

**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY, OMAR ZNIBER,
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KINGDOM OF MOROCCO IN VIENNA, AT THE MEDITERRANEAN
SEMINAR ON “THE COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO SECURITY:
THE OSCE EXPERIENCE AND ITS RELEVANCE FOR
THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION”**

Session three on democratic institutions and the role of civil society

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Mr. Chairman,

Allow me first of all to convey, through you, my thanks to the OSCE for its sustained efforts on behalf of the Mediterranean basin and for its continued commitment to the strengthening of peace and security in this extremely sensitive region.

The holding of this seminar in Jordan is evidence, once again, of the importance ascribed to the role of the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation in the implementation of the basic principles of the Organization.

I should like to take this opportunity to express our warm congratulations to the Netherlands Chairmanship for the work it has accomplished at the head of this Organization, and also to Bulgaria for its important contribution to the holding of this seminar and for its work in co-ordinating with the Mediterranean partners.

Our thanks go also to the Government of the Kingdom of Jordan for their hospitality and the outstanding organization of this event.

Mr. Chairman,

Today, more than ever before the regional approach to security represents an imperative need.

The aim of this seminar, which should be seen in this light, is to reflect on the problem of comprehensive security in the Mediterranean region, which is continuing to face major challenges of a political, economic and humanitarian nature.

To be sure, considerable efforts have been undertaken by the OSCE with a view to strengthening peace and security in this region. These efforts involve the consolidation of confidence-building measures, particularly with regard to the countries located on the southern shore of the Mediterranean. However, it is clear that additional efforts are needed to deal with the challenges, old and new, that are confronting our region.

The new challenges to regional security have taken on a new sense of urgency as we have entered the second millennium. They can be seen in the emergence of extremism and fanaticism, the rise in mass emigration, the threat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, trafficking in narcotic drugs, arms and human beings, and international organized crime. All these new challenges, which have the effect of destabilizing the policies pursued by the States of the region and of damaging their co-operation, have arisen in addition to the dramatic and deadly conflicts that are undermining stability and concord in the Mediterranean.

The steadily growing gaps in the development of the countries on both shores of the Mediterranean also represent a serious cause of frustration and a permanent source of tension in the context of Euro-Mediterranean security.

In view of these many challenges, what are the means, in terms of the human dimension and the role of civil society, available for building and ensuring comprehensive security in the Mediterranean basin?

Mr. Chairman,

In our view, Mediterranean security can be achieved only through the democratization of institutions and a recognized role for civil society.

The promotion of democracy must be accepted more as a specific method in the policies pursued by the States of the region than as a symbolic value. In this way, the democratic process must be part of a dynamic regional movement with broad social participation aimed at installing institutions of good governance and at ensuring the management of public affairs in a climate of transparency and responsibility.

That is why, as a matter of interest primarily to the populations of these countries, the strengthening of the rule of law and democratic institutions in the Mediterranean countries may be seen as a basic condition for the consolidation of peace and security in the region.

In addition, it goes without saying that respect for individual human dignity and the reduction of poverty and social disparities remain essential conditions to be met.

Universal experience has shown that the antidotes to all manner of social and political crises have been identified: "democracy, a market economy and the rule of law". The practical implementation of these values will not fail to ensure tolerance and a spirit of peaceful coexistence among the peoples and individuals of the Mediterranean region.

The establishment of the rule of law, particularly in the countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean, will provide the conditions conducive to the maintenance of stability and peace. By the rule of law, we understand: the strengthening of legal instruments, fair and transparent elections, responsibility, protection of human rights and freedoms, and the independence and effectiveness of the justice system.

Mr. Chairman,

Peace and security in the Mediterranean are also closely linked to economic development and a proper balance in the relations between the countries of the two shores.

On this subject, I should like to emphasize the crucial role of civil society in promoting good governance.

As a corollary to the democratization of institutions, good governance involves the proper management of public finances and aims at ensuring greater transparency and responsibility, particularly in combating corruption among public officials.

Good governance also entails the formulation of a code of conduct for the private sector in order to ensure respect for the rules of fair competition and freedom of enterprise.

At a time when the threats and challenges to international and regional security are taking on global proportions, the rule of law and good governance are required to play a greater role in establishing a climate of social peace and regional stability. It is a question of shaping public opinion at the national and regional level so as to bring to bear an influence on the course of events and to monitor effectively, particularly through the media, the proper management of public affairs.

Mr. Chairman,

The role of elected assemblies and parliamentary bodies in the Mediterranean region also remains one of great importance in the strengthening of comprehensive security. These bodies are called upon, in particular, to raise public awareness and promote the implementation of OSCE recommendations, *inter alia* through national legislation.

Parliamentarians can also perform a considerable role in combating violations of human rights and freedoms, particularly by entrusting awareness-raising measures to political parties and to all those involved in parliamentary life.

Mr. Chairman,

The importance of the role played by civil society organizations in the development of human societies no longer needs to be demonstrated. Because they are not bound by reasons of State and are closer to the realities on the ground, these organizations provide forums for open discussion and represent an inexhaustible source of proposals and recommendations. They are also active in drawing the attention of the authorities and international bodies to problems that may have been overlooked.

The role of civil society is not limited to putting forward proposals, but is also one of initiating practical activities, *inter alia* through co-operation with various groupings, mainly in the furtherance of democracy at the local level.

At the same time, one of the functions of civil society is to encourage a constructive dialogue and greater confidence among nations and religions, something that is needed today, more than in the past, in the Mediterranean region.

It has been demonstrated that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the work they perform in the area of human rights, the advancement of the rights of women, environmental conservation and sustainable development are helping to bring together groups and individuals. Through their representations, the NGOs can also approach the authorities

with regard to problems that cannot be resolved at a purely national level, whether these involve economic, environmental or health-related issues.

In the Mediterranean context, as far as the non-governmental organizations are concerned, one must note that there is an imbalance between the importance of the NGOs on the northern shore of the Mediterranean and those on the south. The latter generally suffer from a shortage of human and material resources, difficulties with regard to access to information and sources of international finance, and certain administrative and political constraints, such as the inability to obtain visas for travel to the northern shore for participation in meetings or training internships.

Thus, steps must be taken to deal with these problems by allowing the southern NGOs to contribute more effectively to the strengthening of peace and security in the Mediterranean basin.

To cite only one excellent example, I should like mention the role of the NGO movement as demonstrated by its effective work in the Middle East, where these organizations have taken resolute measures in the face of the military operations that are part of the conflict plaguing this region, notably the conflict between Israel and Palestine. There is no need to dwell on the importance of these activities in safeguarding human life and protecting children. I should like in particular at this point to refer to Palestinian children, who are enduring the horrors of a completely unjustified and inadmissible repression.

As regards the conflict in the Middle East, you are all familiar with the moderating role of my country, which has been ceaselessly calling for respect for international law, an end to armed hostilities and the rejection of violence and terrorism. Impunity cannot be allowed to become the rule in this harrowing conflict.

Mr. Chairman,

The Kingdom of Morocco, which in several respects represents an open and tolerant democratic model of society, reiterates its commitment to the strengthening of the democratic *acquis* and to continued unswerving movement along the path towards political reform and the promotion of human rights.

It is of course true that every country has its own particular characteristics and that the democratization process must adapt itself to the realities on the ground. It has been demonstrated that overeagerness invariably leads to false starts and indeed to results that are completely contrary to the democratic ideal.

It is against this background that His Majesty, King Mohammed VI, has announced the implementation of a package of measures aimed at immunizing Moroccan society against the ideology of fanaticism, violence and extremism. The purpose of these measures is to reinvigorate the innovative and democratic institutional framework so as to enable public officials to perform properly their role of representing Moroccan citizens within that framework in a way that satisfies the standards generally recognized in democratic countries.

At the same time, these measures taken together are aimed at creating propitious conditions for economic and social development as the best bulwark against the

dissemination of hatred and obscurantist views. There are four essential elements in this package of measures:

- To lay the foundations for responsible political and civic action, notably through greater transparency in the financing of political life, a formal ban on any effort to instrumentalize religion, the preparation of a national charter of citizens' rights and duties, the strengthening of the laws so as to be able to effectively combat hatred, fanaticism, xenophobia and all other forms of discrimination;
- To speed up the in-depth reform of the education system, which His Majesty has raised to the rank of a national priority. It is also through education that the peoples of the Mediterranean will get to know one another better, to accept one another and also to be able to differ when that is necessary;
- To step up efforts to combat exclusion and marginalization, notably through a national programme against illiteracy, the creation of productive jobs, support for initiatives and investments designed to generate wealth, the advancement of the status of women, social services and access to decent housing for the poorer strata of society;
- To recast completely the status of women by introducing a new family code that will abolish the institution of guardianship and put women on an equal footing with men in terms of rights and responsibilities.

Mr. Chairman,

Even if there is general agreement as to the need to arrive at a comprehensive definition of security in the Mediterranean region and to include in it the various challenges that continue to undermine the efforts to ensure peace and stability, it must be admitted that we are still searching for appropriate mechanisms that will allow us to give this project real substance.

The points raised in this statement are intended to be a contribution to the thought being given within the OSCE as to how these mechanisms might be designed so as to be able to turn certain of these ideas into reality.

Within this framework, we believe that the role of the OSCE should be to launch an ambitious programme of regional co-operation aimed at putting into place mechanisms to ensure regular consultation between the Mediterranean partners. A further objective should be to initiate and encourage dialogue among the countries of the southern shore of the Mediterranean and to use this as a starting point for the vertical co-ordination of this co-operation with a view to gradually making it part of the Organization's comprehensive strategy.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.