



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Secretary General Lamberto Zannier

Welcoming address

**Regional Seminar on Identifying, Restraining and Recovering
Stolen Assets in the OSCE Region**

Vienna

5 September 2012

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Distinguished Participants,

I would like to start my welcoming remarks by congratulating the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, the UN Office against Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Stolen Asset Recovery (StAR) Initiative of the World Bank for the successful organization of this important seminar. Indeed, I hear that the past two days featured intensive discussions and a vivid exchange of views, approaches and ideas. At the outset of today's session, which will focus on 'political actions' needed to step up efforts to facilitate the identification, restrain and recovery of stolen assets in the OSCE region, I would like also from my side to express special thanks to all those who have served as moderators, rapporteurs and speakers of the working sessions.

It is on the basis of your expert-level discussions that we now need to determine the political direction, prioritize the sharpening and adaptation of the OSCE's and national approaches to stolen asset recovery, and assess how best to strengthen and streamline international co-operation in this field.

International co-operation is perhaps the area the OSCE participating States should focus most intently upon. Assets move. Whether stolen by corrupt operators or generated through

organized crime, assets tend to move from one country to another in order to hide their origin. There are professional, non-state actors that specialize in facilitating these criminal flows of money, and you as a regional group of States can only be successful in countering this international threat if you harmonize and intensify your individual and collective efforts.

Stronger co-operation can be achieved, for example, by harmonizing national legislation in line with the UNCAC and UNTOC. There are numerous examples of barriers to asset recovery that would not be there if national laws were in line with these international instruments. Stronger international co-operation can be achieved by designating central authorities responsible for mutual legal assistance requests. It can also be strengthened by creating national asset recovery focal points and regional networks. However, it can only be successful in the context of a broad multi-stakeholder approach involving financial intelligence units, anti-corruption agencies, designated central authorities as well as private sector stakeholders.

I am glad to see such a qualified attendance today, and I am sure that our work this morning will benefit from your presence and active participation. Your comments and feedback are much needed at this point in order to turn the technical findings of the past two days into political deliverables for the future. This is particularly important in preparation of the OSCE Ministerial Council that will be held in Dublin in December.

In recent years, corruption and asset theft have become highly topical. We have witnessed developments in our and other parts of the world where people turned to the streets in mass to express dissatisfaction with the way their societies were governed and public funds and tax payers' money are managed and spent. Indeed, corruption in the government sector and theft of public assets undermine the credibility of state institutions and can, if they remain unremedied, have negative consequences for political stability and security. Preventing corruption and putting effective mechanisms for the identification, confiscation and return of stolen assets in place, can fight back against this negative phenomenon.

Organizations such as our own – in close co-operation with other important players in this field such as the UNODC, the World Bank and the Basel Institute on Governance – should remain active in this field, constantly reminding our membership of the importance of addressing these challenges in a more effective and concerted manner and also building their

institutional capacity to do so. Seminars like the one that we are concluding here today are instrumental in achieving this goal.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Distinguished Participants,

Our point is key: asset recovery can only be successful if there is sufficient political will to act, and if the countries involved are willing to dedicate resources, roll up their sleeves, and truly act in concert. The OSCE should leverage the political will of its participating States and Partners for Co-operation to introduce and harmonize legal and institutional mechanisms to effectively combat asset theft and support asset recovery. With its cross-dimensional approach and ability to offer a wide regional platform for exchange of experience and good practice, the OSCE can also support the broad range of State initiatives that bear positively on efforts to improve the economic, security and human rights environments within the OSCE region. Events such as this one is an example of how we can assist in raising awareness among our States and facilitate building of professional contacts and networks.

I sincerely hope that all of you have made and will make full use of your participation in this seminar and that you come away with deeper knowledge that can be used in the conduct of your day-to-day work. More importantly, I hope that the seminar's deliberations and conclusions will find their way into your policies and will lead to the full implementation of the well-designed and well-intentioned international commitments already in place.

With this note, I would like to pass the stage now to Mr. Goran Svilanović, Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities.

Thank you for your attention.