



ADDRESS

**by Dr Dimitrij Rupel, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office
at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Canada
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Moving beyond the divisions in Europe: The Role of the OSCE

Deputy Minister,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be here and an honour to address this prestigious audience as the OSCE Chairman in Office. I find visits to this side of the Atlantic always most inspiring and I look forward to our discussion today.

Sixty years ago the bloody battles of the Second World War came to an end. The world breathed a sigh of relief as the men and women from many countries including many brave Canadians began returning home.

But Europe, which had been divided by war, soon became divided by the Cold War.

The Cold War thawed briefly, thirty years ago, when 35 heads of States and government, including your former Prime Minister Trudeau, met in Helsinki to sign the historic Final Act. That Act set in motion a process of détente between East and West and forged an important link between human rights and security – two developments that were crucial in eroding the Iron Curtain and re-uniting Europe.

This was acknowledged fifteen years ago with the Charter of Paris for a New Europe. Amidst the euphoria of historic changes, OSCE heads of state mapped out a vision for a Europe whole and free.

With the end of the Cold War some people felt that the CSCE was no longer needed. It's aim had been to build security in Europe through co-operation, and that had been achieved.

But, as it turned out, post-communist transition had to be supported. Conflict prevention needed to be strengthened, democratization had to be encouraged.

The CSCE process was therefore transformed into an organization with field operations, institutions, and permanent consultative and decision-making bodies.

These changes helped to make Europe a safer place over the past fifteen years. The OSCE has helped to keep the lid on simmering conflicts in places like Transdnistria, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh. It has worked to prevent conflicts, particularly those involving inter-ethnic tensions. It has helped to resolve conflicts in Tajikistan and the former Yugoslav Republic of

Macedonia. And it has played an important role in post conflict peace building, for example in the Balkans.

It has become a leader in election monitoring, for example in Ukraine last December when more than one thousand OSCE monitors – including a large number of Canadians – helped to restore confidence in the electoral process there.

The OSCE is dealing with new threats and challenges to security like counter-terrorism, anti-trafficking, border monitoring, and policing. Indeed, we would welcome more police experts from Canada.

We are also paying special attention to promoting tolerance and non-discrimination. Canada, with its long tradition of multi-cultural integration and tolerance, could be a leader in the OSCE's work in this field.

In short, the OSCE is not a Cold War relic or a post-Cold War product that has passed its expiry date. It is a thoroughly modern organization, well-equipped and well-positioned to deal with contemporary threats and challenges.

It believes in multi-lateral approaches to complex issues of common concern. And it believes that security is measured in more than tanks and guns – security relates to human rights and democracy, economic and environmental issues, as well as political-military aspects of security. It is my impression that this is a vision that closely corresponds to how Canada looks at the world.

What is not so clear is whether all participating States still share the same vision of a democratic European security space united by common values. Lately, the OSCE has been the focus of considerable attention at a high political level. The Russian Federation and some of its partners in the Commonwealth of Independent States have questioned the relevance and strategic future of the Organization. It has been criticized for applying double standards and for losing its focus. Others have called for strengthening the effectiveness of the OSCE.

Like the UN, NATO and others, the OSCE needs to change with the times in order to maintain its usefulness. I have therefore outlined a "Triple R" agenda for Slovenia's Chairmanship based on Reforming, Rebalancing and Revitalizing the OSCE. I have also appointed a Panel of Eminent Persons whose report on reforming the OSCE is expected this June, and there will be high level consultations on reform in the autumn.

And yet, as this discussion goes on the OSCE continues to prove its worth and relevance. In Kyrgyzstan the OSCE is playing a lead role in supporting democratic transition. We are keeping an eye on developments in Uzbekistan and the Fergana valley.

The OSCE is also a central forum for high level political dialogue on the future of European security. As the European Union's new neighborhood comes closer to Russia's near abroad, developments in countries like Georgia, Moldova, Belarus, and Ukraine take on a new significance. Similarly Central Asia is now on the map, due to developments in Afghanistan and Iraq, the search for new energy sources, and the growing interest in Eurasian geo-strategic position.

The OSCE, with its membership stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostock, is a big tent under which all states can meet as equals to talk about issues of common concern and common interest. We should not underestimate the importance of such dialogue.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Canada is one of the OSCE's biggest contributors. And yet you are not part of Europe. You may therefore ask, what's in it for us? Do we get good value for money?

In the modern world, security is indivisible. Crises in one part of the world can have a knock-on effects in others. For example violent conflict can lead to loss of life, deployment of peace keepers, refugees, and then expensive post conflict rehabilitation. As the saying goes, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. If we put more resources into preventing conflicts and building stable, democratic societies, the chance of conflict will be reduced. Through the OSCE, Canadians are contributing that ounce of prevention. And we are grateful.

I believe that the OSCE can do more to share its experience with other regions of the world. And here Canada's links to the Pacific and its deep engagement in Afghanistan could be used to the full.

I urge you to continue your active engagement through supporting projects, seconding staff, and providing ideas and expertise to promote security and co-operation in Europe.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The project of integration and reconciliation of the European continent and beyond, of East and West, of former adversaries remains extremely important. The work of the OSCE and other international organizations is far from over. Developments all over the world show that long term economic, social and political stability depend on open society, good governance, freedom of expression, democracy, transparency and competition.

Dramatic changes that have been made in the past few years need to be buttressed. We should not be complacent, for example about parts of the Balkans. Without continued, steady engagement all of our careful work may unravel – at a high price. Nor should we turn our backs on those who are asking for assistance in the process of democratization. The OSCE – its values and instruments – need to be constantly supported. And this requires the political engagement and will of all of its States.

In conclusion,

Deputy Minister, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

This year we mark a number of anniversaries that enable us to put into perspective events that have shaped the world in the past sixty years. We recall the end of the Second World War and should resolve never to allow such horrors to be repeated. We recall the thirtieth anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act and the impact that it had on uniting a divided continent. And we recall the fifteenth anniversary of the Charter of Paris that set out a vision for a New Europe.

We can only speculate what future generations will think about 2005. They may see it as the second wave of revolutions. They may see it as a turning point in the reform of inter-

governmental institutions. They may see it as a defining moment in the development of the European project, and how this affects the EU's relations with Russia and the United States.

Whatever the perspective of hindsight, they will recall that this was a dynamic period of change. And the OSCE is right in the middle of it.

Slovenia and Canada, like all other OSCE States, can play a role in finding effective ways for pooling ideas and resources designed to promote peace and security. We all have a common interest in this project, and have a better chance of fulfilling our objectives if we work together.

Thank you for your attention