs should in the same manner strive to include Mediterranean issues in their reports, if appropriate. Thus, the Assembly will show its particular interest in Mediterranean issues and its knowledge of regional concerns.
- Parliamentarians of the OSCE PA should use their domestic political fora in order to raise awareness of the relevance of Mediterranean affairs to European and global security.
- OSCE members should work to address causes of migratory pressures before the phenomenon of migration reaches extreme levels and becomes a major destabilising factor in the region.
- As terrorism represents a major threat to security in the region, parliamentarians of the OSCE area should endeavour in their national parliaments to adopt relevant legislation to further counter terrorism, particularly in the sphere of terrorism financing.
- OSCE member states should continue to provide expertise and support for the development and modernisation of economies in the region, in the hopes of achieving intensified economic co-operation and sustainable development. Thus, endeavouring at the creation of a space of shared prosperity.

- When countries of the OSCE area provide financial, technical or other assistance to countries in the Mediterranean region, due consideration should be given to the economic structure of the area and its sub-regions in order to endeavour for a better complementarity of the region's industries.
  
- Parliamentarians from the OSCE PA should, in their dealings with non-member states, encourage the formation and implementation of democratic practices, protection of fundamental freedoms, as well as the enforcement of the rule of law, which is a *sine qua non* step to ensure stability in the region.

## CONCLUSIONS:

In the months to come – it is my commitment to undertake the following and much more not only to significantly raise the profile of the Mediterranean area within our Assembly but also in the OSCE process. And also to make the Mediterranean more important to the OSCE and to the Assembly:

- a. Provide input to and feedback on initiatives undertaken by participating and partner states aimed at implementing OSCE commitments in the region.
- b. I was very pleased to present the first of my reports to the Assembly – Security and Co-operation in the Mediterranean and Overview I wish to express my appreciation to the Research fellows for compiling such a comprehensive report. I look to you to provide substantive comments to me via the Secretariat on what is in my report and what you believe should be in the report. I want from you articles from your countries on the issues contained related to Mediterranean security and we shall endeavour to incorporate as many as we can into the updated edition that we propose to publish at our Winter Meeting in Vienna next February. I would like also in this second edition, and I must tell you in parenthesis we distributed 250 copies and it is my intention to ask the Secretariat to put in the Assembly's Web page so you can access it easily. I want this to be the document for all of us with an interest in the security, co-operation and the future of the Mediterranean.
- c. I shall Co-operate with and encourage the work of the OSCE's Mediterranean Contact Group. I had discussions with Secretary General KUBIS on what my initiatives are and how the OSCE and our Assembly can inter-link where

appropriate. We are negotiating dates at which we shall visit Vienna and hold talks with the Contact Group and discuss with those officials whose brief includes the Mediterranean I hope I should be able to address some members of the Permanent Council. Having appraised myself of what the OSCE is doing I will be in a better position to determine whether we parliamentarians can contribute to pushing the process along. I shall of course be inviting the Special Representative for the Mediterranean Mr. Michel VOISIN and others to join me in order to establish links and look for ways to co-operate with the OSCE.

- d. I will take part in annual OSCE Mediterranean Seminars and inform participants on the PA's initiatives in relation to the Mediterranean area; The next OSCE Mediterranean Seminar will be held in Rhodes next November. It is my intention to ask Mr. Michel VOISIN to lead our Delegation in the event of my being personally unable to attend. I will also ask Mr. PACINI – Head of the Italian Delegation– as Mr. KAMMENOS – Vice-chairman of the First Committee and Members of the Greek Delegation – to form the Delegation of the Assembly to attend this Seminar. Mr. Gustavo Pallarés will attend on behalf of the Secretariat to assist the Delegation.
- e. I shall stress to the respective Governmental officials the necessity of addressing Mediterranean issues during Permanent Council meetings, Ministerial Council meetings and Summits of Heads of State or Government.
- f. When I addressed you two days ago in the Standing Committee, a meeting I must add I shall remember for some considerable time, I said I hope that the Assembly will seek the parliaments of member States to provide for further such conferences fora, symposia, or whatever name you wish to call them. An

annual Forum is our objective. It will be the centre piece of all our Mediterranean activities. What we have done here in Madrid is an indication of what we will do in the future.

I am pleased to report that I met with Mr. PACINI – Head of the Italian Delegation – early yesterday morning. I welcome the Italian initiative to host next year's Autumn Conference on the Issue of Religious freedom, and I also place on record his very kind offer – it was his initiative to host the next Mediterranean Forum immediately after the Conference. We will therefore have one day for the Standing Committee, to be followed by the Conference on Religious issues and then the Mediterranean Forum. The International Secretariat has already begun contacts with the secretariat of the Italian Parliament regarding arrangements and practical modalities. In the next few months we will be looking to other parliaments to host the Forum in the Autumn of 2004.

When I spoke to you at the Standing Committee I said that I was working on a collaborative conference with the other Inter-Parliamentary bodies. In preparation for this initiative our research staff compiled a report on what the other assemblies had been doing in respect to the Mediterranean. I have also taken good consideration to proposals this morning made by Mr. Rafael Estrella to enhance the co-operation between our two Assemblies regarding the Mediterranean.

Outside my direct OSCE PA commitments I continue to pursue my very strong commitments as a British Parliamentarian. I regularly meet Ambassadors, defence and Foreign Ministers from Mediterranean States including South-East European Nations. I give conference papers and I chair conferences. Indeed I am looking forward to such a conference at the Royal United Services Institute on religious extremism and terrorism. The

Committee that I chair in the House of Commons also provides a focus for my Mediterranean interest.

I have written and said on innumerable occasions I perceive the Mediterranean area to be umbilically linked to adjacent areas and regions such as the Middle East, the Black sea region, Caucasus. It goes without saying the Maghreb. As the nation States in the Mediterranean area belong to alliances, organisations, such as the Islamic Conference, Gulf Co-operation Council, NATO, WEU, EU, Mediterranean issues are part of the nations far beyond the Mediterranean shores.

In a sense we are all Mediterraneans. One of the difference perhaps between me and fellow parliamentarians who were born within the sound of Mediterranean waves, who take a very strong interest in the region, I chose to take an interest. We in our Assembly have a great advantage in the OSCE They have to manage and resolve on a daily basis since there are areas outside the Treaty area which directly affect the OSCE but which does not preoccupy their thinking and action. I refer to the crisis in the Middle East I intend to visit the Middle East and Maghreh. As a national politician observing events in Israel and Palestine and the Middle East with some anxiety.

Those of us who have the privilege and benefit of living in stable wealthy democracies have a duty indeed. It is a moral and political imperative to look at our neighbours, partners even allies who have not yet attained a sufficiently high level of wealth.

I would like to finish by thanking:

All Speakers, Rapporteurs, and Moderators for their contributions

The Spanish Parliament for hosting this Conference

The International Secretariat

The Interpreters

Thank you very much