



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Statement by Ambassador Ján Kubiš, OSCE Secretary General at the Tenth Session of the Islamic Summit Conference

Putrajaya, Malaysia, 16-18 October 2003

Your Majesties,
Your Royal Highnesses,
Your Excellences,
Mr. Secretary General,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with honour that the OSCE has received the invitation to participate in the Tenth Session of the Islamic Summit Conference. I would also like to express my gratitude to H.E. Dr. Mahatir Mohammad, Prime Minister of Malaysia for the excellent hospitality.

Mr. Chairman,

With the primary global responsibility for the maintenance of international peace resting with the United Nations and its Security Council, regional organizations play also here an increasingly important role. The OSCE is recognized as a regional arrangement in the sense of Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter. This gives the OSCE a strong mandate and role in its region.

The OSCE and its 55 participating States – and among them many Muslim nations – are fully aware of this role and responsibility. Over the past years, our Organization has taken significant efforts to reform and improve itself to respond adequately to the new realities and emerging challenges, notably after the 9-11 outrageous crime against humanity. Combating terrorism together with other contemporary risks and challenges, in particular those linked to transnational organized crime, has been placed at the top of the OSCE agenda.

The OSCE participating States have condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. They take, individually and collectively, the most resolute measures to eliminate it. At the same time, they are fully aware that countering terrorism ought not to be at the expense of human rights and, also, that other factors influence the situation, such as unresolved conflicts, economic poverty and degradation, democratic deficits, discrimination and intolerance. The standards of democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms, rule-of-law and good governance should be reinforced, not lowered or limited under the pretext of combating terrorism.

Democracy and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms – values which are universally recognised – are essential safeguards of tolerance and non-discrimination and constitute important factors for stability, security, co-operation and peaceful development. Conversely, tolerance and non-discrimination are important elements in the promotion of human rights and other universally recognised democratic values and principles. Their defence and implementation are obligations of the whole international community and of each country.

The OSCE rejects firmly the identification of terrorism and extremism with a particular religion or culture, and in particular it strongly condemns any acts of discrimination and violence against Muslims and Islam. The OSCE is alarmed and equally strongly condemns anti-Semitic campaigns, slander and incidents. It strongly condemns discrimination on religious grounds and undertakes to endeavour to prevent and protect against attacks directed at any religious group, whether on persons or on places of worship or religious objects.

Intolerance, hate speech, global conspiracy theory and occurrences of discrimination based on religion or belief (including ethnic and religious tensions, aggressive nationalism, racism, chauvinism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and violent extremism) constitute grave sources of human and state insecurity and must be actively opposed and countered. This approach guides the OSCE's political and operational action. In this vein we also work to raise public awareness and action. Only in the course of the past year the OSCE organized and hosted in Vienna two highly-profiled, representative and successful conferences on anti-semitism, and on racism, xenophobia and discrimination. We also appreciate and support similar efforts of our partners that foster tolerance and intercultural, inter-religious dialogues. With much positive feeling, I recall the OIC-EU Joint Forum "Civilizations and Harmony: The Political Dimension" in Istanbul in February 2002, where also the OSCE took an active part.

I am pleased to note that dialogue and interaction between the OSCE and OIC have noticeably expanded over the past couple of years. OIC high-level delegates attended the last OSCE Ministerial Council meetings, while earlier this year OSCE representatives, including myself, participated in the 30th Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers in Tehran. Initial contacts have been established at the levels of the OSCE and OIC Secretariats, focusing on exchange of information and experiences. I am particularly grateful to H.E. Mr. Abdelouahed Belkeziz, OIC Secretary General, for his support.

In the same vein, the OSCE reaches out towards the League of Arab States, African Union or ASEAN.

For us, it is of particular significance that many OSCE participating States, as well as OSCE Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation, are also members of the OIC or its observers. They have manifested a strong interest in enhancing contacts between the two Organizations and are the moving force behind efforts towards this end. They constitute an important additional link that provides for exchange of opinions and concerns and creates a foundation for future interaction between our Organizations based on and in practice determined by our respective mandates, values and commitments.

Thank you for your attention.