



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

The Secretary General

Astana, 29 July 2008

**Statement by the OSCE Secretary General
Marc Perrin de Brichambaut**

**17th Annual Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly
Astana, 29 June - 3 July 2007**

Mr. President,
Madam Vice President,
Excellencies,
Members of the Parliamentary Assembly,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour to address the Annual Session of OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Astana. I was privileged to start my activity as Secretary General at the OSCE PA Session in Washington. I am pleased to start a new term here in Astana, capital of the Participating State which will chair the OSCE in 2010 and on the 10th anniversary of this city as a capital.

This session underscores the commitment of the people of this great country and their political leaders to the values that underpin the OSCE – a commitment to building comprehensive security as well as to supporting democratic institutions and healthy societies.

My message today is a simple one: the role of the OSCE as a forum for political engagement and as a framework for responding to challenges in practical ways is as important today as it has ever been. In a difficult context, the responsibility of the participating States to make the most of the OSCE is vitally important. So is the responsibility of the Parliamentary Assembly, in nudging Governments along, reminding them of their commitments and keeping them on track.

Mr President,
Members of the Parliamentary Assembly,

Let me start by noting a few words about positive developments.

The participating States agreed on the 7th of March to a Budget for 2008. The process that led to this was not as straightforward as we would have wished, but I am grateful especially to Finnish leadership for securing agreement on the main lines of activity for the current year. In Vienna, the participating States have just completed the Programme Outline review process, so the Organization is back on track. It is difficult to overestimate how important this is for the good health of the OSCE.

In addition, as Minister Stubb noted this morning, the Finnish Chairmanship has seized on the opportunity opened by the decision in Madrid on future chairmanships to create an informal “Quintet” format.

Quintet co-operation is already bearing fruit.

For example, the Quintet Ambassadors in Vienna agreed on a cover letter that accompanied the Programme Outline document, emphasising the need for greater coherence in the activities of the Organization. This sent a strong signal to other participating States.

A first informal Quintet ministerial meeting took this pledge forward. In Helsinki last month, Quintet Ministers agreed on a range of priority areas where multi-year planning could be most useful. These include OSCE engagement with Afghanistan, border security and management, combating terrorism, efforts to cope with small arms, light weapons and conventional ammunition stockpiles, tolerance and non-discrimination, gender, economic and environmental challenges, combating trafficking in human beings, and strengthening dialogue with the Organization's Partners for Co-operation.

So, the Quintet Ministers have reaffirmed the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security, but they also have drawn attention to those cross-dimensional priorities that require greater co-ordination.

I look forward to working further with the Quintet to build greater coherence of purpose and action.

Purposeful action has been shown by the OSCE in reducing tensions in the South Caucasus.

Indeed, led by the Chairman-in-Office, the OSCE has worked to reduce tensions in and around Georgia's protracted conflict zones. This has taken several forms, starting with an active role played by the Special Envoy of the Chairman-in-Office.

OSCE crisis management mechanisms have also been invoked, by Russia and Georgia, with regard to an incident involving an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) over Abkhazia, Georgia on 20 April. Three joint meetings of the Permanent Council and the Forum for Security Co-operation were held, and the Chairmanship, with the support of the Secretariat, has led intensive dialogue between the parties.

At a time of worrying tensions, OSCE crisis management functions have been tested successfully. Through the discussion, overwhelming support was expressed for Georgian sovereignty and territorial integrity. Participating States also agreed that any use of force in the zone of conflict runs counter to the fundamental principles and commitments of the OSCE, and that the protracted conflicts should be settled on the basis of international law.

On July 1-2, the OSCE is holding its Annual Security Review Conference. This is an important moment to debate such questions as trans-national security challenges, the state of arms control in the OSCE area and instruments of early warning and crisis management. Representation will be at a high level, including NATO SACEUR

General John Craddock. Once again, this confirms the importance of the OSCE as a forum for political-military dialogue.

Another positive point that I bring to your attention concerns OSCE engagement with Afghanistan.

In Madrid, as you know, OSCE Foreign Ministers recognised that 'long term security and stability in Afghanistan is of the utmost importance for the OSCE region, in particular for Central Asia.' We have been working hard to take this decision forward – looking in particular to OSCE engagement in the areas of 'border security and management, policing and the fight against drug trafficking.' Other areas, such as customs support and training, are also on the table, and we may, upon request, have to revisit the election support efforts we provided in 2004 and 2005.

The OSCE is working quickly for good reason. Stability in Afghanistan matters for the security of the whole OSCE area. Many participating States are already deeply engaged with this key OSCE Partner. We have strong foundations on which to build.

Mr President,
Members of the Parliamentary Assembly,

The OSCE also faces a challenging context.

A first challenge is to remain firmly dedicated to the task of embedding stability in South-Eastern Europe. This is an objective the OSCE shares with other international organizations, because it requires joint efforts and co-ordinated action. The importance of this task can hardly be overstated – neither can the difficulty of achieving it.

At the top of our agenda here is the question of Kosovo.

Acting as an integral pillar of the UN effort, the OSCE has the largest civilian operation on the ground in the region so far, including a presence throughout all of

Kosovo's municipalities that helps to build strong local institutions rooted in OSCE values. It is vital that the OSCE continue to support the efforts to build a society in Kosovo that is structured, multi-ethnic, democratic and tolerant, and one that is committed to respect for human rights.

No less challenging are the conflicts that remain unresolved in Moldova and Georgia, and in Nagorno-Karabakh. I mentioned earlier the confidence-building work the OSCE has conducted to defuse differences between Russia and Georgia. It is vital that we continue to react quickly to potential crises, because tensions remain and volatility is high.

In addition, the foundations of political-military security across the OSCE area, which we had come to take for granted, are increasingly under question. The current deadlock in the negotiations concerning the future of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe poses serious risks to our common security. The CFE Treaty remains a cornerstone of European military security. As the Chairman-in-Office has stated, we should seek at all costs to avoid an erosion of the treaty regime.

What is more, democracy's state of health is fragile across the OSCE area.

Today, political transitions in some OSCE participating States face a difficult road. This road will see moments of progress, as well as times of uncertainty and even setbacks. Democratic evolution everywhere has its own pace and rhythm. It may be a universal concept, but its implementation is always intensely local.

For the sake of brevity, I am not addressing gender issues now. They will be the subject of my annual report next September. Let me say that on this issue we greatly value the advice coming from your Vice President Tone Tingsgard, and I will be pleased to react to her wise suggestions.

If we are to achieve the vision that all States agreed to in the 1990 Paris Charter, the OSCE must continue to demonstrate persistent and patient engagement, and the

participating States must show an unwavering commitment to the shared values that guide the OSCE.

Mr President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

What does all of this mean?

Firstly, that the role of the OSCE as a forum for debate continues to be vital -- on political-military questions, as in its other dimensions.

In 2008 -- as much as in 1998 or 1988 -- the participating States need a place where differences can be aired and not exacerbated and where concerns can be shared and not ignored. The OSCE continues to perform this unique role across Greater Europe

The OSCE remains a key framework for resolving some of Europe's most difficult questions. In South-East Europe, Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus, the OSCE is the only venue where all questions and actors are bound together within a framework founded on the commitment to engage peacefully and co-operate comprehensively. As we move to settling such thorny issues, the importance of the OSCE increases.

Secondly, OSCE support to States and societies in political transition is well-suited for difficult contexts.

The OSCE approach is consensual and comprehensive. It is based on the idea of organic evolution and local ownership, where the OSCE acts with multiple tools at many levels to accompany States and societies through difficult processes.

The OSCE helps to keep participating States on board with implementing ambitious commitments. The objective is to keep momentum going in the right direction

towards full implementation of the ambitious commitments to which all States have agreed.

Finally, recent developments also highlight the fragility of the OSCE which I believe I already highlighted to you.

The OSCE is a remarkable but a delicate political instrument. It is not unthinkable that tensions outside and inside the OSCE could coalesce to fragment the Organization. This possibility should not be far from our minds as we move forward this year.

Difficulties imply responsibilities. Responsibilities on the part of participating States and on the part of all of us to serve the body of commitments that make up this Organization.

In the current context, shared purpose between the bodies that make up the OSCE is vital. The role of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly is key here -- as it is also in advancing the OSCE cause in national parliaments and with national Governments.

Mr President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to end with a word about Kazakhstan and the OSCE.

As you know, the OSCE has a long history of mutually beneficial co-operation with Kazakhstan, its Government, parliament and civil society, working across all three Dimensions.

The decision taken by all OSCE States to welcome Kazakhstan's Chairmanship of the Organization in 2010 is of historic importance. The decision is a signal of this country's commitment to the Organization, its values, and vision of comprehensive security. It also underlines the importance of Central Asia for the OSCE. I have no

doubt that the Chairmanship will be positive for Kazakhstan and for the entire region.

Chairing of the OSCE is a responsibility that one participating State accepts in order to serve the collective good of all 56 States. Chairmanships show the way and they embody the continuous efforts that are necessary to meet the commitments and the standards that underpin the OSCE.

The Secretariat along with the Institutions and all of the field operations look forward to working with Kazakhstan in this capacity.

Thank you listening.